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WEEK 1 **Why Jesus?**

Following God isn't always the most popular thing to do. People will tell you He isn't real, and the world will do everything it can to make Him seem anything but good. But can I share with you the best news in the world?

Jesus is real, and He is so good!

You and I live in a world that is covered in darkness—not actual darkness but an invisible one that makes this world difficult to live in. It makes people treat others unkindly, creates confusion about God, and allows bad things to happen to good people.

Have you ever been in a dark room and a cell phone light clicked on or a candle was lit? The light stands out so much more in the darkness. That's Jesus. He is this beautiful, shining light in a world of darkness. He is the warmth flickering in the cold. He is the glow that lights your steps when things get hard.

Why follow Jesus? Because He is the light, goodness, and love when everything else is imperfect and hard. Jesus can calm your storms, replace your fear with peace, and give you strength to make it through the difficult days. He gives you hope, direction, and love in a world that often tries to take all those things away.

For those who follow Jesus—making Him number one—there is life! And that means two things. First, He gives you a time on earth filled with peace and joy, even when you feel scared or things aren't easy.

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

JOHN 8:12 (ESV)

Second, He gives you life after death. You see, Jesus came to earth and lived a perfect life, then died on a cross and rose again. He conquered death when He came back to life, and He did it for you! And because of that, those who follow Jesus with their whole heart get to spend forever in heaven with Him when they die.

You are very special to Jesus and He wants a relationship with you. Following Him is the best decision you can ever make, and it will give you a life so much sweeter than you can imagine!

- 1) Do you believe Jesus is perfect? Why or why not?
- 2) What about Jesus makes you feel safe and happy?
- 3) Have you had a hard day or week but felt better after praying or going to church? Why do you think that is?
- 4) Have you made a decision to follow Him with all your heart for the rest of your life?
- 5) If so, how does that make you feel? If not, what is holding you back?

PRAYER. Jesus, thank You for loving me so much that You died for me. That's the best love in the world! And thank You for bringing light and goodness into this dark world and into my life. I want to trust You with all my heart; will You help me to do that every day? I love and want to follow You alone. Amen.



WEEK 16 **When You
Mess Up**

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

1 JOHN 1:9 (NLT)

We're human, and we're all going to mess up at one point or another. It shouldn't be an excuse, but it's going to happen. So, when it does, what do you do?

Well, remember that Jesus died for us in order to take away all our sins. So, when we do something wrong, we should go to Him. First John tells us we should confess our sins to Him.

Some might think this just happens when we give our heart to Jesus and are saved, but it should be something we do every time we mess up. One of the most important things you can do in life is learn repentance—telling God what you did wrong and that you're sorry and turning away from it. Meaning, you'll try not to do it again.


Get into this mindset and practice repentance. Even thoughts can carry the weight of sin. Every time you act disrespectfully to your parents or act mean and hurt other people's feelings, repent. Tell Jesus you're sorry, ask Him to forgive you, then pray that He will give you the strength to do better next time.

Learn to apologize by approaching someone you hurt and saying you're sorry. Apologizing can seem hard. Maybe you're not sure how the other person will respond, and no one enjoys confrontation and stress. Try to set your fears aside and focus on the apology. Here are some things you can try: Pray first and ask God to help you with the right words. Pray that the person's heart will be open to

you, and then go to that person and say you're sorry. Be sure to say why you're sorry—it's important to show genuine regard for their feelings and true sorrow for hurting them. Tell them how much you care about them and ask if they will forgive you. It might be a bit scary, but more often than not, the person will forgive you and it will make the relationship so much better.

You're not going to be perfect, but Jesus has made a way for you to be forgiven and cleansed from your sin if you'll repent to Him. Isn't He amazing?

- 1) Is there something you're sorry for that you need to talk to God about? Write down what it is and write a prayer that asks God to forgive you.
- 2) Think of someone you hurt this week or in the recent past. How would you apologize and ask for forgiveness? Write it down.
- 3) Is there a sinful habit you've developed that you want God to help you with? It could be how you treat some people, thoughts you have, or gossiping at school.
- 4) What obstacles prevent you from developing the good habit of repenting?



PRAYER Father, I want to thank You for making a way to be right with You when I sin. I'm not perfect, and although I will try to follow You with all my heart, I know I will mess up. Thank You, Jesus, for Your sacrifice so that I can be made right, through You. Please help me, God, to remember to repent when I sin. Amen.

WEEK 29 **What's the Deal with Cliques?**

Cliques can be good and bad. Good because people have found other people they enjoy being with. But they also can be bad when those in the clique are mean to others outside the group.

If I could encourage you to do one thing for others, I would say be kind. Kindness is one of the most beautiful gifts anyone could ever receive.

In today's passage in Romans, we see examples of how to treat people and how not to treat people.

★ **Do good and not harm to those unlike you.**

We are all different, but that doesn't mean we can't get along. Be good to all, even those who aren't like you.

- ★ **Share in the ups and downs with your friends.** Being a great friend means being there for your friends. When something good happens to them, be excited for them and celebrate with them. When they are going through something sad, offer empathy and support.


Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody. Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody.

ROMANS 12:14-18
(MSG)

- ★ **Be nice to everyone.** And that means everyone, especially the people everyone else picks on.
- ★ **Everyone is valuable; nobody is better than anyone else.** Not even the popular people. No one person is better than another. Everyone has value.
- ★ **See the good in everyone.** This applies even to those who act mean. Chances are, they are acting out because they are hurting inside. Showing them kindness might help them bring down those walls.

Honor God and set the example by showing your peers what a good person looks like.

- 1) What are your thoughts on cliques? Good or bad, or both?
- 2) Have you been hurt by a clique? What happened and how did it make you feel?
- 3) Do you have a close group of friends? Who is in this group?
- 4) Do you think your group is good to others or can they sometimes be unkind to those on the outside?
- 5) How do you want to treat people who are not in your group of friends?



PRAYER. Father, thank You for the friends You have put into my life. I'm so glad to have people I can do life with. Will You please help me to be okay when people hurt me, and help me not hurt others? Help me to be a person who is kind, warm, and inviting to all. I want to be like You, loving people well. Amen.

WEEK 47 **Living in a Tech World**

Technology is all around us. It's in our hands, our homes, and everywhere we look. We can't get away from it, that's for sure! While it has so many good uses and benefits, being constantly connected and being addicted to your devices can get in the way of living a real life. With your eyes always on your screen, you can miss the beauty right in front of you—people, nature, places, experiences, and feelings filling your life with depth, joy, and adventure.

Technology can also be a source of trauma and stress. There is a lot of toxic content online, things people, and especially kids, shouldn't be exposed to. For preteens and teens, social media can be an unsafe space.

What do you think about tech? Do you ever find it to be draining or unhelpful? Perhaps you should look at how you can limit tech's reach in your life.

If you're struggling academically because you're constantly distracted by TV and media and addicted to your phone, make it a habit to study and do your homework as soon as you get home from school. Keep the TV off and put away all devices until you're

So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective.

**COLOSSIANS
3:1–2 (MSG)**

done. Maybe you're also having a hard time sleeping because you're scrolling on your phone before bed, which then affects your ability to stay awake, focused, and engaged. Try putting the phone down thirty minutes before bed to settle down naturally. If the online access you have is introducing you to content that isn't healthy, put some restrictions in place to protect your heart and mind.

And truly, as today's verse says, keep your eyes on Jesus and focus on what He is doing in your life and around you. That's far more exciting and helpful than locking your eyes to a screen all the time.

- 1) Is technology becoming an unhealthy distraction in your life? In what ways?
- 2) What are some changes that you can make?
- 3) What benefits do you see to tech?
- 4) What negatives do you see to tech?
- 5) Are there any other changes you can make to balance the tech in your life a bit better?

PRAYER. Father, I appreciate how technology has made some things easier in life and provides some good things. But I also see how it can hurt, and I want to be careful of that in my life. Please help me to be wise about my tech use and find ways to balance it. I need Your help to be a good steward of the technology in my life. It's in Your name I pray. Amen.

