



WEEK 1

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

F O R E V E R

THE BIG IDEA

The love of Jesus is bigger than our doubts.

THE BIBLE

John 18:17-18, 20:1-10 and 24-29;
Romans 8:35-39; Psalm 91:14-16

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

MUSIC | “Love Theory” or “The Blessing”

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Open by playing a video or performing a song about Jesus’ neverending love for us, like “[Love Theory](#)” (Kirk Franklin), “[The Blessing](#)” (Cody Carnes, Elevation Worship, and Kari Jobe), or any of the worship songs recommended in the Music section of your Series Overview.

QUESTION | What’s something you could do “forever”?

- Hola! Have you ever thought about how long forever is? If you Google the word “forever,” you’ll learn that it means “for all time” or “for always.” That’s a pretty long time.
- There aren’t many things I think I could forever, except maybe eat ice cream or watch everything on Disney+. What about you? **What’s something you could do “forever”?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.

ACTIVITY | The Forever Challenge

- There aren’t many things I could do forever, but there are plenty of things I could definitely not do forever — like juggle.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this game, you’ll need [balloons](#) and [permanent markers](#). Before your program, inflate and tie at least twelve balloons (or twelve balloons for every team that will be playing). When you’re ready to play, call at least one pair of students to the front. If you’d like this to be a demonstration, only bring two students to the front. If you’d like it to be a competition, bring at least two pairs to the front. Give one student in each pair a permanent marker and a dozen

balloons. Let them know they will be writing on the balloons while their partner will attempt to hold, volley, juggle, or carry as many balloons as possible without letting any touch the floor. To play, give a prompt, and then have your writers call out an answer, write their answer on a balloon, and toss that balloon to their partner. Their partner must keep that balloon off the floor without losing control. When a team drops three balloons, they're out. Keep adding more balloons until you have a winner. Here are a few prompts you could use . . .

- **Something you might carry in your pocket or purse.** (Phone, wallet, coupons, snacks, water bottle, hand sanitizer, sunglasses, etc.)
- **Three things you take to school.** (Books, pencils, gym clothes, notebooks, water bottle, phone charger, lunch money, wallet, etc.)
- **Two positive emotions.** (Happy, excited, joyful, etc.)
- **Two negative emotions.** (Stressed, sad, angry, etc.)
- **Two things that cause drama at school.** (Homework, dating, grades, sports, tryouts, etc.)
- **Two things that cause drama at home.** (Who sits in the front seat, chores, TV, running late, etc.)
- Have you ever heard the phrase, "too many irons in the fire"? It's what people say when they've got way too much going on.
 - Isn't that how life feels sometimes? You're trying to make it through life while juggling your external life *and* your internal life.
 - On top of school, work, responsibilities, and daily routines, you've got the added layer of managing things like relationships, drama, fear, anxiety, and stress. It can feel like a lot to juggle.
- And on top of all that, you're at an age when you might be trying to figure out what you believe for the very first time or in a brand new way. Maybe you're starting to ask things like . . .
 - Do I really believe in Jesus, or is Christianity just my family's religion?
 - Am I content with casually believing in God, or do I want to follow Jesus with my whole life?
 - What do I do with the questions I have about God?

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.
 - ☆ **Between home, school, friends, and everything else, what are some of the things you feel like you're "juggling" right now?**
 - ☆ **Is your faith one of the things you're "juggling"? How easy or difficult is it for you to make your faith a priority right now?**

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

STORY | Talk about a time you "juggled" too many things, including doubt or questions

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a personal story (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you were juggling too many things, including doubt or questions about God. If possible, try to choose a moment from your teenage years, rather than your adult years. You might talk about juggling your classes, homework, sports, clubs, friendships, friend drama, work, family . . . you get the idea. After you've painted a picture of your life at the time, add that you also had doubts or questions about God and share what they were.
- There are a lot of reasons why we might have questions or doubts about God. Sometimes we start asking questions because we're learning and growing. Those questions you're asking might be an important and necessary part of learning to think critically! But sometimes doubts can form when we experience something painful or confusing.
- When you start asking tough questions about God or what you believe, it can feel pretty heavy and overwhelming. You might not know . . .
 - What you believe.
 - What you don't believe.
 - Where to go with your questions.
 - What your questions even are.
- I get it! Seriously. I love Jesus, but I have questions. I mean, Easter is about Jesus rising from the dead.
 - How does that happen? How does someone just stop being dead?
 - Are we sure it happened? What if it didn't?
 - And if it did happen, so what? What does it have to do with my life today?
- Well, it turns out I'm not the only one with questions like these. (And if you've asked questions like these, you're not alone either.)

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 reasons why people your age might have questions or doubts about Jesus?**
 - **What are some of the questions or doubts you think people have about God or their faith? Do you share any of those questions or doubts?**

SCRIPTURE | John 18:17-18

- Sometimes I think, "If only I could have lived at the same time Jesus did! If I could have seen Him with my own eyes, I wouldn't have a single question or doubt. Everything would make sense." But even Jesus' followers who saw Him every single day had doubts and questions — especially around the time of Jesus' death.
 - Oh — spoiler alert. In case you haven't heard, Jesus died. He was betrayed by one of His closest friends, imprisoned, beaten, and executed because of His teachings.
 - Although the Easter story is now a story we celebrate every year, while the story was unfolding, everything would have seemed like it was falling apart. Jesus' followers at

the time were filled with questions, doubts, and fears.

- It started when Judas, one of Jesus' followers, betrayed Him. Did Judas not trust Jesus was who He said He was? Did he believe but just not care? We don't know, but we know turned his back on Jesus.
- Then, after Jesus was arrested, one of His closest friends and followers panicked and denied he even knew Jesus.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 18:17-18.*
- I can't really blame Peter, though. He was juggling a lot, including his own pain and fears. Had he been wrong about Jesus the whole time? Had he misunderstood? If Jesus was who He said He was, why would God let this happen?
 - Imagine spending years of your life as a disciple of Jesus, living every day in His presence. You'd get to eat with Him, travel with Him, hear Him teach, and even witness miracles.
 - That's what Peter and the other disciples had experienced, which is why it was so confusing when Jesus was arrested. Everyone expected Jesus to be their Messiah, Savior, and King. But suddenly, things had changed.
- Like Peter, sometimes we fear we've been wrong about Jesus.

SCRIPTURE | John 20:1-10

- Soon after Peter's denial, Jesus was beaten, tortured, and killed. His death was public, humiliating, and painful. If there was ever a time for His disciples to doubt Him, it was then. Let's see what happened next.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 20:1-10.*
- Imagine Mary's confusion when she walked up to the tomb. Jesus' body was not there! Was it stolen? Was this a trick? This was even more painful than just knowing He was dead.
- Like some of the disciples, sometimes we struggle to believe the good news of Jesus, even when we see the evidence right in front of us.

SCRIPTURE | John 20:24-29

- As more of Jesus' followers began to believe the good news that He really was alive, word started to spread – but not everyone was ready to believe.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 20:24-29.*
- Like Thomas, sometimes it's difficult for us to trust Jesus is who He says He is until we have more evidence.

WHEN OUR DOUBTS FEEL BIG

- In John 20:9, we read that the disciples, at first, did not understand. Can you relate? Do you ever feel like you don't understand either?
- Peter, Mary, Thomas, and the other disciples had been with Jesus for years, but even they were overwhelmed by doubt, questions, and fears when things got difficult. So maybe doubt is more common than we might imagine.
- When it was most difficult to believe, Jesus' followers likely wondered, "God, what am I supposed

to do? What's true? Are You with me?"

- But then, while they were still doubting, questioning, and full of fear, Jesus showed up!
 - No matter how big their doubts seemed, Jesus' love for them was bigger.
 - Because He loved them so much, Jesus met them in the midst of their doubts.
 - No doubt or heartache could hold Jesus back from them, and it won't hold back the full love He has for you either.

SCRIPTURE | Romans 8:31-39

- When Jesus died, even His closest friends and followers had questions, fears, and doubts. But Jesus wasn't offended by, or angry about, those questions. Instead, Jesus patiently and lovingly helped His friends believe the good news that He really was alive, and that, because of His death and resurrection, nothing (not even death) could separate them from God's love — not ever.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Romans 8:31-39.*
- When we're confused, questioning, or doubting, the resurrection of Jesus is proof that God is with us and loves us. If Jesus can't be defeated by death, He absolutely won't be defeated by our doubts! Because the love of Jesus is bigger than our doubts.

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.*
 - ✪ **Do you relate to Peter, Mary, or Thomas in the stories we read? If so, how?**
 - **What do you think we should do when we have a big question or doubt about God? What shouldn't we do?**
 - **Read Psalm 91:14-16. What do you think this Psalm has to do with our conversation today?**

JESUS' LOVE IS BIGGER THAN YOUR DOUBTS

- Doubt gets a pretty bad reputation sometimes. For some reason, we think doubt disqualifies us from being loved by God or considered a true Jesus-follower. We might think . . .
 - "If I have doubts about Jesus, then I'm not good enough."
 - "If I have doubts about Jesus, then my faith isn't real."
 - "If I have doubts about Jesus, then I'm going to be in big trouble if people in my church find out."
- But doubt doesn't have to be bad or shameful. Doubt was a part of the story then and it's a part of the story now.
- Maybe this seems counterintuitive, but doubt can actually lead us to a deeper relationship with Jesus when our doubts expose what we need most.
 - Do we need courage and clarity, like Peter did?
 - Do we need comfort and hope, like Mary did?

- Do we need evidence and reassurance, like Thomas did?
- Do we need the safety of a community to help us trust and believe, like all of Jesus' followers did?
- The good news is that Jesus can give us all of these things.

RESPONSE | Peg Board Prayers

- Just like Jesus' disciples, we all try our best to make sense of what's going on in and around us. No matter what big doubts, questions, fears, or hurts you're juggling this Easter season, the good news is that Jesus' love is bigger.
 - There is no doubt you have that Jesus doesn't know.
 - There is no doubt you have that's too big for Jesus to carry.
 - There is no doubt you have that would make Jesus push you away or not love you.
- In just a moment, we're going to spend some time talking to God about our doubts, questions, fears, and hurts — whatever is making it difficult to fully believe the good news that Jesus loves us and is alive.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need a large [peg board](#), pegs, black and white paint, and strips of assorted [pink and purple fabrics](#). Paint the peg board black. When it dries, use the white paint to paint the pegs and a large heart in the center of the peg board. Fill the heart-shaped area with pegs. Cut your fabric into long, thin strips. When you're ready, ask students to . . .*
 - Come up to the board.
 - Grab at least one strip of fabric to represent their doubts, questions, fears, or hurts.
 - Talk to God about their doubts as they tie their fabric strips to pegs on the peg board.

MUSIC | "God I Look To You" or "Nothing I Hold Onto"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *During and after the Peg Board Prayers, play a video or perform at least one worship song like "God I Look To You" (Bethel Music), "Nothing I Hold Onto" (Will Reagan), or any of the worship songs recommended in the Music section of your Series Overview.*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.*
 - **What's one big doubt or question you have about God right now?**
 - **How do you think Jesus' love for you can help you in the midst of your doubt or question?**

PRAYER | Forever Love

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Close in prayer. Give students 30 seconds to sit in silence. Then guide them through a prayer that . . .*
 - Thanks Jesus for His forever love.
 - Declares that Jesus' love is bigger than our doubts.
 - Asks for help remembering Jesus is alive and with us.
 - Declares that nothing can separate us from the love of God — not even our doubts.

- Celebrating the Easter season can feel confusing when you still have questions or doubts. But don't forget — you're not alone. It was confusing for Jesus' first followers too.
- It's okay if you still don't have an answer to every question or a resolution for every fear or doubt. For now, here's what I hope you remember:
 - Jesus isn't surprised or afraid of your questions.
 - Jesus will always help you and intervene for you.
 - Nothing will ever change His forever love for you.
 - **The love of Jesus is bigger than your doubts.**