



# WEEK 4

## HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

Because of who God is, we can take risks for others.

### THE BIBLE

Esther 1-7; John 15:12-13

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

#### ACTIVITY | Hedbanz: Movie Edition

- Welcome back to True Story, where we're exploring true stories from Scripture (and some not-so-true stories from our favorite movies) and what they can teach us about who we are and who God is.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll [index cards](#), a marker, and the headbands from [Hedbanz](#). Before your program, write on each card the name of a character from a movie your students would recognize, **but choose characters who all took risks**. To stay on-theme with this series, include characters like Woody, Buzz, Elastigirl, Mr. Incredible, Carl, Russel, Elsa, Anna, and Moana. To play, invite a few students to the front, have each student draw an index card without looking at it, place the index card in their headband so the rest of your students can see it, and explain that the names on their foreheads are their new identities. Each contestant must ask the room "yes or no" questions about who they are. The contestant who guesses their identity the fastest is the winner.*

#### QUESTION | What do these characters have in common?

- Let's see how well you really know these characters. **What do all of these characters have in common?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond. They will likely name several things the characters all have in common.*
- Okay, I guess these characters have a lot of things in common, but there's one specific thing I'm thinking about! Each of these characters did something risky.

### DISCUSSION | How did these characters take risks?

- Turn to the person next to you. Choose one of these characters and think of a few examples of how that character took risks.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give students 60 seconds to discuss and ask a few students to share one of their answers.

### 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's something risky you did as a kid?**
- ★ **What's one risky thing someone your age might do? Can you think of both a positive and a negative example?**

### STORY | Talk about a time you did something risky as a teenager.

- Many of our favorite movie characters took big risks, but did you know young people (like you) are wired to take big risks too? Your riskiness might look like . . .
  - Suddenly (and dramatically) changing your hair or style.
  - Asking someone *really* amazing on a date.
  - Picking up a new skill or interest.
  - Doing something silly or embarrassing.
  - Rebelling against your parents' rules.
  - Driving recklessly.
  - Or even trying something dangerous, unwise, or illegal.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Share a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to share a story) about a time when you did something risky as a teenager. Check out the list above for ideas, but keep this story light and relatable to the majority of your students.
- At teenagers, your brains are developing in significant ways. I won't go into the science, but the point is that young people are more likely than adults to do risky things.
  - Sometimes, your riskiness will be selfish and get you in trouble, but your riskiness can also be used for good! Your riskiness can make you more likely than adults to try new things, chase new experiences, and learn new things more quickly.
  - So what kinds of risks do you usually take? No risks at all? Risks that are selfish and put you and others in danger? Or do you take risks that have the potential to benefit you and others?

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

### VIDEO | "Grandma Tala" and "Moana Leaves the Island," from Moana

- Learning to take risks for the right reason is an important part of growing up and of following Jesus. Like we've been doing every week in this series, we're going to look at another true story from Scripture to discover what risk-taking has to do with who God is and who we are.

- But before we get to that *true* story, let's take a look at a not-so-true story. *Moana* is a story about a girl who takes a big risk in order to save her people.
- *Moana* is the daughter of a Polynesian chief, but their island is dying. While her village struggles to survive, *Moana* is given a mission that only she can complete.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show or summarize the scenes from *Moana* where [Grandma Tala](#) tells *Moana* the story of their ancestors and [Moana leaves the island](#). (Disney+ timestamp: 0:26:00–0:32:00.)
- Maybe it seems unbelievable that a teenager could save her entire island, but *Moana* isn't the only young girl who was called to risk it all in order to save her people.

### SCRIPTURE | Esther 1-3

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Summarize the book of *Esther* and its context, or show all or a portion of the video "[Overview: Esther](#)," from [The Bible Project](#).
- In the Old Testament of the Bible, there is a book called *Esther*. It's the story of a young Jewish girl named *Esther*, who God uses to save the Jewish people.
  - During *Esther*'s time, many Jews (God's chosen people) were living far from Jerusalem (the land God gave them), including *Esther* and her older cousin *Mordecai*.
  - *Esther* and *Mordecai* lived in a city called *Susa*, which was part of the Persian empire – a kingdom that wasn't exactly known for following God.
- When the book begins, the King of Persia is on the search for a new wife after his former queen angered him by refusing to flaunt herself in front of the king's friends.
  - What happens next is sometimes referred to as "a beauty contest," but don't think of *Esther* as a pageant queen.
  - The king's men collected a bunch of attractive young girls and added them to the king's already extensive collection of women he kept nearby to do his bidding. The king then chose his favorite girl and made her queen. He chose *Esther*.
  - *Esther* became queen, but not willingly. She never had a choice in the matter, because the king was in charge.
- The king was pretty obsessed with *Esther*, and he liked *Mordecai* too, after *Mordecai* uncovered and stopped a plot to kill him. But because Jews were a minority in Persia, *Esther* and *Mordecai* knew they needed to keep their Jewish identities a secret for their own safety.
- But everything changed when the lives of every Jew in Persia were suddenly threatened.
  - One of the king's officials, *Haman*, convinced the king that Jews were a danger to his kingdom. Why? Because Jews refused to worship anyone but God – which means they would refuse to worship *Haman* or the king.
  - *Haman* said the best solution would be to murder every single Jew in the kingdom. The king enthusiastically agreed, not knowing that his own queen, *Esther*, was Jewish.
  - Time was ticking for the Jewish people. Without God's help, they would all die.

### SCRIPTURE | Esther 4-7

- *Mordecai* realized *Esther* was in the best position to prevent this mass execution, so he told her she had a choice to make.

- Because no one knew she was Jewish, it was possible Esther could continue to live undiscovered and in peace, right under the king's nose.
- Or . . . Esther could do something risky and try to save her people. If she succeeded, everyone would be saved, but if she failed, she would die along with them.
- Together, Esther and Mordecai came up with a plan. Esther, they decided, would reveal her Jewish identity to the king, hope that he didn't execute her on the spot, and try to change his mind.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read or summarize Esther 5-7, or show all or a portion of the video "[Overview: Esther](#)," from [The Bible Project](#).
- I said this story would reveal something important about who God is, but here's a fun fact: God is never mentioned in this story — not once! That's part of what makes the book of Esther so interesting. Although God is never mentioned, God's presence can be found on every page, behind every scene, and in between every line.
  - The book of Esther shows us that God . . .
  - Never gives up on God's people.
  - Is always working.
  - Always has perfect timing.
  - Uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things.
- To once again summarize all of these traits, God is good.

### SCRIPTURE | Esther 4:14

- And what does this story reveal about who we are?
  - We can trust God won't leave us without help.
  - We can trust God is working, even when our situation feels scary or out of control.
  - We are often called by God to do something risky.
  - We can be used by God to rescue others.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Esther 4:14.
- Esther didn't choose to become queen, but Mordecai reminded her she could choose what she would do next.
  - Would she hide in fear? Or would she let God use her?
  - Would she protect herself? Or would she do something risky to protect others?
- Like Esther . . .
  - You were created by a God who is good (who is always working behind the scenes to protect and rescue God's people).
  - You are called, and can be used, by your Creator to protect and rescue others — but sometimes it will be risky.
- If you ever had the opportunity to do something risky for God or for others, remember this: because of who our Creator is, we can live for a purpose bigger than ourselves. **Because of who God is, we can take risks for others.**

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

**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.*
- **Have you ever seen someone doing something risky to help someone else? What happened?**
- **Why do you think Esther decided to risk her safety for the benefit of others?**
- ★ **Have you ever been in a situation where you had to choose between protecting yourself and helping others? What happened?**
- **Why do you think more people don't take risks to help each other? What prevents you from taking more risks to help others?**

**YOU CAN TAKE RISKS FOR OTHERS**

- Sometimes I wonder if the reason we don't take more risks for God or for others is that we're waiting for a miraculous sign that tells us exactly what to do — like a burning bush, voice from the heavens, or angelic visitor who gives us step-by-step instructions.
- But Esther didn't wait around for a miracle or special divine revelation. Esther didn't need those things!
  - Esther knew what God would want her to do because Esther knew God.
  - Because Esther knew that God would want her people to be protected, Esther got to work and protected them.
- In the same way, you don't need a special invitation to take risks for God or for others.
  - When you get to know God better, you better understand what God wants from you — to love others like you are loved.
  - When you understand who and what God values, you don't need God to tell you exactly what to do or when to do it. You can just get to work!
- There are people right now who need to be protected, loved, and rescued. People who need . . .
  - Food, clothes, or shelter.
  - A friend or advocate.
  - To hear the good news of Jesus.
- You don't need to wait for a special invitation to protect, love, and rescue people. Maybe all you need is for someone to remind you that . . .
  - God is going to work with or without you, but you have a choice to get involved.
  - Maybe you were created and equipped "for such a time as this."
  - It might be risky, but you're not alone or without help.

**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.*

- ✪ When we have to make a big decision like Esther did, how do we know when to act and when to wait for God to give us more direction?
- Read John 15:12-13. When you take a risk to help someone else, what might that reveal about your relationship with God?
- ✪ What's one new or interesting thing you noticed about God today? If that's true about God, what's true about you?
- Can you name one thing you wish you could change or one person you wish you could help? What are you going to do about it?

## REFLECTION | "No Longer Slaves," by Bethel Music

- It can be scary to take risks for God and for others, but we don't need to be ruled by our fears. Because of who God is, we can take the kind of risks God calls us to take.
- As we listen to this song together, here are a few things you can do.
  - Think about the words and say them to God as a prayer.
  - Reflect on who God is and who you are.
  - Write down some of the risks God might be calling you to take for the sake of others.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 4 folder. Place one under each sheet, along with a pen. Play the song "No Longer Slaves," by Bethel Music and show the lyrics onscreen. To close, ask everyone to stand and sing the chorus together.

## WE ARE BECAUSE GOD IS

- In every story we've read this month, we've looked for two things: who God is and who we are. But did you notice that we always started with who God is?
  - That's because the true story of Scripture has never been about us. It has always been, and always will be, about the God who made us.
  - But it's not enough to simply read the Bible to learn more about God. The purpose of Scripture is transformation, not just inspiration.
- So when you read the Bible, try these three questions.
  - "What does this passage reveal about who God is?"
  - "What does it reveal about who I am?"
  - "Now what should I do about it?"
- Let's recap what we've discovered the last few weeks.
  - Because God is a good Creator, **we can trust how God has made us.**
  - Because God is powerful and present, **we can do difficult things.**
  - Because God is in control, **we can embrace the unknown.**
  - Because God is always working through and around us, **we can take risks for others.**
- Like Esther, Naomi and Ruth, Elijah, and the early followers of Jesus, we can discover who we are by discovering who our Creator is, and then letting those truths guide our actions.
- My prayer for you is that you would know God — and because you know God, that you would also trust how God has made you, do difficult things, embrace the unknown, and take risks for others. You can, because your Creator is good.

## MUSIC | "How Far I'll Go" (Moana)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As you dismiss, play the song or music video of "How Far I'll Go" — either the version by Alessia Cara or the movie version.