



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus proves that God is for us.

THE BIBLE

Genesis - Exodus; Isaiah 53;
Romans 8:31-40

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | Us or Them

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Just like last week, split your students into two teams and open with a game that pits half of your students against the other half. Which game you play doesn't matter. You could choose one of your group's all-time favorite games, or repeat one of the games from the previous lessons in this unit. The goal should be to get students to embrace a friendly but competitive "us versus them" attitude. If you want to make this an ongoing theme throughout this series, you might . . .*
 - *Split your group into two teams for the duration of the series.*
 - *Give your teams a team mascot or a team color (red and blue).*
 - *Ask each team in a call-and-response, "Who's going to win?" ("Us!") "Who's going to lose?" ("Them!")*

OBJECT LESSON | Growing Sea Creatures

- Since we talked last week about a guy who got eaten by a fish, I thought I'd share with you all a little fish-themed magic. Have you ever tried one of these before? It's pretty cool. You put this tiny thing in water, and then . . . watch it grow.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show one of the sea creatures that expand when placed in water. Open one and place it in a clear container of water when you start to teach and let it grow over the next few minutes. Stand silently waiting for it to grow for about 30 seconds — the goal is an awkward, but funny, silence.*
- Has anyone tried this before? Did it take way longer than expected? I was kind of hoping this thing would instantly turn gigantic, but I guess this is going to take a little longer than I expected.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give your students a few moments to share in pairs or as a group. To close, ask a few students to summarize what they discussed, and then share your own thoughts.*
- **Have you ever had to wait for something you really wanted? What was it and how long did you have to wait?**

STORY | Talk about a time you had to wait for something.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you had to wait for something. You can either keep this story light and fun or talk about a time when waiting was difficult.*



- Have you ever had to wait for something for a really long time? Waiting is hard. Most people probably wouldn't list "waiting" as one of their favorite activities.
- In the very first week of this series, we talked about how **God once sent a plan in motion — a plan that would change the whole world, but took thousands of years to complete.**

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

OBJECT LESSON | "OR" to "FOR" Cardboard Letters

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Using the cardboard letters from Week 1, spell the words "or" and "for" for emphasis as you teach.*
- In the very first week of this series, we learned about the beginnings of God's plan.
 - We saw a glimmer of it in the first few chapters of Genesis, when God hinted that someday evil would be destroyed forever.
 - We saw God's plan take another step forward when God promised Abraham to make his descendants into a great nation — the nation of Israel, a family with more members than there are stars in the sky.
 - God promise Abraham that his people would be blessed by God, and that God would bless the whole world through them.
- God's plan was revolutionary in a world where people and nations tend to see each other as enemies. While humans operated out of an "us or them" mentality, God was trying to teach a new way: "us *for* them."

SCRIPTURE | **Genesis - Exodus**

- God had a plan, but this plan didn't come together instantly. God's plan was kind of like this little sea creature — we all had to wait for it to grow.
- Oh, by the way — you know how God promised Abraham he'd have, like, a million descendants? When God made that promise, Abraham was already really old, and so was his wife Sarah. Plus, Sarah was barren — they didn't have any kids, and couldn't have any kids!
 - How were two old people who couldn't have kids going to have any descendants at all, let alone enough to equal the number of stars in the sky?
 - Was God mistaken? Were they just supposed to wait around and trust it was going to happen, or were they supposed to get . . . creative?
- After years of waiting, they got creative. Abraham and Sarah didn't trust God was going to make things happen, so they took matters into their own hands. Abraham fathered a kid with another woman.
 - Yeah, this was the wrong move.
 - Despite this, **God eventually fulfilled the promise** to Abraham and Sarah miraculously gave birth to a son. They named him Isaac.
- After years of waiting, Abraham and Sarah finally had their promised child! The plan was finally on track . . . until God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.
 - I'm not sure you all understand what I mean, so let me be clear. In the days of the Old Testament, people made sacrifices to God — sometimes grain or fruit,



- but sometimes animals. These animals were placed on altars, killed, and sometimes burned as gifts to God.
- That's what God asked Abraham to do to Isaac — the son God promised.
 - Aside from sounding pretty twisted and gruesome, this didn't seem like a great idea. I imagine Abraham thought, "God, are you sure you know what you're doing? This kid is the key to that great nation you promised me — what are you doing? We need Isaac to live!"
 - I'm not going to pretend I totally like and understand this story, but this was a part of God's plan. And since Abraham was finally trying to obey God instead of take matters into his own hands, Abraham was going to go through with it. But before Abraham could harm Isaac, **God intervened and provided an animal sacrifice instead.**
- Isaac went on to father children and God's plan seemed to be on track once again. Over many years, Abraham's family did grow into a great nation called Israel. But then . . . Israel was taken captive and enslaved by Egypt.
 - God has a plan to rescue them (a plan involving a guy name Moses, a series of plagues, and a staff that turns into a snake), but once again, the people of Israel would be asked to make a sacrifice.
 - In order to protect themselves from the final plague (a plague where everyone's firstborn sons would die), God told every family to find a perfect lamb, kill it as a sacrifice to God, and put its blood over the door post of their homes.
 - Kind of gross, I know. But through this lamb's sacrifice, God said they would be saved and protected. Believe it or not, **sacrifices were always part of God's plan.**

SCRIPTURE | Isaiah 53

- Throughout the Old Testament, God used the symbolism of sacrifices to hint at how God's plan was going to grow over time.
- Although God's people couldn't see it at the time, **these sacrifices were always pointing to Someone who would embody what God had been telling us all along: that God is for us.**
- For the last couple of weeks, we've talked about two prophets God used to speak to us on God's behalf. Today I want to introduce you to a third prophet named Isaiah.
 - Like Jeremiah, Isaiah spoke to Israel during a time when Israel was held captive and oppressed by their enemies.
 - During that time of suffering, God spoke these words through Isaiah . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Isaiah 53 together.*
- Maybe you've guessed who this prophecy is about. This prophecy speaks to the final step in God's plan to bless Abraham's descendants, and to bless the whole world through them.
- Many years after Abraham, a baby was born — one of Abraham's many descendants, named Jesus.
- When Jesus grew up, He began healing and caring for people while He preached a very important message: the Kingdom of Heaven is here. I am God in the flesh and, through



me, God's promises are about to be fulfilled. This is good news, not just for Israel, but for the whole world.

- Jesus was killed because of that message. His body was broken and His blood was spilled, like a sacrificial lamb, but three days later He was raised to life again.
- **Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God's plan was finally fulfilled.** Through Jesus, we can know God and experience eternal life. Through Jesus, God turns us (God's enemies) into God's friends.
- **When God sent Jesus, it proved that God is for us, and has always been for us.** God had always been faithful, but this was God's way of saying . . .
 - "I am so for you that I would die for you."
 - "I'll be for you even if you're not for Me."
 - "I've been for you since before you were even born, I'm for you now, and I'll always be for you."
- God could have come up with any plan to show that God loved us, but this is the plan God chose. In becoming a sacrifice for us, **Jesus proves that God is for us.**

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give your students a few moments to share in pairs or as a group. To close, ask a few students to summarize what they discussed, and then share your own thoughts.
- **We heard a lot of stories from the Old Testament this month. Which of those stories or people surprised you the most, and why?**
- **What questions do you still have about the people or stories we've talked about?**
- **What does God's plan (from Genesis to Jesus) tell us about what God is like?**

OPTIONAL VIDEO | "Sacrifice & Atonement," by The Bible Project

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you'd like to spend more time with the theology of atonement, we recommend playing [this video](#) by The Bible Project (until 4:17).

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

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give your students a few moments to share in pairs or as a group. To close, ask a few students to summarize what they discussed, and then share your own thoughts.
- **Read Romans 8:31-40. What words or phrases do you most connect with? How has your understanding of this passage deepened in the last few weeks?**
- **How do we know that God is "for" us?**
- **What are some reasons it could be difficult for someone to believe God is for them?**
- **What are some ways we can help others see that God is for them?**

RESPONSE | Emmanuel

- During this past Christmas season, you probably heard the word "Emmanuel." It's a name that we see in another prophecy from Isaiah about the coming of Jesus. It means, "God with us."



US FOR THEM | WEEK 4 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

- In The Message translation of the Bible, it says this about Jesus: "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood" (John 1:14, MSG).
 - To show us, once and for all, that God is for us, Jesus moved into our neighborhood to live, to die, to rise again, and to be with us.
- If we're called to be for others like God is for us, what would it look like for you to move "into someone else's neighborhood" like Jesus moved into yours?
 - Who can you love, care for, serve, or protect like Jesus did?
 - Who needs to see that, because *you* are for them, maybe *God* is for them too?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Provide several ways for students to respond to this week's message. You might play some quiet worship music while you allow students to . . .*
 - *Talk to an adult about following Jesus for the first time.*
 - *Talk to God quietly.*
 - *Write or draw a response to Jesus' sacrifice or God's invitation to be for others.*
- In the last few weeks, we've established four things: **God is for us, we're called to be for others, God is for our enemies, and Jesus proves that God is for us.**
- My hope for you today and every day is that you would believe, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that God loves you and is for you — and that you'd let that truth transform you into someone who loves and is for others.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give your students a few moments to share in pairs or as a group. To close, ask a few students to summarize what they discussed, and then share your own thoughts.*
- **What are some needs in our neighborhoods that Jesus would have met?**
- **What can our group do together to show others that we are for them?**