



A 6-WEEK SERIES FROM THE GOSPELS



JESUS & EASTER

FROM OUR ANNUAL *TEACHING STRATEGY*

BY HEATHER LEA KENISON AND STEPHEN SWITZER



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ABOUT THIS SERIES

If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

THIS SERIES AT A GLANCE

WEEK 1

This week, we'll see Jesus' response to His friends' betrayal on the night of His arrest.

- **BIG IDEA:** Jesus never gives up on us.
- **THE BIBLE:** Luke 22:1-6, 47-48, 54-62; John 21:15-17; Psalm 32
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Question, Activity, Image, Story, Poll, Object Lesson, Reflection, Discussion

WEEK 4

This week, we'll see what happened on Easter Sunday and what it means for us.

- **BIG IDEA:** Jesus is alive.
- **THE BIBLE:** Luke 24:1-12; I Corinthians 15:21-26; Romans 7:21-25
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Question, Image, Story, Video, Prayer, Music, Discussion

WEEK 2

This week, we'll see how Jesus suffered on His way to the cross, and why it matters.

- **BIG IDEA:** Jesus understands our pain.
- **THE BIBLE:** Matthew 27:27-44; Philippians 3:4-14; Romans 6:6-7
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Story, Video, Object Lesson, Music, Prayer, Discussion

WEEK 5

This week, we'll see how Jesus responded when Thomas doubted Jesus really was alive.

- **BIG IDEA:** Jesus can be trusted.
- **THE BIBLE:** John 20:19-31; Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 4:4-6
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Image, Story, Poll, Object Lesson, Music, Discussion

WEEK 3

This week, we'll see how Jesus cared for the repentant man who was crucified alongside Him.

- **BIG IDEA:** Jesus shows us love.
- **THE BIBLE:** Luke 23:32-56; Philippians 2:5-11; Ephesians 2:8-9
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Question, Story, Image, Reflection, Music, Response, Discussion

WEEK 6

This week, we'll see how Jesus restored Peter after his betrayal by giving him a mission.

- **BIG IDEA:** Jesus gives us a mission.
- **THE BIBLE:** John 21:1-3, 15-17; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 9:1-20; I Peter 2:21
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Video, Story, Image, Object Lesson, Question, Reflection, Music, Discussion

Before Easter Sunday, we suggest completing **The Break Trail Experience**, the Spring Discipleship Activity included in the Discipleship section of your downloads. Take a look, if you haven't already!

HOW TO PROGRAM FOR THIS SERIES

Outside of your teaching time, we have a few programming ideas to help this series really come to life — everything from how to **design your room**, to which **games to play**, to what **music to play and sing**.

ROOM DESIGN

For this series, we're embracing the great outdoors!

First, you'll need a backdrop. There are tons of ways to create a backdrop that you can re-use multiple times each year. Check out [this post](#) for a list of ideas. For this series, we suggest creating a backdrop with a wood (or wood-like) texture, by either creating your backdrop with **wooden pallets** or **covering foam panels with wallpaper that looks like wood**.

Once your backdrop is complete, add the series title. Using a projector or stencil, trace the logo onto the backdrop and paint it with acrylic paint. If you're painting on top of wood (or wallpaper that looks like wood) try painting with a dry brush so the paint looks weathered and distressed in some places.

Finally, add some hiking-themed props that you either purchase or borrow, like a [tent](#), some hiking shoes, walking poles, and as many fake trees as you can find. You could even add a fake bonfire like [this one](#).



GRAPHIC DESIGN

We give you editable graphics so you can make everything your own! If you're going to **edit our graphics** or **create something brand new . . .**

Use this font!

INTEGRAL CF REGULAR

Download this font [here!](#)

And use these colors!

 HEX #3FA7D1
CMYK: 69/18/8/0

 HEX #F8C22A
CMYK: 3/24/94/0

 HEX #EE7E1C
CMYK: 3/61/100/0

MUSIC

Here are a few worship songs about proclaiming Jesus' victory over sin and death . . .

- **"As I Am (Acoustic)"** (Hillsong Young & Free)
- **"The Blood is Still the Blood"** (Maverick City Music)
- **"Breathe Miracles"** (Red Rocks Worship)
- **"Come Alive"** (All Nations Music)
- **"House of Miracles"** (Brandon Lake)
- **"Graves Into Gardens"** (Elevation Worship)
- **"You Keep Hope Alive"** (Mandisa, Jon Reddick)
- **"O What a Miracle"** (North Point Worship)
- **"Do It Again"** (Elevation Worship)
- **"Follow You Anywhere"** (Passion)

We've added these songs to our [Grow Students \(Volume 5\) Spotify playlist](#) for your personal use only, according to Spotify's [terms and conditions](#). For more information on how to use copyrighted music in your services legally, [read this!](#)

And if you want to sing or sample a non-worship song or two (maybe as an opener, a closer, a bonus song during your program), try some of these . . .

- **"God Flex"** (Tedashii, Trip Lee)
- **"Long Live the Champion"** (KB feat. Yariel, GabrielRodriguez EMC)
- **"Washed by the Water"** (NEEDTOBREATHE)
- **"Love"** (We Are Messengers)
- **"Lights"** (Caitie Hurst)
- **"Alive"** (NEEDTOBREATHE)
- **"Love Revolution"** (Lenny Kravitz)
- **"Alive"** (Sia)

For more fun (and clean) song suggestions, check out all of [our Spotify playlists](#) for your personal use only, according to Spotify's [terms and conditions](#). For more information on how to use copyrighted music in your services legally, [read this!](#)



GAMES by Jeremiah Herring, Tyler Grant & Jordan Floro

If you have a designated time for games before your worship and teaching time, we have a few suggestions for games you can play . . .

- [Dissing Terry Trail](#)
- [Trail Of Things](#)
- [Letter Trail](#)
- [The Longest Trail](#)
- [Finish The Trail](#)
- [I'm Going On A Hike](#)

Since this series is all about hiking and the outdoors, the games are too! To get the instructions and graphics for each game, click the links or visit the Games section of your Grow Students dashboard.

HOW TO PREP FOR THIS SERIES

WHAT TO GET

If you want to try all of our suggestions for this series, here's what you'll need to buy, borrow, Google, or dig for in your storage closet . . .

WEEK 1:

- [Blindfolds](#)
- [Cones](#)
- Stuff from your storage closet that can be used as obstacles
- Images of a few trailblazers like, [Steve Jobs](#), [Ruby Bridges](#), or [Rihanna](#)
- A [glass bowl](#)
- A large Spoon
- [Water-soluble paper](#)
- Pens
- The handout provided in your Week 1 folder

WEEK 2:

- A video clip from [The Office](#), "[Michael Grills His Foot](#)"
- [First aid kit](#)
- Your phone
- A snack
- Your car keys
- A video clip from [Marvel's Tribute to Chadwick Boseman](#)
- The song "[Another in the Fire](#)" ([Hillsong United](#))

WEEK 3:

- [Playing cards](#)
- Easter candy
- Easter baskets
- An [image of Florence Nightingale](#)
- The handout provided in your Week 3 folder
- The song "[As I Am \(Acoustic\)](#)" ([Hillsong Young & Free](#))
- The Break Trail Experience, from the Discipleship section of Grow Students (Volume 5)

WEEK 4:

- The “It’s Alive!” images provided in your Week 4 folder
- Images from the Chilean mine rescue, like [this one](#) or [this one](#)
- A video clip of [an animal in a state of torpor](#)

WEEK 5:

- A video greeting for your students from a celebrity
- An screenshot of a “verified” social media account
- [Six-inch nails](#)
- The song [“Do It Again” \(Elevation Worship\)](#)

WEEK 6:

- Candy
- Seeds
- [Popcorn](#)
- [Dried fruit](#)
- [Pretzels](#)
- Bowls or bags
- A video clip from [The Fellowship of the Ring](#)
- The trailer for [World’s Toughest Race](#)
- A personal item that represents your comfort zone
- The song, [“Follow You Anywhere” \(Passion\)](#)

WHAT TO MAKE

WEEK 1:

- Set up a space to play **Trail Tourists**.
- Set up for the object lesson **Forgiving Others**. And you might want to test it beforehand.
- Print and cut the **handouts** provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen.

WEEK 2:

- Set up for the object lesson **First Aid Friends**.

WEEK 3:

- Set up a space to play **A Suspicious Easter Exchange**. Remove the Aces from your deck of cards and fill the Easter baskets with candy.
- Print and cut the **handouts** provided in your Week 3 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen.

WEEK 4:

- Prepare the images provided in your Week 4 folder for **“It’s Alive!”**

WEEK 5:

- Create or commission a video for the activity **A Special Guest**.
- Take a screenshot of a verified account from a celebrity or influencer your students would recognize.
- Get enough nails for the object lesson **Six-Inch Nails** to pass around.

WEEK 6:

- Set up a space to have a **Build-Your-Own Trail Mix Bar**.
- Identify someone connected to your church or community who shares the gospel with others in unique ways. Interview them live or create a video interview to play during teaching time.

WHAT TO CUSTOMIZE

You know your students better than we do, so there are probably some things you'd like to change about this series before you start teaching. Here's what you'll need to update if you make changes . . .

- **TEACHING:** Add your own stories, jokes, and any pop culture references that make sense for your group. You can edit each message using the Word documents provided or the [Grow Message Builder](#).
- **SMALL GROUP:** If you make any changes to your teaching, make sure your small group questions reflect those changes. You can edit these using the Word documents provided.
- **APP:** If you make changes to your teaching or small group questions, don't forget to update your content in the [Grow App](#) for your team!
- **GRAPHICS:** We've provided graphics in your [Graphics & Video folder](#) already, but we've also provided a blank slide in case you need to make your own.
- **EMAILS:** Customize and send the [volunteer and parent emails](#) we've provided for this series.

WHAT TO COMMUNICATE

To make sure your students, volunteers, and families are in the loop . . .

- **STUDENTS:** Throughout the month, post the [Graphics & Video](#) we've provided on social media, like the Big Idea images and Bumper Video. Post the [One-Minute Sermon Videos](#) we've provided or use the One-Minute Sermon Scripts to film a recap video each week and post it on social media.
- **FAMILIES:** Before you begin teaching this series, send families the [Parent Email](#) we've provided (after you've customized it for your ministry, of course). After each week of the series, post the Big Idea images wherever you talk to families online. You can also copy and paste the social media examples we've included in your [Social Media Posts](#).
- **VOLUNTEERS:** Before you teach each week of this series, send volunteers the weekly [Volunteer Emails](#) we've provided (after you've customized it for your ministry, of course). Before each week of the series, post the Big Idea images wherever you talk to volunteers online. You can also copy and paste the social media posts we've included in your [Social Media Posts](#).

For a more in-depth digital communication strategy, **customize the [Social Media Plan spreadsheet](#)** we've provided. And hey! When you post on social media, **don't forget to use the [#growcurriculum](#) hashtag** to share your ideas and stories with our team and with other churches who are using Grow!

HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES

Every ministry is different. Whether you're teaching middle schoolers, high schoolers, teenagers with special needs, or all three, here's how to hack this series to fit your unique and diverse audience.

HACKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

by By Eddie Witkowski and Crystal Quintero



REVISE

To make this series more accessible for middle schoolers, here's what to adjust . .

In as many weeks as you'd like, add some younger people to your examples of modern day trailblazers. Every week of this series, we highlight some trailblazers who did some incredible things. But because middle schoolers sometimes struggle to connect figures from the past to their current realities, you may want to add younger people or examples that are more specific to your students' experiences and interests. You could even poll your students in advance through texting or social media (or in person the week before you start this series) to find out who they consider "trailblazers."

In Week 2, revise the object lesson First Aid Friends by switching the car keys for house keys. When a middle schoolers is having a tough time, they're less likely than a high schooler would be to get picked up by a friend or family member and driven somewhere. They're more likely to have a friend come over to their house to hang out. Swap these car keys for house keys and talk about the comfort of a friend showing up (maybe with some ice cream) during a time of need.



REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

In as many weeks as you'd like, replace any of the Story modules with a prerecorded video. Middle schoolers have notoriously short attention spans, especially around holidays and vacations. Keep them engaged by changing up your medium a little more often than usual. Instead of telling a story live, use the story prompts we've provided to film videos (of yourself or other people) telling their stories while walking outside or on a trail.



REMEMBER

Because death is foundational to the Easter story, some of your middle schoolers may need help processing their experiences with death and loss or their fear of death. At this age, many middle schoolers are still very concrete thinkers, which means there is a risk some middle schoolers may get stuck thinking about physical death and resurrection rather than spiritual death and resurrection. Take care to explain these metaphors well, but still be prepared to address any questions or fears they have about physical death.

HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS by Andy Disher and Areli Ortiz

REVISE

To make this series more accessible for high schoolers, here's what to adjust . .

In as many weeks as you'd like, revise any of the Story modules by having high schoolers share their stories. Of course, you have great stories to share! But when a high school student shares their story, students are more likely to pay attention and listen to what they have to say. Plus, it's a great way to give younger students some examples of "trailblazers" to follow. Just be sure to work with your story-tellers beforehand and make sure they are ready to share the story — especially with heavier topics and prompts.

In Week 6, revise the reflection How Can I Be a Trailblazer? by adding follow-up. More than ever, your high schoolers are ready and willing to do something that matters! So give them more than just a challenge — give them some follow-up and accountability to make it happen. First, have your high schoolers clarify which of the challenges and action steps they want to tackle. Then encourage them to verbalize that with an adult in the room. Whether that adult is you or your volunteers, make sure the adult sets a reminder on their phone to follow up each student who confided in them to find out how it's going.

REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

In Week 1, replace the activity Trail Tourists with more discussion or teaching time. You might have high school students that are all about the games, but more than likely your high schoolers are less interested than your middle schoolers are in silly games. If that's the case for your high schoolers, skip this game and get straight into the sermon.

REMEMBER

In Week 1, keep in mind the conversation about Judas' suicide could be a trigger for some high schoolers. While this conversation should be handled carefully in any circumstance, if any of your students have personal experience with depression, shame, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts, be aware of how this piece of Judas' story could impact them. As you teach this week, make sure your volunteers and parents are aware this will be mentioned. Have resources available for students who might have concerns about suicide, self-harm, or other mental health crises.

HACKS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

by Alyssa Roberts and Sunny Brown

REVISE

To make this series more accessible for students with special needs, here's what to adjust . .

Anytime you show videos or play music, remember to turn on closed captioning.

There are a lot of videos in this series, so remember to accommodate anyone with hearing disabilities by giving them captions to follow along with.

Every week, add visual aids to every passage of Scripture. Having pictures will help students with certain kinds of disabilities understand the concepts and stories better. Every week of this series is story-based, so images of Bible characters you find online or dramatizations (featuring your volunteers and some props from your church production closet) would help.

In Week 4, consider your students who take things literally when you talk about the resurrection. The question might be asked, "Since God brought Jesus back from the dead, will God bring my friend, family member, or pet back from the dead too?" Because death is foundational to the Easter story, this subject can't exactly be avoided! So prepare yourself and your team by reminding everyone to be aware of confusion, to explain these metaphors well, and to still be prepared to lovingly address any questions your students have about physical death.

REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

Replace any of the trailblazers mentioned in this series with people who have special needs or physical disabilities. Whenever you highlight a person or heroic story in your teaching time, it's a great moment to highlight people who have been trailblazers in the special needs or disabled community. Just be aware that these people are usually not the norm but the exceptions, so be sensitive to the students you have in the room. Your goal should be for them to feel seen and inspired, but not pressured to perform or meet a certain standard of success.

REMEMBER

If you have students who use a wheelchair or have limited mobility, remember to consider how they might experience the theme of hiking throughout this series. Because students with physical limitations are restricted in terms of what they can do, it would mean so much to see examples of how someone who uses a wheelchair experiences nature and navigates outdoor trails.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Heather Lea Kenison is the Director of Student Ministries at St. Luke's UMC in Indianapolis, leading a team of diverse staff and volunteers with the mission of sharing Jesus Christ to students. Heather is also the Founder of Women in Youth Ministry, an organization that seeks to elevate the voices of women in a male-saturated field. If you'd like to chat student ministry, coaching, Cardinals, makeup, or Enneagram, Heather's your woman.

Stephen Switzer was a youth pastor in Raleigh, North Carolina for 5 years and currently works as a Project Manager for Stuff You Can Use. He and his wife, Erica, live in San Pedro Sula, Honduras where they oversee a nonprofit called *Embraced International* which focuses on providing opportunities/solutions for vulnerable kids & families. If you'd like to chat about Honduran coffee, North Carolina barbecue, or go-to podcasts, reach out! He would love to connect with you!

CONNECT WITH HEATHER!



CONNECT WITH STEPHEN!



ALONG WITH . . .



SERIES DEVELOPMENT: Heather Lea Kenison, Stephen Switzer, Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, David Magallanes, Amber Stephens, Candace Williams, Liliana Reza, Steph Whitacre

HACKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS: Eddie Witkowski, Crystal Quintero

HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS: Andy Disher, Areli Ortiz

HACKS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: Alyssa Roberts, Sunny Brown

GAMES: Jeremiah Herring, Tyler Grant, Jordan Floro

ONE-MINUTE SERMONS: David Magallanes, Elle Campbell, Jose Rodriguez, Erica Rodriguez, Vanessa Serrano Cruz, Damean Easter, and the Rescue a Generation team

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Jules Gray, Josh Gosney, Amber Gaddis

LAYOUT DESIGN: Jules Gray, Josh Gosney

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT: Kenny Campbell, Tash McGill, Linda Moon, Ali Anne, Kellee Gentry, Emily Acton, Jada Smith, Jay Logan, Eddie Irvin, Daniel Wallis

DEVOTIONAL FOR VOLUNTEERS



STUDY

It was Winston Churchill who said, "If you're going through hell, keep going." Life can feel like one endless hike uphill but who better to break the trail than the one who endured hell on our behalf? He's the one **who never gives up on us**, the one **who understands what we're going through**. He's the one who **shows us love**, Jesus walks with you because **He's alive** and **can be trusted**. And with all of that in mind, He also **gives us a mission** to continue the work He has started. The work you do with teenagers is part of that mission. To get ready for this Easter series, **spend a few minutes reading the stories you'll be teaching students this month**. As you do, think about what God has taught you (and is still teaching you) through these passages, and how these Big Ideas have been true in your life.

WEEK 1: Jesus never gives up on us. (Luke 22:1-6, 47-48, 54-62; John 21:15-17; Psalm 32)

WEEK 2: Jesus understands our pain. (Matthew 27:27-44; Philippians 3:4-14; Romans 6:6-7)

WEEK 3: Jesus shows us love. (Luke 23:32-56; Philippians 2:5-11; Ephesians 2:8-9)

WEEK 4: Jesus is alive. (Luke 24:1-12; I Corinthians 15:21-26; Romans 7:21-25)

WEEK 5: Jesus can be trusted. (John 20:19-31; Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 4:4-6)

WEEK 6: Jesus gives us a mission. (John 21:1-3, 15-17; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 9:1-20; I Peter 2:21)

PRAY

When someone breaks trail through the snow or on a path that hasn't been cleared, they make a way for others to follow in their footsteps. They go first. Every Easter you teach the story of Jesus and how His life makes a path for us to know God. But are you still walking that path regularly? It will be hard to break that trail for students if you haven't been walking it yourself. As you get ready for this series, check in with God and yourself to see how well you've been following in Jesus' footsteps. **Which passage of Scripture or Big Idea from this month is most relevant to you right now?** Spend a few minutes asking God to show you how you've already grown in this area, plus the next step you need to take in order to keep growing.

GROW

Do you need a little grace right now? God has already given it to you, but maybe you need to let yourself receive it. As you prepare for this series, notice if you have any unresolved sin in your life that needs to be "put to death," as Paul would say, so you can find new life. Look for the ways the power of Jesus' resurrection needs to continue transforming you from the inside out as you follow in His footsteps. You're not done growing yet! So what's your next step? **Whatever your next step is right now, take it. Then help students do the same.**

WEEK 1 SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus never gives up on us.

THE BIBLE

Luke 22:1-6, 47-48, 54-62; John 21:15-17;
Psalm 32

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

QUESTION | “Have you ever taken a journey to a new place?”

- Welcome to our new series, *Break Trail*, where we’re talking about exciting journeys and new destinations. So I’m wondering, **have you ever taken a journey to a new place?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*

ACTIVITY | Trail Tourists

- It’s pretty fun to visit new places and see new things, but if you want to make the most of your visit when you’re visiting a new place, you need someone who knows their way around.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you’ll need [blindfolds](#), [cones](#), and some obstacles from your storage closet. Divide your students (or just a handful of players) into two teams and designate a leader on both teams. Have your first team line up behind their team leader, with one hand on the shoulder of the teammate in front of them, and place a blindfold on each teammate except the leader. While the first team is getting set up, have the other team set up cones and obstacles throughout the room to create a simple obstacle course. The leader of the first team must take their teams through the course without anyone hitting any cones. Then have your teams switch places. To make it competitive, time each team and announce a winner.*

QUESTION | “Who are some trailblazers you know?”

- If you’ve ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know “breaking trail” is something you do when you encounter deep snow that’s tough to navigate.

- When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. It's so much easier to walk in the tracks of someone else who has already "broken" the trail.
- We often call those people "trailblazers," but we don't always use that term literally. Sometimes a "trailblazer" is someone who has forged a new and different kind of path. **Who are some trailblazers you know?**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.

IMAGES | Modern Day Trailblazers

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show images of a few trailblazers from different industries as you tell their stories and the trails they broke, like . . .
 - [Steve Jobs](#). This man changed the world in more ways than one. Even if you don't use Apple products, you've been impacted by this man's ability to see technology in a new way – as not just something for the super rich, but something all people should be able to access.
 - [Ruby Bridges](#). Ruby was the first African American student to attend a formally all-white school in Louisiana. Even though the Supreme Court required schools to desegregate in 1954, most schools ignored this decision. In 1960, six years after the Supreme Court's ruling, Ruby was escorted to school, while angry protestors stood on the sidelines. The decision had already been made, but somebody had to break the trail and be the first person to set a new precedent for education in the United States. Ruby Bridges was that amazing trailblazer.
 - [Rihanna](#). Yes, she's an amazing artist who has broken a few trails with her style of music, but in 2017, she launched a makeup line called Fenty Beauty. Her makeup line was the first to cover an extensive range of shades and diverse model representation. Her makeup line was named one of Time's 25 Best Inventions of 2017. Rihanna broke the trail and made it more common for other companies to represent a more diverse audience.
- For the next few weeks, we're going to talk about a lot of heroic trailblazers, but more than anyone else we're going to talk about a leader named Jesus. Jesus blazed trails through . . .
 - His birth.
 - His life.
 - His teachings.
 - His death.
 - His resurrection.
- As we journey toward Easter (and beyond), let's talk about some of the ways Jesus blazed trails for you and me.

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

STORY | Talk about a time you let someone down.

- There are so many ways Jesus broke new ground. He made a way for us to forever change the way we saw God and others in a few key areas, but this was a big one: Jesus gave us a new way to see failure (ours and others’).
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you let someone down, broke a promise, or betrayed you. How did they react? Did they give up on you? Did they give you a second chance? Share what happened, how you felt when you realized you failed them, and how you felt about their response.*
- Maybe you’ve had a moment when . . .
 - Like me, you hurt someone you love and wished you could rewind the tape and change it.
 - Or you’ve trusted someone else to keep a secret or a promise, but they let you down. It’s understandable if you feel you aren’t able to trust or even love that person like you used to.
 - Or maybe you’ve let yourself down. Maybe you’re frustrated that you can’t measure up to whatever standard you’ve set for yourself.
- Today, we’re going to learn about two people close to Jesus who let Him down. But the way Jesus responded to His friends-turned-traitors was pretty trail-blazing.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 22:1-6, 47-48, 54-62

- We are just a few weeks away from Easter Sunday — the day we celebrate Jesus rising from the dead. But in the days leading up to His death, Jesus found Himself in some uncharted territory.
 - Jesus knew He was about to die, but His friends and followers didn’t (even though Jesus tried to tell them).
 - Well — actually, most of Jesus’ friends and followers didn’t know He was going to die. But one of them did.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Luke 22:1-6, 47-48, 54-62.*
- I’ve had some pretty bad friends and some really hurtful betrayals, but this story is more than I can imagine.
 - Judas has to be the worst friend of all time! Judas singled out Jesus and betrayed Him to His face — literally, with a “friendly” kiss! Judas didn’t just let Jesus down. He actually wanted Him dead. But it gets worse . . .
 - Not only was Jesus betrayed by His friend Judas, but He was *also* betrayed by His dear friend Peter. Peter was arguably Jesus’s most devoted follower and one of His best friends, but Peter denied he knew Jesus three times.
 - Jesus is God, but He was also human — complete with all of the emotions we humans know well. I can’t imagine how painful it must have been for Jesus’ friends to let Him down in such significant ways.

POLL | What Would You Do?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask the questions below and give students a chance to respond by raising their hands or standing up to indicate “yes.”
- If your friend did something horrible to you (and didn’t apologize) and you saw them the next day, **what would you do?** Would you . . .
 - Avoid them at all costs?
 - Confront them and get the awkwardness out of the way?
 - Pretend you don’t know what happened?
 - Move to a new state and change your name so you never have to deal with it?

SCRIPTURE | John 21:15-17

- Now that you’ve imagined what it’s like to be let down, put yourself in Judas’ or Peter’s sandals for a moment. Can you imagine the weight of such a huge failure resting on your shoulders? If you’re them, you realize . . .
 - You betrayed your friend — someone who had never been anything but kind and loving toward you.
 - You betrayed your friend so badly that they ended up getting in trouble. And not only in a little trouble, but put to death.
- It’s easy to see why Peter and Judas were very upset about the way they betrayed their friend, Jesus. In the end, though, Judas and Peter chose to address their shame in different ways.
 - In one of the greatest tragedies in the entire Bible, Judas didn’t give Jesus time to forgive Him. Instead, Judas tragically chose to end his own life.
 - Judas was so overcome with grief and guilt that he forgot what Jesus was all about. Jesus’ life and mission were never about guilt, shame, or grief. Jesus was always about grace, love, and forgiveness.
- At the same time, Peter was also wrestling with his share of grief and guilt. Even after Jesus rose from the dead, I’m sure Peter thought Jesus couldn’t or wouldn’t let him lead anything after this colossal failure. But instead, Jesus showed Peter a new path he could take.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read John 21:15–17.
- Jesus didn’t give up on Peter, even when fear led Peter to lie about his friendship and loyalty to Jesus. Instead of anger or condemnation, Jesus gave Peter forgiveness and grace.
- Peter ended up doing exactly what Jesus told him to do. He became the leader of the “sheep” Jesus was talking about — Jesus’ followers. Peter went on to lead the early church and is still known by many Christian traditions as the first official leader of the Church.

JESUS NEVER GIVES UP ON US

- Like Peter and Judas, maybe you’ve felt like you’ve let Jesus down. Maybe you’ve felt like you were never good enough for Jesus to care about you to begin with. But if there’s anything we can learn from Peter and Judas, it’s that there’s nothing you could do to cause Jesus to love you less.

- Jesus shows us in this story that even the most extreme betrayal will never change Jesus's perspective or love.
- Peter came to believe what Judas forgot — that while any other friend in the world might not forgive him, Jesus breaks trail. Jesus always forgives.
- Jesus didn't give up on his friends, even when they gave up on themselves. And the same is true for you. No matter what we've done or what we may think about ourselves, **Jesus never gives up on us.**

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

OBJECT LESSON | Forgiving Ourselves

- We all know how give up on people when they fail us. Humans have been following that trail since the beginning of time. But Jesus broke a new trail when He showed us He'd never give up on us.
- Remember, the purpose of breaking trail is to make it easier for others to follow along behind you. That's what Jesus does for us. He broke a new trail by forgiving us so we can follow in His footsteps and forgive others — and maybe ourselves too.
 - We've all needed forgiveness for the ways we've hurt others. Maybe you made fun of someone at school, or teased someone in gym class, or spread a rumor, or lied to someone.
 - We've all needed forgiveness for the ways we've chosen sins that hurt us (and God too). It could be an unhealthy relationship, a bad Internet browser history, a dirty mouth, or an angry spirit. Maybe you need forgiveness for this so you can move on and live out who God created you to be.
- What do you need forgiveness for? Who do you need to forgive? What would it look like for you to forgive yourself or someone else, just like God has forgiven you?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this object lesson, you'll need a [large glass bowl](#) full of water, a large spoon, [water-soluble papers](#), and pens. Pass out the pens and water-soluble paper as you give the instructions. When students have written down something they need forgiveness for, invite them to come to the front and place it in the bowl. After each piece is added, stir the bowl until it dissolves.

REFLECTION | Lectio Divino of Psalm 32

- There was a man named David who had a pretty heavy track record of failing God and others. The book of Psalms is full of his confessions to God and expressions of trust that God would never give up on him.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Invite students to open their Bibles or a Bible app on their smartphones to Psalm 32, or show the passage on your screen.
 - **STEP ONE:** Read the Scripture out loud while students listen.
 - **STEP TWO:** Read the Scripture out loud while students read along, underlining words or phrases that stuck out to them if they have their Bible or a Bible app.

- **STEP THREE:** *Read the Scripture out loud and ask students to focus on one phrase God is pointing out to them. Have them circle this phrase.*
- This was David's prayer of repentance. David knew that God would never give up on him, no matter how big his mistakes were.
 - If you're struggling to forgive yourself, remember Jesus can and always will forgive you.
 - If you're struggling to forgive someone else, remember Jesus shows us the way to show each other grace.
- Jesus broke the trail and decided that nothing would ever keep us from being able to follow him. Is there something you think keeps you from Jesus? This week, give that thing to God so you can better hold onto the truth that, no matter what, **Jesus never gives up on you.**

ACTIVITY | Take a Hike

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print the handouts provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat.*
- Before you go, I have one last challenge for you. Throughout this series, we're going to talk a lot about the trails Jesus blazed for us and how we can follow in His footsteps. But sometimes it helps to process all of this with other people, and outside of our normal routines.
 - So sometime in the next few weeks (or maybe a few times), take a hike — literally. Invite a few friends or get your small group together.
 - It can be a short walk around town or an intense hike on a local trail. Either way, start walking and take this handout with you. It will give you some things to think about and talk about as you go.
 - As you walk, think about how, in your everyday life, you can walk more intentionally in the footsteps of Jesus — our trailblazer who, among so many other things, never gives up on us.

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus never gives up on us.

THE BIBLE

Luke 22:1-6, 47-48, 54-62; John 21:15-17;
Psalm 32

- **What's something that gets a lot of hype but you think is a letdown?**
- **What are some of the ways you've seen people let each other down?**
- **How does it feel when someone lets you down? What about when you let someone else down?**
- **What do you think Jesus was thinking or feeling when Judas and Peter betrayed Him?**
- **How did Jesus respond to Judas and Peter letting Him down?**
- **What are some of the ways you and I sometimes let God down?**
- **When we let God down, what do you think Jesus would want us to know?**
- **Is it ever difficult for you to believe any of those things when you let God down? Which ones and why?**
- **Read Psalm 32:5. You don't have to tell us what it is, but is there anything you need God to make right with God right now? How can you do that?**
- **If it's true Jesus never gives up on you, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

ACTIVITY

Schedule a time to "take a hike" together and talk about following in the footsteps of Jesus.

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus never gives up on us.

THE BIBLE

Luke 22:1-6, 47-48, 54-62; John 21:15-17;
Psalm 32

- **What's something that gets a lot of hype but you think is a letdown?**
- **What are some of the ways you've seen people let each other down?**
- **How did Jesus respond to Judas and Peter letting Him down?**
- **What are some of the ways you and I sometimes let God down?**
- **Read Psalm 32:5. You don't have to tell us what it is, but is there anything you need God to make right with God right now? How can you do that?**
- **If it's true Jesus never gives up on you, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

ACTIVITY

Schedule a time to "take a hike" together and talk about following in the footsteps of Jesus.

WEEK 1 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus never gives up on us.

THE BIBLE

Luke 22:1-6, 47-48, 54-62; John 21:15-17;
Psalm 32

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

QUESTION | “Have you ever taken a journey to a new place?”

- Welcome to our new series, *Break Trail*, where we’re talking about exciting journeys and new destinations. So I’m wondering, **have you ever taken a journey to a new place?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.

ACTIVITY | Trail Tourists

- It’s pretty fun to visit new places and see new things, but if you want to make the most of your visit when you’re visiting a new place, you need someone who knows their way around.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this game, you’ll need [blindfolds](#), [cones](#), and some obstacles from your storage closet. Divide your students (or just a handful of players) into two teams and designate a leader on both teams. Have your first team line up behind their team leader, with one hand on the shoulder of the teammate in front of them, and place a blindfold on each teammate except the leader. While the first team is getting set up, have the other team set up cones and obstacles throughout the room to create a simple obstacle course. The leader of the first team must take their teams through the course without anyone hitting any cones. Then have your teams switch places. To make it competitive, time each team and announce a winner.

QUESTION | “Who are some trailblazers you know?”

- If you’ve ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know “breaking trail” is something you do when you encounter deep snow that’s tough to navigate.

- When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. It's so much easier to walk in the tracks of someone else who has already "broken" the trail.
- We often call those people "trailblazers," but we don't always use that term literally. Sometimes a "trailblazer" is someone who has forged a new and different kind of path. **Who are some trailblazers you know?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.

IMAGES | Modern Day Trailblazers

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show images of a few trailblazers from different industries as you tell their stories and the trails they broke, like . . .
 - [Steve Jobs](#). This man changed the world in more ways than one. Even if you don't use Apple products, you've been impacted by this man's ability to see technology in a new way – as not just something for the super rich, but something all people should be able to access.
 - [Ruby Bridges](#). Ruby was the first African American student to attend a formally all-white school in Louisiana. Even though the Supreme Court required schools to desegregate in 1954, most schools ignored this decision. In 1960, six years after the Supreme Court's ruling, Ruby was escorted to school, while angry protestors stood on the sidelines. The decision had already been made, but somebody had to break the trail and be the first person to set a new precedent for education in the United States. Ruby Bridges was that amazing trailblazer.
 - [Rihanna](#). Yes, she's an amazing artist who has broken a few trails with her style of music, but in 2017, she launched a makeup line called Fenty Beauty. Her makeup line was the first to cover an extensive range of shades and diverse model representation. Her makeup line was named one of Time's 25 Best Inventions of 2017. Rihanna broke the trail and made it more common for other companies to represent a more diverse audience.
- For the next few weeks, we're going to talk about a lot of heroic trailblazers, but more than anyone else we're going to talk about a leader named Jesus. Jesus blazed trails through . . .
 - His birth.
 - His life.
 - His teachings.
 - His death.
 - His resurrection.
- As we journey toward Easter (and beyond), let's talk about some of the ways Jesus blazed trails for you and me.

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

STORY | Talk about a time you let someone down.

- There are so many ways Jesus broke new ground. He made a way for us to forever change the way we saw God and others in a few key areas, but this was a big one: Jesus gave us a new way to see failure (ours and others’).
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you let someone down, broke a promise, or betrayed you. How did they react? Did they give up on you? Did they give you a second chance? Share what happened, how you felt when you realized you failed them, and how you felt about their response.*
- Maybe you’ve had a moment when . . .
 - Like me, you hurt someone you love and wished you could rewind the tape and change it.
 - Or you’ve trusted someone else to keep a secret or a promise, but they let you down. It’s understandable if you feel you aren’t able to trust or even love that person like you used to.
 - Or maybe you’ve let yourself down. Maybe you’re frustrated that you can’t measure up to whatever standard you’ve set for yourself.
- Today, we’re going to learn about two people close to Jesus who let Him down. But the way Jesus responded to His friends-turned-traitors was pretty trail-blazing.

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 of the ways you’ve seen people let each other down?**
 - ☆ **How does it feel when someone lets you down? What about when you let someone else down?**

SCRIPTURE | Luke 22:1-6, 47-48, 54-62

- We are just a few weeks away from Easter Sunday — the day we celebrate Jesus rising from the dead. But in the days leading up to His death, Jesus found Himself in some uncharted territory.
 - Jesus knew He was about to die, but His friends and followers didn’t (even though Jesus tried to tell them).
 - Well — actually, most of Jesus’ friends and followers didn’t know He was going to die. But one of them did.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Luke 22:1-6, 47-48, 54-62.*
- I’ve had some pretty bad friends and some really hurtful betrayals, but this story is more than I can imagine.

- Judas has to be the worst friend of all time! Judas singled out Jesus and betrayed Him to His face — literally, with a “friendly” kiss! Judas didn’t just let Jesus down. He actually wanted Him dead. But it gets worse . . .
- Not only was Jesus betrayed by His friend Judas, but He was *also* betrayed by His dear friend Peter. Peter was arguably Jesus’s most devoted follower and one of His best friends, but Peter denied he knew Jesus three times.
- Jesus is God, but He was also human — complete with all of the emotions we humans know well. I can’t imagine how painful it must have been for Jesus’ friends to let Him down in such significant ways.

POLL | What Would You Do?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask the questions below and give students a chance to respond by raising their hands or standing up to indicate “yes.”
- If your friend did something horrible to you (and didn’t apologize) and you saw them the next day, **what would you do?** Would you . . .
 - Avoid them at all costs?
 - Confront them and get the awkwardness out of the way?
 - Pretend you don’t know what happened?
 - Move to a new state and change your name so you never have to deal with it?

SCRIPTURE | John 21:15-17

- Now that you’ve imagined what it’s like to be let down, put yourself in Judas’ or Peter’s sandals for a moment. Can you imagine the weight of such a huge failure resting on your shoulders? If you’re them, you realize . . .
 - You betrayed your friend — someone who had never been anything but kind and loving toward you.
 - You betrayed your friend so badly that they ended up getting in trouble. And not only in a little trouble, but put to death.
- It’s easy to see why Peter and Judas were very upset about the way they betrayed their friend, Jesus. In the end, though, Judas and Peter chose to address their shame in different ways.
 - In one of the greatest tragedies in the entire Bible, Judas didn’t give Jesus time to forgive Him. Instead, Judas tragically chose to end his own life.
 - Judas was so overcome with grief and guilt that he forgot what Jesus was all about. Jesus’ life and mission were never about guilt, shame, or grief. Jesus was always about grace, love, and forgiveness.
- At the same time, Peter was also wrestling with his share of grief and guilt. Even after Jesus rose from the dead, I’m sure Peter thought Jesus couldn’t or wouldn’t let him lead anything after this colossal failure. But instead, Jesus showed Peter a new path he could take.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read John 21:15–17.
- Jesus didn’t give up on Peter, even when fear led Peter to lie about his friendship and loyalty to Jesus. Instead of anger or condemnation, Jesus gave Peter forgiveness and grace.

- Peter ended up doing exactly what Jesus told him to do. He became the leader of the “sheep” Jesus was talking about – Jesus’ followers. Peter went on to lead the early church and is still known by many Christian traditions as the first official leader of the Church.

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 do you think Jesus was thinking or feeling when Judas and Peter betrayed Him?**
 - **How did Jesus respond to Judas and Peter letting Him down?**
 - **What are some of the ways you and I sometimes let God down?**

JESUS NEVER GIVES UP ON US

- Like Peter and Judas, maybe you’ve felt like you’ve let Jesus down. Maybe you’ve felt like you were never good enough for Jesus to care about you to begin with. But if there’s anything we can learn from Peter and Judas, it’s that there’s nothing you could do to cause Jesus to love you less.
 - Jesus shows us in this story that even the most extreme betrayal will never change Jesus’s perspective or love.
 - Peter came to believe what Judas forgot – that while any other friend in the world might not forgive him, Jesus breaks trail. Jesus always forgives.
- Jesus didn’t give up on his friends, even when they gave up on themselves. And the same is true for you. No matter what we’ve done or what we may think about ourselves, **Jesus never gives up on us.**

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.*
 - ☆ **When we let God down, what do you think Jesus would want us to know?**
 - ☆ **Is it ever difficult for you to believe any of those things when you let God down? Which ones and why?**

OBJECT LESSON | Forgiving Ourselves

- We all know how give up on people when they fail us. Humans have been following that trail since the beginning of time. But Jesus broke a new trail when He showed us He’d never give up on us.

- Remember, the purpose of breaking trail is to make it easier for others to follow along behind you. That's what Jesus does for us. He broke a new trail by forgiving us so we can follow in His footsteps and forgive others — and maybe ourselves too.
 - We've all needed forgiveness for the ways we've hurt others. Maybe you made fun of someone at school, or teased someone in gym class, or spread a rumor, or lied to someone.
 - We've all needed forgiveness for the ways we've chosen sins that hurt us (and God too). It could be an unhealthy relationship, a bad Internet browser history, a dirty mouth, or an angry spirit. Maybe you need forgiveness for this so you can move on and live out who God created you to be.
- What do you need forgiveness for? Who do you need to forgive? What would it look like for you to forgive yourself or someone else, just like God has forgiven you?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this object lesson, you'll need a [large glass bowl](#) full of water, a large spoon, [water-soluble papers](#), and pens. Pass out the pens and water-soluble paper as you give the instructions. When students have written down something they need forgiveness for, invite them to come to the front and place it in the bowl. After each piece is added, stir the bowl until it dissolves.*

REFLECTION | Lectio Divino of Psalm 32

- There was a man named David who had a pretty heavy track record of failing God and others. The book of Psalms is full of his confessions to God and expressions of trust that God would never give up on him.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Invite students to open their Bibles or a Bible app on their smartphones to Psalm 32, or show the passage on your screen.*
 - **STEP ONE:** *Read the Scripture out loud while students listen.*
 - **STEP TWO:** *Read the Scripture out loud while students read along, underlining words or phrases that stuck out to them if they have their Bible or a Bible app.*
 - **STEP THREE:** *Read the Scripture out loud and ask students to focus on one phrase God is pointing out to them. Have them circle this phrase.*
- This was David's prayer of repentance. David knew that God would never give up on him, no matter how big his mistakes were.
 - If you're struggling to forgive yourself, remember Jesus can and always will forgive you.
 - If you're struggling to forgive someone else, remember Jesus shows us the way to show each other grace.
- Jesus broke the trail and decided that nothing would ever keep us from being able to follow him. Is there something you think keeps you from Jesus? This week, give that thing to God so you can better hold onto the truth that, no matter what, **Jesus never gives up on you.**

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.
 - **Read Psalm 32:5. You don't have to tell us what it is, but is there anything you need God to make right with God right now? How can you do that?**
 - **If it's true Jesus never gives up on you, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

ACTIVITY | Take a Hike

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, print the handouts provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat.
- Before you go, I have one last challenge for you. Throughout this series, we're going to talk a lot about the trails Jesus blazed for us and how we can follow in His footsteps. But sometimes it helps to process all of this with other people, and outside of our normal routines.
 - So sometime in the next few weeks (or maybe a few times), take a hike – literally. Invite a few friends or get your small group together.
 - It can be a short walk around town or an intense hike on a local trail. Either way, start walking and take this handout with you. It will give you some things to think about and talk about as you go.
 - As you walk, think about how, in your everyday life, you can walk more intentionally in the footsteps of Jesus – our trailblazer who, among so many other things, never gives up on us.



TAKE A HIKE

BEFORE YOUR HIKE:

If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along. In so many ways, that's what Jesus does for us. So we're going on a hike! Literally.

It can be a short walk around your neighborhood or a long hike on a trail. Either way, don't forget to . . .

1. Recruit a few friends to join you.
2. Tell someone where you're going and how long you'll be gone.
3. Go when it's still light out.
4. Bring a small first aid kit, water, and snacks.
5. Check to see if you will have phone service.

DURING YOUR HIKE:

Split your hike into four sections (or take four different hikes). On each leg of your journey, follow the instructions below.

PART #1: SPENDING TIME WITH OTHERS

Just like Jesus built deep relationships with the people around Him, our relationships with each other can help us (and our faith) grow. While you walk, get to know each other better. Tell your life stories. Share weird facts about yourselves you've never shared before. Ask each other hard questions — the kind of questions that are usually too deep or serious to ask in normal, everyday conversations.

PART #2: SPENDING TIME WITH GOD

Just like Jesus often prayed on His own and with His friends, we can talk to God anytime. So while you walk, talk to God either silently or out loud. If you need something to pray about, ask each other how you can pray for them and then do it! Oh, but you probably want to keep your eyes open.

PART #3: USE YOUR GIFTS

Just like Jesus served others by using His gifts (like His gifts of teaching, compassion, and miraculous healings), we can follow His footsteps by finding ways to serve God and others with our gifts too. While you walk, encourage each other with one of your gifts! If you can whistle, whistle! If you can sing, sing! If you're really good at remembering Scripture or poetry, share something you've memorized. Take turns using your gifts while you hike.

PART #4: SHARE YOUR STORY

Just like Jesus regularly told others what He knew to be true about God, we can have conversations about God and share our stories of faith with others too. While you walk, take turns telling stories. You can start by telling stories about the best day you can remember or a time when you met someone famous, but then try telling stories about how you first heard about Jesus, what you think about God, and how your faith is growing and changing.

WEEK 2 SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus understands our pain.

THE BIBLE

Matthew 27:27-44; Philippians 3:4-14;
Romans 6:6-7

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

STORY | Talk about a ridiculous injury you sustained.

- Welcome back to *Break Trail*, where we're talking about walking in the footsteps of Jesus. We have a lot of information about Jesus' life on earth, but we don't know everything. I still have a lot of questions about Jesus, like . . .
 - What was His favorite food?
 - Did He have a favorite joke?
 - What did He do on His days off?
 - I know He never *sinned*, but do you think Jesus ever made a tiny little human mistake, like stub His toe?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a quick story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about one of the most ridiculous injuries you've ever sustained – but keep it silly, not gruesome. After you tell your story, give a few students a chance to share their stories.*

VIDEO | A Clip from *The Office* (“Michael Grills His Foot”)

- Judging by some of your stories, I'm guessing at least some of you can relate to this situation Michael Scott once got himself into.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip (0:30-1:20) from [this scene in The Office](#), where Michael Scott burns his foot on a George Forman Grill. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*

- When Michael grilled his foot in rancid bacon grease, he wasn't looking for people to tell him what to do, and he certainly wasn't looking for someone to laugh at him. All he wanted was for someone to come to his house, pick him up, and bring him to work so he could be around his friends – I mean coworkers. The “friend” thing is debatable.

OBJECT LESSON | First Aid Friends

- Sometimes when we're hurt, people will try to show up for us, but not always in the ways we want or need. People might try to show up with a first aid kit to try and fix your problem for you, but I think we all know a fix isn't always as important as a friend.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, pack a [first aid kit](#) with a phone, a snack, and a set of car keys. Remove these items as you teach . . .*
 - **PHONE:** Sometimes when we're hurt, people want to give us advice. But we really just want someone to give us a call and listen as we talk it out.
 - **SNACK:** Sometimes the best “medicine” for a tough day is a friend or family member who shows up with your favorite snack to remind you they see you.
 - **CAR KEYS:** Sometimes you just need someone who is willing to pick you up when you need to take a moment to breathe or get away from a tough situation.

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

STORY | Talk about a time no one understood your pain.

- But sometimes when we're going through something painful, it feels like no one understands.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) a time you were going through something painful, but no one understood how painful it was. You might talk about your parents' divorce, or an injury or illness, or being rejected.*
- When life already hurts, people add to that hurt (even if they don't mean to) when they fail to get to know our pain. It's not because they don't want to help or don't care. It's just hard to really understand what other people are going through sometimes.

VIDEO | A Clip from Marvel's Tribute to Chadwick Boseman

- Although it's never easy to experience pain, it helps when we know we're not alone. Once in a while, a tragedy occurs that unites people in their pain, like when the world loses someone who was seen as a trailblazer.
- Like we said last week, there's a hiking term called “breaking trail.” It's what you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate.
 - When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind. It's so much easier to walk in the tracks of someone else who has already “broken” the trail.
 - We often call those people “trailblazers,” but we don't always use that term literally. Sometimes a “trailblazer” is someone who has forged a new and different kind of path.

- Chadwick Boseman was an incredible actor who many people saw as a trailblazer. Before his premature death to cancer, Chadwick made the most of his career, not just for himself, but for the next generation too.
- In the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, it is said of Chadwick, "He was not only a conduit to the past and the way African-Americans persevered and pushed through so many challenges, he also represented brightness and the promise of tomorrow."
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (3:38-4:36) of Marvel's tribute to Chadwick Boseman. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- Chadwick's death was painful for so many young people who looked up to him as a trailblazer.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 27:27-44

- Easter Sunday is coming soon, which means believers all over the world are looking forward to celebrating the day of Jesus' resurrection. But before we get there, it's important to remember the pain that came first.
 - Before Jesus' followers knew they had a reason to celebrate, they had to deal with the loss of Jesus — their trailblazer who blazed new trails and showed them new ways of understanding what God is like.
 - When some people think about God, they think about someone who's far away and not relatable. They see God as someone who might be able to solve their problems, but not someone who can actually relate to their painful or frustrating things. But Jesus shows us that's not true.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 27:27-44.
- When Jesus was arrested and eventually killed, he felt every type of pain imaginable.
 - Jesus was physically in pain. He was beaten with fists, whips, and other ancient weapons. Nails were driven through His hands and feet. When He hung on the cross, He couldn't breathe.
 - Jesus felt the pain of being insulted. People questioned Jesus' authenticity, took and gambled away His clothes to humiliate Him, and mocked Him and everything He had lived and fought for.
 - Jesus felt the pain of being betrayed. Like we said last week, many of the people Jesus loved walked away from Him. Jesus was abandoned by many people who had been close to Him.
 - Jesus felt the pain of seeing His loved ones in pain. In the last moments before He took His last breath, Jesus saw His own mother in the crowd, who was unable to do anything except watch in horror.
 - Jesus felt the pain of being misunderstood. Jesus was put to death by religious leaders, soldiers, and everyday people who saw Him as a criminal, blasphemer, or violent rebel. But in reality, Jesus was God Himself, on a mission to love and rescue each of them.
- So no, God isn't incapable of understanding our pain. Jesus (who is God) understands pain very well.

SCRIPTURE | Philippians 3:10-14

- In the book of Philippians, the apostle Paul (one of the earliest leaders in the early Church) wrote a letter to some of the early Jesus-followers. He had this to say about the pain Jesus suffered . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Philippians 3:10-14.*
- Jesus showed us God understands our pain. But then Paul said he was trying to better understand Jesus' pain too.
 - Paul said he wanted to know and experience the power of Jesus' resurrection.
 - Easter Sunday (the day we celebrate Jesus rising from the dead) is a day every followers of Jesus loves to celebrate — and for good reason! Jesus' life is the reason we can have life too!
 - Paul was saying he wanted to have a new kind of life through the power of Jesus, both now and for eternity.
 - But Paul said he wanted to experience the pain of Jesus' suffering too. So does that mean Paul just wanted to sit and think about Jesus' death until he felt more sad? Does it mean he wanted to literally reenact the day Jesus went to the cross? Not necessarily.
 - Paul was saying he would put to death his old life in order to live his new life in Jesus. Just like Jesus died, Paul wanted to see his old life of sin die too.
 - And no matter what, Paul said he would keep moving forward, focusing on a hopeful future because of Jesus and forgetting his painful and sinful past.
- Through His death and resurrection from the dead, Jesus gave us the chance to be rescued from sin and experience a new and abundant life with Him. But that new life also involves death — Jesus' death, as well as the death of our sins.
- When Jesus died, He showed us He understands our pain. Now we're invited to understand Jesus pain too.
 - When we're experiencing pain, Jesus reminds us He understands what we're going through because He suffered too.
 - When we remember how Jesus experienced pain, we are reminded of how much God gave in order to rescue us from sin.
- I know Easter is usually about celebrations and happiness, but before Easter Sunday came Good Friday, where Jesus suffered and died to make a way for us to be rescued from pain that comes from sin and death. Easter is a reminder that we don't follow a God who can't understand us when we're hurting. We follow a Savior who is right there with us when we're hurting, because **Jesus understands our pain.**

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

JESUS KNOWS OUR PAIN

- So today, what kind of pain are you feeling?
 - **PHYSICAL PAIN:** Can you relate to any of the ways Jesus was physically harmed by others? Or maybe you have an illness, injury, or disability that causes you pain. Jesus knows what it's like to experience physical pain.

- **EMOTIONAL PAIN:** If you've ever felt left out, forgotten, betrayed, or unwanted, Jesus has been there too. Sometimes people are cruel on purpose and sometimes life is just really difficult and complicated. Sometimes people we love are hurting and we feel like there's nothing we can do to fix it. No matter why you're hurting, Jesus knows what it's like to experience emotional pain too.
- **SPIRITUAL PAIN:** Or maybe you're struggling right now because of a sin that feels like it has control of your life. If that's you, remember Jesus willingly took on the weight of your sin so you could have freedom and new life. You don't have to carry this alone.
- My pain doesn't look like your pain. Your experiences are different from mine. It's sometimes easy for us to point fingers or try to decide whose pain is the biggest, but nobody wins when we operate that way.

MUSIC | "Another in the Fire" (Hillsong United)

- Sometimes the best thing in the midst of our toughest, most painful moments is to be reminded we aren't alone. That's what Jesus did for us. As we sing this song, here's what I want you to think about . . .
 - "What is painful in my life right now?"
 - "How do I need Jesus to help me find healing from that pain?"
 - "How can I better understand the pain Jesus experienced?"
 - "In my life, what needs to die so I can find new life in Jesus?"
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the song "Another in the Fire" (Hillsong United), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here's [a link to preview the song](#) for your personal use.*

PRAYER | A Prayer for Each Other's Pain

- Jesus understands our pain, but sometimes in order to really believe that, we need to meet another person who at least tries to understand our pain. Maybe there's a way for you to do that for someone else.
- When you become aware of someone else's pain . . .
 - **LOOK TO JESUS:** In Jesus, we have a trailblazer whose paths we can follow. Jesus willingly chose to enter into our pain in order to help us find a way out. We don't need to literally die for each other in order to do that, but we can choose to get involved in each other's lives when things get painful.
 - **PRESS ON TOGETHER:** The apostle Paul talked about pressing on in his faith. But when life is painful, that can be difficult to do alone. We need each other when life is painful and we need each other to help us put an end to our old sinful lives. We can't do it alone.
 - **PRAY WITH EACH OTHER:** When life is painful or we're struggling to move on from a sin that's controlling us, it can feel like we're the only one fighting that battle. But just like Jesus stands with us in our pain, we can stand with each other in prayer.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have your students circle up with one or two people sitting beside them. Encourage each person to pray for one thing that has brought pain to them or someone they know. Have each person end their prayer with, "God, this is my prayer." Then, have the rest of the group respond with, "God, this is our prayer," to show they understand their pain.*
- I don't know what kind of pain you're familiar with right now, but whether it's physical, emotional, or spiritual pain, you are not in this alone. **Jesus understands your pain.** This week, I hope that knowledge motivates you to spend more time with Him. That's why He came to earth in the first place — to be close with you.

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus understands our pain.

THE BIBLE

Matthew 27:27-44; Philippians 3:4-14;
Romans 6:6-7

- **Have you ever gotten an injury for a ridiculous reason? What happened?**
- **When you're in pain, what do you usually want other people to do for you?**
- **Have you ever felt like someone didn't understand the pain you were going through? What happened?**
- **On a scale of 1-5, how confident are you that Jesus understands what you're going through?**
- **Why do you think it's important for us to know Jesus understands our pain?**
- **Why do you think it's important for us to understand the pain Jesus went through?**
- **When you think about the different kinds of pain Jesus felt, what do you and He have in common?**
- **Read Romans 6:6-7. What do you think it means to be set free from sin? How does it happen?**
- **Are you hurting in any way right now (physically, emotionally, or spiritually)? Does anyone want to share more about what you're going through?**
- **If it's true Jesus understands what you're going through, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

ACTIVITY

Encourage each person to pray for one thing that has brought pain to them or someone they know. Have each person end their prayer with, "God, this is my prayer." Then, have the rest of the group respond with, "God, this is our prayer," to show they understand their pain.

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



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- **Have you ever gotten an injury for a ridiculous reason? What happened?**
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ACTIVITY

Encourage each person to pray for one thing that has brought pain to them or someone they know. Have each person end their prayer with, "God, this is my prayer." Then, have the rest of the group respond with, "God, this is our prayer," to show they understand their pain.

WEEK 2 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus understands our pain.

THE BIBLE

Matthew 27:27-44; Philippians 3:4-14;
Romans 6:6-7

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

STORY | Talk about a ridiculous injury you sustained.

- Welcome back to *Break Trail*, where we're talking about walking in the footsteps of Jesus. We have a lot of information about Jesus' life on earth, but we don't know everything. I still have a lot of questions about Jesus, like . . .
 - What was His favorite food?
 - Did He have a favorite joke?
 - What did He do on His days off?
 - I know He never *sinned*, but do you think Jesus ever made a tiny little human mistake, like stub His toe?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a quick story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about one of the most ridiculous injuries you've ever sustained – but keep it silly, not gruesome. After you tell your story, give a few students a chance to share their stories.*

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 gotten an injury for a ridiculous reason? What happened?**
 - **When you're in pain, what do you usually want other people to do for you?**

VIDEO | A Clip from *The Office* (“Michael Grills His Foot”)

- Judging by some of your stories, I’m guessing at least some of you can relate to this situation Michael Scott once got himself into.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip (0:30-1:20) from [this scene in The Office](#), where Michael Scott burns his foot on a George Forman Grill. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- When Michael grilled his foot in rancid bacon grease, he wasn’t looking for people to tell him what to do, and he certainly wasn’t looking for someone to laugh at him. All he wanted was for someone to come to his house, pick him up, and bring him to work so he could be around his friends – I mean coworkers. The “friend” thing is debatable.

OBJECT LESSON | First Aid Friends

- Sometimes when we’re hurt, people will try to show up for us, but not always in the ways we want or need. People might try to show up with a first aid kit to try and fix your problem for you, but I think we all know a fix isn’t always as important as a friend.
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 - **PHONE:** Sometimes when we’re hurt, people want to give us advice. But we really just want someone to give us a call and listen as we talk it out.
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SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

STORY | Talk about a time no one understood your pain.

- But sometimes when we’re going through something painful, it feels like no one understands.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) a time you were going through something painful, but no one understood how painful it was. You might talk about your parents’ divorce, or an injury or illness, or being rejected.*
- When life already hurts, people add to that hurt (even if they don’t mean to) when they fail to get to know our pain. It’s not because they don’t want to help or don’t care. It’s just hard to really understand what other people are going through sometimes.

VIDEO | A Clip from *Marvel’s Tribute to Chadwick Boseman*

- Although it’s never easy to experience pain, it helps when we know we’re not alone. Once in a while, a tragedy occurs that unites people in their pain, like when the world loses someone who was seen as a trailblazer.
- Like we said last week, there’s a hiking term called “breaking trail.” It’s what you do when you encounter deep snow that’s tough to navigate.

- When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind. It's so much easier to walk in the tracks of someone else who has already "broken" the trail.
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- Chadwick's death was painful for so many young people who looked up to him as a trailblazer.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 27:27-44

- Easter Sunday is coming soon, which means believers all over the world are looking forward to celebrating the day of Jesus' resurrection. But before we get there, it's important to remember the pain that came first.
 - Before Jesus' followers knew they had a reason to celebrate, they had to deal with the loss of Jesus — their trailblazer who blazed new trails and showed them new ways of understanding what God is like.
 - When some people think about God, they think about someone who's far away and not relatable. They see God as someone who might be able to solve their problems, but not someone who can actually relate to their painful or frustrating things. But Jesus shows us that's not true.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 27:27-44.
- When Jesus was arrested and eventually killed, he felt every type of pain imaginable.
 - Jesus was physically in pain. He was beaten with fists, whips, and other ancient weapons. Nails were driven through His hands and feet. When He hung on the cross, He couldn't breathe.
 - Jesus felt the pain of being insulted. People questioned Jesus' authenticity, took and gambled away His clothes to humiliate Him, and mocked Him and everything He had lived and fought for.
 - Jesus felt the pain of being betrayed. Like we said last week, many of the people Jesus loved walked away from Him. Jesus was abandoned by many people who had been close to Him.
 - Jesus felt the pain of seeing His loved ones in pain. In the last moments before He took His last breath, Jesus saw His own mother in the crowd, who was unable to do anything except watch in horror.

- Jesus felt the pain of being misunderstood. Jesus was put to death by religious leaders, soldiers, and everyday people who saw Him as a criminal, blasphemer, or violent rebel. But in reality, Jesus was God Himself, on a mission to love and rescue each of them.
- So no, God isn't incapable of understanding our pain. Jesus (who is God) understands pain very well.

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 felt like someone didn't understand the pain you were going through? What happened?**
 - ☆ **On a scale of 1-5, how confident are you that Jesus understands what you're going through?**
 - **Why do you think it's important for us to know Jesus understands our pain?**

SCRIPTURE | Philippians 3:10-14

- In the book of Philippians, the apostle Paul (one of the earliest leaders in the early Church) wrote a letter to some of the early Jesus-followers. He had this to say about the pain Jesus suffered . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Philippians 3:10-14.
- Jesus showed us God understands our pain. But then Paul said he was trying to better understand Jesus' pain too.
 - Paul said he wanted to know and experience the power of Jesus' resurrection.
 - Easter Sunday (the day we celebrate Jesus rising from the dead) is a day every followers of Jesus loves to celebrate — and for good reason! Jesus' life is the reason we can have life too!
 - Paul was saying he wanted to have a new kind of life through the power of Jesus, both now and for eternity.
 - But Paul said he wanted to experience the pain of Jesus' suffering too. So does that mean Paul just wanted to sit and think about Jesus' death until he felt more sad? Does it mean he wanted to literally reenact the day Jesus went to the cross? Not necessarily.
 - Paul was saying he would put to death his old life in order to live his new life in Jesus. Just like Jesus died, Paul wanted to see his old life of sin die too.
 - And no matter what, Paul said he would keep moving forward, focusing on a hopeful future because of Jesus and forgetting his painful and sinful past.
- Through His death and resurrection from the dead, Jesus gave us the chance to be rescued from sin and experience a new and abundant life with Him. But that new life also involves death — Jesus' death, as well as the death of our sins.
- When Jesus died, He showed us He understands our pain. Now we're invited to understand Jesus pain too.

- When we're experiencing pain, Jesus reminds us He understands what we're going through because He suffered too.
- When we remember how Jesus experienced pain, we are reminded of how much God gave in order to rescue us from sin.
- I know Easter is usually about celebrations and happiness, but before Easter Sunday came Good Friday, where Jesus suffered and died to make a way for us to be rescued from pain that comes from sin and death. Easter is a reminder that we don't follow a God who can't understand us when we're hurting. We follow a Savior who is right there with us when we're hurting, because **Jesus understands our pain.**

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

JESUS KNOWS OUR PAIN

- So today, what kind of pain are you feeling?
 - **PHYSICAL PAIN:** Can you relate to any of the ways Jesus was physically harmed by others? Or maybe you have an illness, injury, or disability that causes you pain. Jesus knows what it's like to experience physical pain.
 - **EMOTIONAL PAIN:** If you've ever felt left out, forgotten, betrayed, or unwanted, Jesus has been there too. Sometimes people are cruel on purpose and sometimes life is just really difficult and complicated. Sometimes people we love are hurting and we feel like there's nothing we can do to fix it. No matter why you're hurting, Jesus knows what it's like to experience emotional pain too.
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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.*
 - **Why do you think it's important for us to understand the pain Jesus went through?**
 - ☆ **When you think about the different kinds of pain Jesus felt, what do you and He have in common?**
 - ☆ **Read Romans 6:6-7. What do you think it means to be set free from sin? How does it happen?**

MUSIC | “Another in the Fire” (Hillsong United)

- Sometimes the best thing in the midst of our toughest, most painful moments is to be reminded we aren't alone. That's what Jesus did for us. As we sing this song, here's what I want you to think about . . .
 - “What is painful in my life right now?”
 - “How do I need Jesus to help me find healing from that pain?”
 - “How can I better understand the pain Jesus experienced?”
 - “In my life, what needs to die so I can find new life in Jesus?”
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the song “Another in the Fire” (Hillsong United), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here's [a link to preview the song](#) for your personal use.*

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.*
 - **Are you hurting in any way right now (physically, emotionally, or spiritually)? Does anyone want to share more about what you're going through?**
 - **If it's true Jesus understands what you're going through, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

PRAYER | A Prayer for Each Other's Pain

- Jesus understands our pain, but sometimes in order to really believe that, we need to meet another person who at least tries to understand our pain. Maybe there's a way for you to do that for someone else.
- When you become aware of someone else's pain . . .
 - **LOOK TO JESUS:** In Jesus, we have a trailblazer whose paths we can follow. Jesus willingly chose to enter into our pain in order to help us find a way out. We don't need to literally die for each other in order to do that, but we can choose to get involved in each other's lives when things get painful.
 - **PRESS ON TOGETHER:** The apostle Paul talked about pressing on in his faith. But when life is painful, that can be difficult to do alone. We need each other when life is painful and we need each other to help us put an end to our old sinful lives. We can't do it alone.
 - **PRAY WITH EACH OTHER:** When life is painful or we're struggling to move on from a sin that's controlling us, it can feel like we're the only one fighting that battle. But just like Jesus stands with us in our pain, we can stand with each other in prayer.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have your students circle up with one or two people sitting beside them. Encourage each person to pray for one thing that has brought pain to them or someone they know. Have each person end their prayer with, “God, this is my prayer.” Then, have the rest of the group respond with, “God, this is our prayer,” to show they understand their pain.*
- I don't know what kind of pain you're familiar with right now, but whether it's physical, emotional, or spiritual pain, you are not in this alone. **Jesus understands your pain.** This week, I hope that knowledge motivates you to spend more time with Him. That's why He came to earth in the first place — to be close with you.

WEEK 3 SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus shows us love.

THE BIBLE

Luke 23:32-56; Philippians 2:5-11;
Ephesians 2:8-9

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | A Suspicious Easter Exchange

- Welcome back to *Break Trail*, where we've been on a journey toward Easter – and it's almost here! Let's get into the Easter spirit with a little Easter exchange.
- In this game, you'll need to figure out who our "suspicious" Aces are, while also completing your mission objectives.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need a [deck of playing cards](#), a bunch of Easter candy, and at least 12 Easter baskets. Before your program, fill each basket with candy, making sure there is enough for every student to have at least one piece, and remove the Ace cards from your deck. To play, have every student draw a card and keep it a secret – their card will tell them their objective for the game. When everyone has a card, give them their objectives from the list below and give them two minutes to play. To make it more competitive, have them tally each time they complete their objective and give an extra prize to the person with the highest tally. At the end of two minutes, you'll reveal that you "forgot" to put the Aces in the deck – oops! Here are the game objectives . . .*
 - **ACES:** *Try to make it through the entire game without making eye contact with anyone.*
 - **CARDS 2-6:** *Walk around the room and compliment every person you make eye contact with. You can only say nice things!*
 - **CARDS 7-10:** *Walk around the room and make up an original secret handshake with every person you make eye contact with.*
 - **FACE CARDS (JACK, QUEEN, OR KING):** *Receive a basket of candy, but share one piece with everyone you make eye contact with.*

- Weird – I don't know how this happened, but it looks like there were never any Aces in that deck to begin with. Oops! But if we're looking on the bright side, instead of the original game I had in mind, we got to enjoy a few minutes of pure kindness and candy. Not a bad situation!

QUESTION | "Who is the kindest person you know?"

- Obviously, I kind of tricked you all into being super nice to each other for a few minutes, but do you know any people who are just genuinely kind? Like, all the time?
- **Who is the kindest person you know? What makes them so kind?**

STORY | Talk about the kindest person you know.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about someone you know who is consistently kind. Share why they are so consistently kind. Then focus on one specific way they've been kind to you.*
- Sometimes you meet someone who's just genuinely kind, right? If you're anything like me, I love super-kind people, but they also make me think, "Hmm . . . I thought I was a pretty good person, but compared to them, I'm the worst!"

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

QUESTION | "What does it mean to be a good or bad person?"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond to each of the questions below.*
 - **In your opinion, what does it mean to be a "good" person?**
 - **What does it mean to be a "bad" person?**
 - **How would you describe most people you know? "Good," "bad," or somewhere in between?**
- Most of the time, most of us want to be "good" people. We want to feel good about who we are and want other people to agree with us! But sometimes we don't feel like good people. Sometimes . . .
 - We don't tell the whole truth.
 - We let our tempers or attitudes get the best of us.
 - We take risks that hurt someone else.
 - We try to do something nice for someone but it backfires.
 - We miss a chance to show up for someone who needed you because you were busy, tired, or distracted.
- We want to be "good," but it's not always easy. So if you've worried your mistakes make you a "bad" person, a failure, or a disappointment to God, I want to talk about Good Friday.

JESUS, OUR TRAILBLAZER

- For the last couple of weeks, we've been making a journey toward Jesus by talking about all the ways that Jesus blazed new trails for us through His life, death, and resurrection.

- Like we said last week, there's a hiking term called "breaking trail." It's what you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate.
- When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind. It's so much easier to walk in the tracks of someone else who has already "broken" the trail.
- Obviously, we're not going on a literal hike with Jesus, but as we've seen, Jesus broke new trails for us when it comes to . . .
 - Understanding God.
 - Being close with God.
 - Loving others like God loves us.
- So far, we've seen two ways Jesus blazed new trails for us. Through His example, Jesus showed us His way isn't the way most people would choose — it's better.
 - When two of His best friends betrayed Him, Jesus showed them (and us) that He never gives up on us.
 - When He suffered physically and emotionally, Jesus showed us He understands our pain.
 - Today we're going to see a third way Jesus blazed a new trail for us. This time, Jesus set yet another new standard for loving God and others.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 23:32-43

- In case you haven't noticed, we've been following Jesus' Easter journey in chronological order.
 - In Week 1, we saw Jesus betrayed by His friends on the night of His arrest.
 - In Week 2, we saw how Jesus was beaten, tortured, and mocked on His way to the cross.
 - This week, we find Jesus on the cross in the last moments before His death.
- This is the day we call Good Friday. It's the day, 2,000 years ago, when Jesus, an innocent man, hung dying between two criminals. Most people gathered that day to watch the execution saw three "bad" guys, all deserving of death. But Jesus showed us something new.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 23:32-43.*
- While Jesus was in His last moments on the cross, He chose to spend some of His final breaths communicating with one of the men dying alongside Him.
 - Jesus would have had every right to focus on Himself in that moment. The pain He was experiencing would have been excruciating.
 - But instead, Jesus chose to show kindness to the man suffering beside Him. He invited a convicted criminal to join Him in the afterlife, where there would be no more suffering.
- This "bad" man was resigned to his fate. He knew he had made mistakes and believed he deserved death for his crimes. He didn't even ask Jesus to give him anything — he just asked that Jesus would remember him. So when Jesus went further than the man had requested and promised he would be with Jesus in paradise, Jesus' kindness was twofold:
 - Jesus' kindness extended into eternity with His gift of eternal life.
 - But Jesus' kindness also comforted a dying man in the last moments of his life.

- Even while He was suffering, Jesus was thinking of people like you and me. If there was ever a time when we all could've forgiven Jesus for focusing on the pain, the suffering, and the loss that was unbelievably heavy in this moment, it was this moment. But Jesus, even in this painful, broken place, chose to show love to someone who didn't deserve it.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 23:32-43

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 23:44-55.*
- Immediately after Jesus died, the crowd realized the weight of what they had done. They finally understood they had killed an innocent man – so they went home.
- But if it was so obvious Jesus was exactly who He said He was, why didn't these people realize it before they killed Him?

SCRIPTURE | Philippians 2:5-8

- To answer that question, Paul, the same early church leader we talked about last week, might tell you this . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Philippians 2:5-8.*
- Jesus could have come to earth in a display of power and authority and let everyone know exactly who He was. But He didn't. Instead, Jesus chose . . .
 - Humility over power.
 - Sacrifice over selfishness.
 - Kindness over control.
 - In His life and death, Jesus consistently chose us over Himself. That's what love looks like.
- When Jesus looked at one of those "bad" guys dying alongside Him . . .
 - He didn't shame him
 - He didn't reject him.
 - He didn't tell him it was too late.
 - Jesus welcomed and embraced him with love.
- Like that criminal, you and I have done a lot of things that break God's heart. But just like that man discovered, **Jesus shows us love** when He looks at us too.

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

IMAGE | Florence Nightingale

- Everything Jesus did was done out of love for people like you and me. But this moment on the cross shows a very specific kind of love. It shows us Jesus' love is . . .
 - Compassionate.
 - Gentle.
 - Kind.
 - Unconditional.

- Jesus doesn't just love us in theory – He loves us personally. He loves us in a way that doesn't just give us hope for life after death, but cares for us in the here and now.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you teach, show an image of Florence Nightingale [like this one](#) on screen.*
- Each week, we've been talking not only about how Jesus has blazed trails for us, but about how ordinary people have been trailblazers as well. One trailblazer I want to introduce you to is Florence Nightingale.
 - Florence lived about two hundred years ago in England, during the days of the Crimean War.
 - When Florence was 30 years old, she wrote in a letter to her sister, "God called me in the morning and asked me would I do good for Him alone, without reputation." Shortly afterward, she saw the way a Christian community in Germany was caring for the sick and her life changed forever.
 - During the Crimean War, Florence heard about the many wounded soldiers suffering and dying from their injuries without care. Florence made it her mission to show those soldiers the love and compassion of Jesus by caring for their physical needs.
- But Florence didn't just show up on the front lines to help one or two people personally. She did so much more. Florence . . .
 - Contacted government officials to help find a solution.
 - Designed new ways of caring for the sick and wounded.
 - Identified new medical and hygiene practices that saved lives.
 - Managed and trained nurses wherever she went.
 - Laid the foundation for medical care we still use today all over the world.
- A newspaper once said of Florence, "She is a 'ministering angel,' without any exaggeration in these hospitals." If we were to follow Florence's lead and "do good for [God] alone, without reputation," what would that look like?
- This is the kind of thing that can happen when you experience the compassionate love of Jesus for yourself. It changes you – and then it compels you to share that same love with others.
 - Jesus compassionately cared for the criminal hanging next to Him. By showing him love, Jesus didn't just care for him in eternity – He cared for him while he was alive and hurting.
 - In the same way, Florence compassionately cared for the sick, wounded, and dying as a response to the love God had shown her. She didn't just care for those people's souls, but for their bodies too.
- The kind of love Jesus demonstrated (and that Florence imitated) wasn't conditional. It wasn't reserved only for people who were "good," or deserving, or worth it. God's love is available to all of us.

REFLECTION | Responding to Jesus' Love

- So what about us? How do you need to respond to the love Jesus has shown you today?
 - Do you need to receive His love for the first time, like the man who died beside Him?
 - Do you need to come back to His love after drifting away from Him?
 - How can you show the compassionate love of Jesus to others, even if you're not sure they deserve it?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, print and cut the handout provided in your Week 3 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen, and give students a few moments to write and reflect.

MUSIC | “As I Am (Acoustic)” (Hillsong Young & Free)

- Jesus broke a new trail for us by modeling a love that . . .
 - Is given freely and without condition.
 - Says everyone is loved, no matter what.
 - Secures our eternity after this life is over.
 - And compassionately cares for us right here and now.
- We’re going to close by singing a song of worship and thanks for God’s compassionate love for us when we don’t deserve it. How will you respond to Jesus loving you just as you are?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play the song “As I Am (Acoustic)” (Hillsong Young & Free), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here’s [a link to preview the song](#) for your personal use.
- Did you hear that? “All my regrets and my failures — all of my wrongs have been left at the cross. Now all that remains is the Father’s love.”
- We’re all a mess. None of us are as good as we wish we could be. But even so, **Jesus shows us love** that is kind, compassionate, and gracious. And in His name, we can reflect that same love to others.

RESPONSE | The Break Trail Experience

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you haven’t used it already, this is a great time to use your discipleship activity, *The Break Trail Experience*, from the Discipleship section of your downloads. This *Stations of the Cross* experience can be done in one night for a special Good Friday event, or over the course of several weeks, or even as a social media campaign in the week leading up to Easter.

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus shows us love.

THE BIBLE

Luke 23:32-56; Philippians 2:5-11;
Ephesians 2:8-9

- **Who is the best person you know? What makes them so great?**
- **In your opinion, what does it mean to be a "good" person? What about a "bad" person?**
- **On a scale of 1-5, how good of a person do you think you are? Explain!**
- **Do you think there's anyone so bad God shouldn't forgive them? Why or why not?**
- **What can we learn about Jesus from His interactions with the other two men being crucified?**
- **Without using the word "love," explain how Jesus treated the man who was dying beside him.**
- **Read Ephesians 2:8-9. What does this passage tell us about ourselves? What does it tell us about God?**
- **Has your life ever been changed by God's compassionate love for you? If so, how?**
- **God's love is unconditional, but do you think that means we should always show people love unconditionally? Why or why not?**
- **If it's true Jesus shows us love, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

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- **Read Ephesians 2:8-9. What does this passage tell us about ourselves? What does it tell us about God?**
- **Has your life ever been changed by God's compassionate love for you? If so, how?**
- **If it's true Jesus shows us love, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

WEEK 3 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus shows us love.

THE BIBLE

Luke 23:32-56; Philippians 2:5-11;
Ephesians 2:8-9

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | A Suspicious Easter Exchange

- Welcome back to *Break Trail*, where we've been on a journey toward Easter – and it's almost here! Let's get into the Easter spirit with a little Easter exchange.
- In this game, you'll need to figure out who our "suspicious" Aces are, while also completing your mission objectives.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need a [deck of playing cards](#), a bunch of Easter candy, and at least 12 Easter baskets. Before your program, fill each basket with candy, making sure there is enough for every student to have at least one piece, and remove the Ace cards from your deck. To play, have every student draw a card and keep it a secret – their card will tell them their objective for the game. When everyone has a card, give them their objectives from the list below and give them two minutes to play. To make it more competitive, have them tally each time they complete their objective and give an extra prize to the person with the highest tally. At the end of two minutes, you'll reveal that you "forgot" to put the Aces in the deck – oops! Here are the game objectives . . .*
 - **ACES:** *Try to make it through the entire game without making eye contact with anyone.*
 - **CARDS 2-6:** *Walk around the room and compliment every person you make eye contact with. You can only say nice things!*
 - **CARDS 7-10:** *Walk around the room and make up an original secret handshake with every person you make eye contact with.*
 - **FACE CARDS (JACK, QUEEN, OR KING):** *Receive a basket of candy, but share one piece with everyone you make eye contact with.*

- Weird – I don't know how this happened, but it looks like there were never any Aces in that deck to begin with. Oops! But if we're looking on the bright side, instead of the original game I had in mind, we got to enjoy a few minutes of pure kindness and candy. Not a bad situation!

QUESTION | "Who is the kindest person you know?"

- Obviously, I kind of tricked you all into being super nice to each other for a few minutes, but do you know any people who are just genuinely kind? Like, all the time?
- **Who is the kindest person you know? What makes them so kind?**

STORY | Talk about the kindest person you know.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about someone you know who is consistently kind. Share why they are so consistently kind. Then focus on one specific way they've been kind to you.
- Sometimes you meet someone who's just genuinely kind, right? If you're anything like me, I love super-kind people, but they also make me think, "Hmm . . . I thought I was a pretty good person, but compared to them, I'm the worst!"

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. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - **Who is the best person you know? What makes them so great?**
 - **In your opinion, what does it mean to be a "good" person? What about a "bad" person?**

QUESTION | "What does it mean to be a good or bad person?"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond to each of the questions below.
 - **In your opinion, what does it mean to be a "good" person?**
 - **What does it mean to be a "bad" person?**
 - **How would you describe most people you know? "Good," "bad," or somewhere in between?**
- Most of the time, most of us want to be "good" people. We want to feel good about who we are and want other people to agree with us! But sometimes we don't feel like good people. Sometimes . . .
 - We don't tell the whole truth.
 - We let our tempers or attitudes get the best of us.
 - We take risks that hurt someone else.
 - We try to do something nice for someone but it backfires.

- We miss a chance to show up for someone who needed you because you were busy, tired, or distracted.
- We want to be “good,” but it’s not always easy. So if you’ve worried your mistakes make you a “bad” person, a failure, or a disappointment to God, I want to talk about Good Friday.

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.
 - **On a scale of 1-5, how good of a person do you think you are? Explain!**
 - ★ **Do you think there’s anyone so bad God shouldn’t forgive them? Why or why not?**

JESUS, OUR TRAILBLAZER

- For the last couple of weeks, we’ve been making a journey toward Jesus by talking about all the ways that Jesus blazed new trails for us through His life, death, and resurrection.
 - Like we said last week, there’s a hiking term called “breaking trail.” It’s what you do when you encounter deep snow that’s tough to navigate.
 - When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind. It’s so much easier to walk in the tracks of someone else who has already “broken” the trail.
- Obviously, we’re not going on a literal hike with Jesus, but as we’ve seen, Jesus broke new trails for us when it comes to . . .
 - Understanding God.
 - Being close with God.
 - Loving others like God loves us.
- So far, we’ve seen two ways Jesus blazed new trails for us. Through His example, Jesus showed us His way isn’t the way most people would choose – it’s better.
 - When two of His best friends betrayed Him, Jesus showed them (and us) that He never gives up on us.
 - When He suffered physically and emotionally, Jesus showed us He understands our pain.
 - Today we’re going to see a third way Jesus blazed a new trail for us. This time, Jesus set yet another new standard for loving God and others.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 23:32-43

- In case you haven’t noticed, we’ve been following Jesus’ Easter journey in chronological order.
 - In Week 1, we saw Jesus betrayed by His friends on the night of His arrest.
 - In Week 2, we saw how Jesus was beaten, tortured, and mocked on His way to the cross.
 - This week, we find Jesus on the cross in the last moments before His death.
- This is the day we call Good Friday. It’s the day, 2,000 years ago, when Jesus, an innocent man, hung dying between two criminals. Most people gathered that day to watch the execution saw three “bad” guys, all deserving of death. But Jesus showed us something new.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 23:32-43.*
- While Jesus was in His last moments on the cross, He chose to spend some of His final breaths communicating with one of the men dying alongside Him.
 - Jesus would have had every right to focus on Himself in that moment. The pain He was experiencing would have been excruciating.
 - But instead, Jesus chose to show kindness to the man suffering beside Him. He invited a convicted criminal to join Him in the afterlife, where there would be no more suffering.
- This “bad” man was resigned to his fate. He knew he had made mistakes and believed he deserved death for his crimes. He didn’t even ask Jesus to give him anything – he just asked that Jesus would remember him. So when Jesus went further than the man had requested and promised he would be with Jesus in paradise, Jesus’ kindness was twofold:
 - Jesus’ kindness extended into eternity with His gift of eternal life.
 - But Jesus’ kindness also comforted a dying man in the last moments of his life.
- Even while He was suffering, Jesus was thinking of people like you and me. If there was ever a time when we all could’ve forgiven Jesus for focusing on the pain, the suffering, and the loss that was unbelievably heavy in this moment, it was this moment. But Jesus, even in this painful, broken place, chose to show love to someone who didn’t deserve 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.*
 - ✳ **What can we learn about Jesus from His interactions with the other two men being crucified?**
 - ✳ **Without using the word “love,” explain how Jesus treated the man who was dying beside him.**

SCRIPTURE | Luke 23:32-43

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 23:44-55.*
- Immediately after Jesus died, the crowd realized the weight of what they had done. They finally understood they had killed an innocent man – so they went home.
- But if it was so obvious Jesus was exactly who He said He was, why didn’t these people realize it before they killed Him?

SCRIPTURE | Philippians 2:5-8

- To answer that question, Paul, the same early church leader we talked about last week, might tell you this . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Philippians 2:5-8.*
- Jesus could have come to earth in a display of power and authority and let everyone know exactly who He was. But He didn’t. Instead, Jesus chose . . .

- Humility over power.
- Sacrifice over selfishness.
- Kindness over control.
- In His life and death, Jesus consistently chose us over Himself. That's what love looks like.
- When Jesus looked at one of those "bad" guys dying alongside Him . . .
 - He didn't shame him
 - He didn't reject him.
 - He didn't tell him it was too late.
 - Jesus welcomed and embraced him with love.
- Like that criminal, you and I have done a lot of things that break God's heart. But just like that man discovered, **Jesus shows us love** when He looks at us too.

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.*
 - **Read Ephesians 2:8-9. What does this passage tell us about ourselves? What does it tell us about God?**
 - **Has your life ever been changed by God's compassionate love for you? If so, how?**

IMAGE | Florence Nightingale

- Everything Jesus did was done out of love for people like you and me. But this moment on the cross shows a very specific kind of love. It shows us Jesus' love is . . .
 - Compassionate.
 - Gentle.
 - Kind.
 - Unconditional.
- Jesus doesn't just love us in theory — He loves us personally. He loves us in a way that doesn't just give us hope for life after death, but cares for us in the here and now.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you teach, show an image of Florence Nightingale [like this one](#) on screen.*
- Each week, we've been talking not only about how Jesus has blazed trails for us, but about how ordinary people have been trailblazers as well. One trailblazer I want to introduce you to is Florence Nightingale.
 - Florence lived about two hundred years ago in England, during the days of the Crimean War.
 - When Florence was 30 years old, she wrote in a letter to her sister, "God called me in the morning and asked me would I do good for Him alone, without reputation." Shortly afterward, she saw the way a Christian community in Germany was caring for the sick and her life changed forever.

- During the Crimean War, Florence heard about the many wounded soldiers suffering and dying from their injuries without care. Florence made it her mission to show those soldiers the love and compassion of Jesus by caring for their physical needs.
- But Florence didn't just show up on the front lines to help one or two people personally. She did so much more. Florence . . .
 - Contacted government officials to help find a solution.
 - Designed new ways of caring for the sick and wounded.
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 - Laid the foundation for medical care we still use today all over the world.
- A newspaper once said of Florence, "She is a 'ministering angel,' without any exaggeration in these hospitals." If we were to follow Florence's lead and "do good for [God] alone, without reputation," what would that look like?
- This is the kind of thing that can happen when you experience the compassionate love of Jesus for yourself. It changes you — and then it compels you to share that same love with others.
 - Jesus compassionately cared for the criminal hanging next to Him. By showing him love, Jesus didn't just care for him in eternity — He cared for him while he was alive and hurting.
 - In the same way, Florence compassionately cared for the sick, wounded, and dying as a response to the love God had shown her. She didn't just care for those people's souls, but for their bodies too.
- The kind of love Jesus demonstrated (and that Florence imitated) wasn't conditional. It wasn't reserved only for people who were "good," or deserving, or worth it. God's love is available to all of us.

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.*
 - ✪ **God's love is unconditional, but do you think that means we should always show people love unconditionally? Why or why not?**
 - **If it's true Jesus shows us love, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

REFLECTION | Responding to Jesus' Love

- So what about us? How do you need to respond to the love Jesus has shown you today?
 - Do you need to receive His love for the first time, like the man who died beside Him?
 - Do you need to come back to His love after drifting away from Him?
 - How can you show the compassionate love of Jesus to others, even if you're not sure they deserve it?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the handout provided in your Week 3 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen, and give students a few moments to write and reflect.*

MUSIC | “As I Am (Acoustic)” (Hillsong Young & Free)

- Jesus broke a new trail for us by modeling a love that . . .
 - Is given freely and without condition.
 - Says everyone is loved, no matter what.
 - Secures our eternity after this life is over.
 - And compassionately cares for us right here and now.
- We’re going to close by singing a song of worship and thanks for God’s compassionate love for us when we don’t deserve it. How will you respond to Jesus loving you just as you are?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the song “As I Am (Acoustic)” (Hillsong Young & Free), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here’s [a link to preview the song](#) for your personal use.*
- Did you hear that? “All my regrets and my failures — all of my wrongs have been left at the cross. Now all that remains is the Father’s love.”
- We’re all a mess. None of us are as good as we wish we could be. But even so, **Jesus shows us love** that is kind, compassionate, and gracious. And in His name, we can reflect that same love to others.

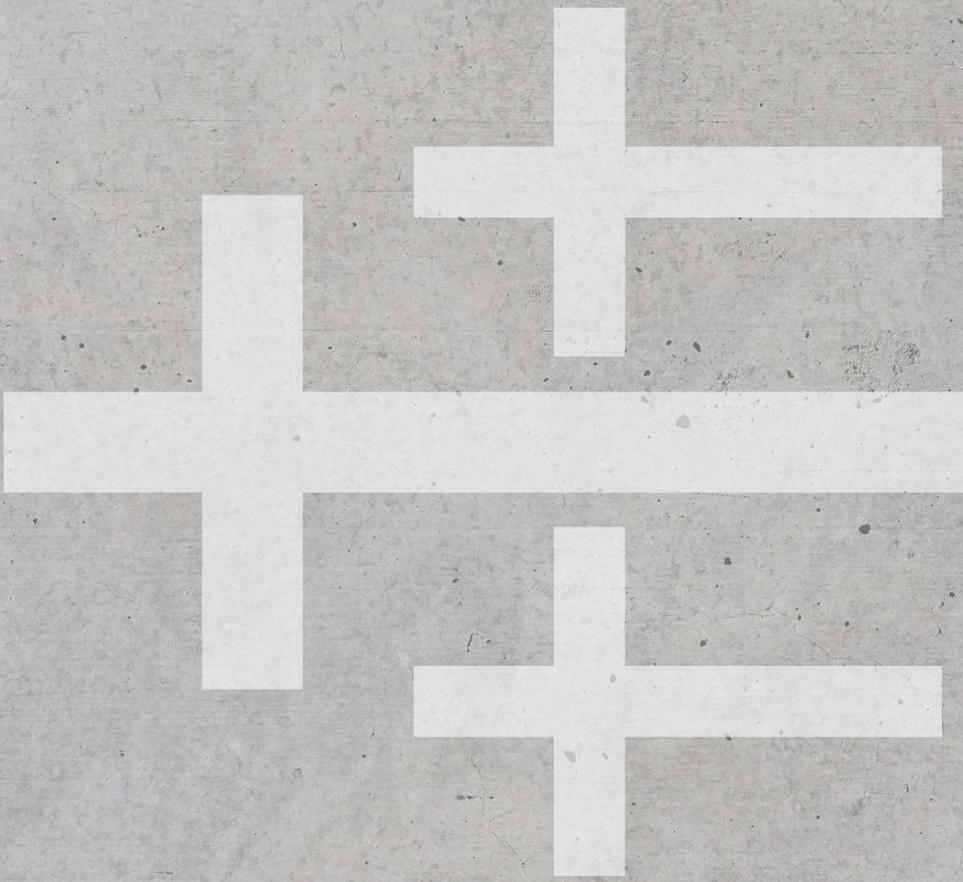
RESPONSE | The Break Trail Experience

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you haven’t used it already, this is a great time to use your discipleship activity, The Break Trail Experience, from the Discipleship section of your downloads. This Stations of the Cross experience can be done in one night for a special Good Friday event, or over the course of several weeks, or even as a social media campaign in the week leading up to Easter.*

JESUS SHOWS US LOVE.



JESUS SHOWS US LOVE.



WEEK 4 SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus is alive.

THE BIBLE

Luke 24:1-12; I Corinthians 15:21-26;
Romans 7:21-25

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

QUESTION | "Is anyone here a hiker?"

- Welcome back to *Break Trail!* If you haven't been here for a few weeks and you're wondering what "break trail" means, it has to do with hiking. **Is anyone here a hiker?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have students raise their hands to indicate whether or not they like to hike. Follow up with some of the students who responded by asking them questions like . . .*
 - **Where do you like to hike?**
 - **How often do you hike?**
 - **Has anything interesting ever happened to you on a hike?**

IMAGES | It's Alive!

- When you're out in nature, it's pretty common to be taken by surprise by a wild creature or two. Maybe . . .
 - A bird dive-bombs you and steals your snacks.
 - You get stalked by a bobcat.
 - You brush a leaf off your arm and realize it's a giant spider.
 - A snake interrupts your casual stroll.
- When you're out in nature, you have to stay aware of the many living things around you. A lot of animals have a natural ability to blend into their surroundings for protection, so they're hard to spot.
- But even indoor animals have some camouflage abilities, like . . .

- Is it a poodle or fried chicken?
- Is it a husky or a bagel?
- Is it a parrot or some guacamole?
- Is it a kitten or a caramel sundae?
- Is it a chihuahua or a blueberry muffin?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, prepare the images provided in your Week 4 folder. Show them on screen one at a time. If you'd like to turn this into a game, show the blurred versions of each picture first and have students guess which box is which. Otherwise, just show the unblurred versions of the images.*

STORY | Talk about a time you were surprised something was alive.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or have a volunteer or student tell a story) about a time when you were surprised something was alive when you thought it was inanimate. You might talk about the time what you thought was a stray hair was actually a bug on your face, or when the thing you thought was a pillow was actually your dog, or when you were singing at an embarrassing volume because you thought you were alone, only to find out that lump of pillows on the sofa was actually your roommate.*
- Considering it's Easter, you might know where I'm going with this whole "being surprised something was alive" thing. For the last few weeks, we've been following Jesus' journey to the cross and beyond.
 - In Week 1, we saw Jesus betrayed by His friends on the night of His arrest.
 - In Week 2, we saw how Jesus was beaten, tortured, and mocked on His way to the cross.
 - In Week 3, we found Jesus on the cross in the last moments before His death.
 - And today, in celebration of Easter Sunday, we're going to talk about what happened next.

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

STORY | Talk about a time you experienced a hopeless situation.

- I'm guessing you know what happened after Jesus was killed. It's what Easter Sunday (and our entire faith in Jesus) is all about. Three days after Jesus died, He rose from the dead!
 - But before we get there, I want us to think about what it must have been like for Jesus' friends and followers before they heard the good news of Jesus' resurrection.
 - Try not to jump ahead to the celebration just yet. Instead, see if you can imagine what it must have been like to be one of Jesus' followers. Your leader (the one you thought was the Son of God) is dead. Your own life is danger too. Your movement seems to be over. Everything that had given you hope and purpose just a few days earlier now seems like a lost cause.
 - If you had been there you would probably have been feeling pretty hopeless. You probably would have been wondering, "Will things ever get better?"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or have a volunteer or student tell a story) about a time when you experienced what you thought was a hopeless situation. Choose a story that ultimately has a happy ending, but don't share the conclusion just yet – you'll come back to this story. For now, leave everyone wondering if or how this could possibly turn out well.*
- You may not have the same story that I have, but you probably have a similar story of a moment when you just couldn't see how your situation could work out for the best.
- In our lowest and most hopeless moments, it often seems impossible to imagine a find a way out of our hopeless stories. But Jesus is in the business of breaking new trails no one else could. Let's see how Jesus broke trail on the path to hope.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 24:1-12

- On our last stop on this journey toward Easter, we left with Jesus' body being taken down from the cross and prepared for burial, while his close friends and family mourned their loss.
 - In Jewish culture, it was customary when someone died to visit their tomb on the third day. During that visit, friends and family would cover their loved one's body with oils and spices to honor the dead and limit the odor a dead body would give off.
 - Three women who had been close followers and friends of Jesus were the ones who got up early on that third day to go and treat the body of Jesus. All things considered, these women expected to go Jesus' tomb and find Him . . . well, *dead*.
 - This was a sad, somber, and overall hopeless situation. As far as they know, all that was left to do was grieve and mourn what had been lost.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 24:1-12.*
- The women went to the tomb, expecting to see Jesus' body there. But they didn't. Instead, two men appeared (probably angels) to tell the women the person they were looking for wasn't dead at all. He was alive!
 - Can you imagine the shock these women must have experienced? Because this announcement does not make sense. They saw Jesus die. They saw His body. They knew He was buried. But now He's not?
 - When they started thinking through all the things Jesus had said that once seemed so cryptic, things began to make sense for the first time. Jesus really *was* alive – and this shouldn't have been a surprise. Jesus had been hinting at this all along!
 - The women ran to the rest of the disciples to tell them Jesus was alive! But of course, they found it hard to believe.
 - Even Peter, who was usually the first to get excited, had to go to the tomb and see for himself. Peter saw the empty tomb, but he still didn't believe it. Luke told us Peter walked away, in awe, wondering what was going on.
- Can you blame Jesus' followers for their confusion and hesitation? The idea that Jesus had risen from the dead was so fantastic and unbelievable. It makes sense why they had trouble grasping it.

IMAGES | The Chilean Mine Collapse

- In 2010, there was a disaster in the country of Chile. Thirty-three miners were at work underground, just like they did every day, when the ground shifted and a rock bigger than a skyscraper fell into the only path that existed for the miners to exit the mine.
 - These men were completely trapped below ground. In the dark. With limited food and supplies. And dwindling oxygen. If ever there was a moment that felt helpless, it would've been this one.
 - However, after almost 70 days of planning, innovating, failing, succeeding, and a whole lot of drilling, an international team of miners and scientists had a breakthrough.
 - They drilled a hole that reached deep into the earth, to the place where the miners were stuck, and then built an extraction tube to rescue them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As you teach, show a few images of the Chilean mine rescue, like [this one](#) of the extraction tube that was built for this escape plan or [this one](#) of one of the men after his rescue.
- This device could only pull up one of the miners at a time and it took roughly 15 minutes to slowly climb all the way to the surface. A man named Florencio Ávalos was the first to make the trip.
 - No one was confident he could survive or that it would work. No one had ever built a device like this before. Certainly, no one had ever tested it to see if it could work.
 - Thirty-three families, friends, scientists, and media outlets from all over the world watched as Florencio emerged from the extraction device. Safe. Alive.
 - After Florencio successfully broke this trail, every single one of those 33 miners followed in his footsteps and took their trips to the surface too.
- Florencio blazed a trail for his fellow miners. It was a trail that led from death to life, if only they were willing to follow his lead.

SCRIPTURE | I Corinthians 15:21-26

- It's not a perfect analogy, but in some ways, Jesus' resurrection was similar to that first trip taken by Florencio. When Jesus rose from the dead, He showed all of us the way to finding new life too.
- Here's how the apostle Paul talks about it . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read I Corinthians 15:21-26.
- When Paul says we can be made alive again in Jesus, he means two things:
 - When we die, we don't stay dead. Just like Jesus, we can rise again and live an eternal life with God.
 - But with Jesus, we can also find new life right here and right now. The things in our lives or hearts that seem dead don't have to stay that way.
- At the core of our faith is the belief that God can . . .
 - Turn death into life.
 - Redeem anything that's gone wrong.
 - Resurrect anyone and anything.
- Seeing dead things come back to life is kind of what following Jesus is all about. **Jesus is alive.** And with Jesus, so are we.

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

STORY | Finish talking about your hopeless situation.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Wrap up your story from earlier. How God bring your hopeless situation back to life?*
- With God, any hopeless situation can turn for the better. Anything dead can come back to life. With Jesus, there truly is no such thing as hopelessness.

VIDEO | A Clip from a Video about Animals in States of Torpor

- With Jesus, I sometimes feel a little bit like this mouse.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (0:00-0:40, 1:15-1:25, 2:30-2:40) of a man reviving a mouse from a state of torpor. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- Okay, this little mouse is super cute and it's totally acceptable if you giggled with glee when he started hopping around again.
 - This little guy had been in a hopeless situation. He was stuck in a trench, powerless to free himself, unless someone bigger and more powerful came to rescue him.
 - Honestly, this video really resonates with me. Not just because we're both adorable and like to take naps, but I know what it's like to get stuck in a state of torpor.

PRAYER | Hoping for New Life

- What about you? Is there part of your life where you've lost hope?
 - **YOUR FAITH:** Has it been a while since you really gave your faith a chance? Maybe you haven't spent much time with Jesus. Maybe it feels like that part of you is in the past or was never real to begin with. Maybe you've never before made a decision to follow Jesus, but you think you might want to start today.
 - **YOUR DREAMS:** Do you feel like all of your hopes and plans are falling apart? Maybe it seems like it's time to give up and stop trying.
 - **YOUR WORLD:** You may have been fighting for a long time now to try and see things change in our city or around the world. You see brokenness and want to see change, but nothing ever seems to get better.
 - **YOUR RELATIONSHIPS:** Maybe there is someone you love and have been praying for, but you're beginning to lose hope they'll ever overcome the problem they are facing.
- It's not easy to hold out hope when things seem so dark. Jesus is alive, but there was a time when Jesus was truly dead and His followers' faith was still shaken to its core.
- I don't know what the future holds, but I believe Jesus can do things none of us would expect. There is no prayer too big for the One who died and decided not to stay dead.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Invite students to spend a moment asking Jesus to bring life into their situations that seem dead. As they pray, begin to play some music quietly in preparation for a time of worship.*

MUSIC | Easter Worship

- There are things in our life that we cannot bring life to on our own, but thanks to Jesus, nothing has to remain dead, lost, or hopeless.
 - Not us.
 - Not our faith.
 - Not our dreams.
 - Not our world.
 - Not the people we love.
- Yes, Jesus died, but that's not the end of the story. Jesus *got up*. He left death, hopelessness, and the power of sin behind — not for Himself, but for you and me. Death and sin don't have to have the last word for this one reason: **Jesus is alive!** And thanks to Him, we can be too.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you can, end a little early this week so you can spend some extra time in worship to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. You can use any songs you like best, but here are a few specifically about the fact that Jesus is alive . . .*
 - "Breathe Miracles" (Red Rocks Worship)
 - "Come Alive" (All Nations Music)
 - "House of Miracles" (Brandon Lake)
 - "Graves Into Gardens" (Elevation Worship)
 - "You Keep Hope Alive" (Mandisa, Jon Reddick)
 - "O What a Miracle" (North Point Worship)

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus is alive.

THE BIBLE

Luke 24:1-12; I Corinthians 15:21-26;
Romans 7:21-25

- **What's your favorite Easter memory or tradition?**
- **Today, Easter Sunday usually begins with a celebration, but how did the first Easter Sunday begin for Jesus' followers?**
- **Choose one person from the Easter story – one of Jesus friends, His mom, or maybe one of the soldiers who killed Him. What do you think they would have experienced the day Jesus rose from the dead?**
- **Why was Jesus' resurrection such good news for His followers? Why is it still good news for us today?**
- **Without Jesus' resurrection, how would the world be hopelessly broken?**
- **Without Jesus' resurrection, how would you and I be hopelessly broken?**
- **Read Romans 7:21-25. Have you ever wanted to do what was right, but couldn't do it? Why does Jesus' resurrection matter in those moments?**
- **What's something in your life, or in the world, you want to see Jesus resurrect?**
- **How many times do you think you've heard the Easter story? How do you think we can keep ourselves from getting bored by the story of Jesus' resurrection?**
- **If it's true Jesus is alive, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

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Luke 24:1-12; I Corinthians 15:21-26;
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- **If it's true Jesus is alive, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

WEEK 4 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus is alive.

THE BIBLE

Luke 24:1-12; I Corinthians 15:21-26;
Romans 7:21-25

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

QUESTION | "Is anyone here a hiker?"

- Welcome back to *Break Trail!* If you haven't been here for a few weeks and you're wondering what "break trail" means, it has to do with hiking. **Is anyone here a hiker?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have students raise their hands to indicate whether or not they like to hike. Follow up with some of the students who responded by asking them questions like . . .*
 - **Where do you like to hike?**
 - **How often do you hike?**
 - **Has anything interesting ever happened to you on a hike?**

IMAGES | It's Alive!

- When you're out in nature, it's pretty common to be taken by surprise by a wild creature or two. Maybe . . .
 - A bird dive-bombs you and steals your snacks.
 - You get stalked by a bobcat.
 - You brush a leaf off your arm and realize it's a giant spider.
 - A snake interrupts your casual stroll.
- When you're out in nature, you have to stay aware of the many living things around you. A lot of animals have a natural ability to blend into their surroundings for protection, so they're hard to spot.
- But even indoor animals have some camouflage abilities, like . . .

- Is it a poodle or fried chicken?
- Is it a husky or a bagel?
- Is it a parrot or some guacamole?
- Is it a kitten or a caramel sundae?
- Is it a chihuahua or a blueberry muffin?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, prepare the images provided in your Week 4 folder. Show them on screen one at a time. If you'd like to turn this into a game, show the blurred versions of each picture first and have students guess which box is which. Otherwise, just show the unblurred versions of the images.*

STORY | Talk about a time you were surprised something was alive.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or have a volunteer or student tell a story) about a time when you were surprised something was alive when you thought it was inanimate. You might talk about the time what you thought was a stray hair was actually a bug on your face, or when the thing you thought was a pillow was actually your dog, or when you were singing at an embarrassing volume because you thought you were alone, only to find out that lump of pillows on the sofa was actually your roommate.*
- Considering it's Easter, you might know where I'm going with this whole "being surprised something was alive" thing. For the last few weeks, we've been following Jesus' journey to the cross and beyond.
 - In Week 1, we saw Jesus betrayed by His friends on the night of His arrest.
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 - In Week 3, we found Jesus on the cross in the last moments before His death.
 - And today, in celebration of Easter Sunday, we're going to talk about what happened next.

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. 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 your favorite Easter memory or tradition?**
 - **Today, Easter Sunday usually begins with a celebration, but how did the first Easter Sunday begin for Jesus' followers?**

STORY | Talk about a time you experienced a hopeless situation.

- I'm guessing you know what happened after Jesus was killed. It's what Easter Sunday (and our entire faith in Jesus) is all about. Three days after Jesus died, He rose from the dead!
 - But before we get there, I want us to think about what it must have been like for Jesus' friends and followers before they heard the good news of Jesus' resurrection.

- Try not to jump ahead to the celebration just yet. Instead, see if you can imagine what it must have been like to be one of Jesus' followers. Your leader (the one you thought was the Son of God) is dead. Your own life is danger too. Your movement seems to be over. Everything that had given you hope and purpose just a few days earlier now seems like a lost cause.
- If you had been there you would probably have been feeling pretty hopeless. You probably would have been wondering, "Will things ever get better?"
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or have a volunteer or student tell a story) about a time when you experienced what you thought was a hopeless situation. Choose a story that ultimately has a happy ending, but don't share the conclusion just yet – you'll come back to this story. For now, leave everyone wondering if or how this could possibly turn out well.*
- You may not have the same story that I have, but you probably have a similar story of a moment when you just couldn't see how your situation could work out for the best.
- In our lowest and most hopeless moments, it often seems impossible to imagine a find a way out of our hopeless stories. But Jesus is in the business of breaking new trails no one else could. Let's see how Jesus broke trail on the path to hope.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 24:1-12

- On our last stop on this journey toward Easter, we left with Jesus' body being taken down from the cross and prepared for burial, while his close friends and family mourned their loss.
 - In Jewish culture, it was customary when someone died to visit their tomb on the third day. During that visit, friends and family would cover their loved one's body with oils and spices to honor the dead and limit the odor a dead body would give off.
 - Three women who had been close followers and friends of Jesus were the ones who got up early on that third day to go and treat the body of Jesus. All things considered, these women expected to go Jesus' tomb and find Him . . . well, *dead*.
 - This was a sad, somber, and overall hopeless situation. As far as they know, all that was left to do was grieve and mourn what had been lost.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 24:1-12.*
- The women went to the tomb, expecting to see Jesus' body there. But they didn't. Instead, two men appeared (probably angels) to tell the women the person they were looking for wasn't dead at all. He was alive!
 - Can you imagine the shock these women must have experienced? Because this announcement does not make sense. They saw Jesus die. They saw His body. They knew He was buried. But now He's not?
 - When they started thinking through all the things Jesus had said that once seemed so cryptic, things began to make sense for the first time. Jesus really *was* alive – and this shouldn't have been a surprise. Jesus had been hinting at this all along!
 - The women ran to the rest of the disciples to tell them Jesus was alive! But of course, they found it hard to believe.
 - Even Peter, who was usually the first to get excited, had to go to the tomb and see for himself. Peter saw the empty tomb, but he still didn't believe it. Luke told us Peter walked away, in awe, wondering what was going on.

- Can you blame Jesus' followers for their confusion and hesitation? The idea that Jesus had risen from the dead was so fantastic and unbelievable. It makes sense why they had trouble grasping 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.*
 - ★ **Choose one person from the Easter story – one of Jesus friends, His mom, or maybe one of the soldiers who killed Him. What do you think they would have experienced the day Jesus rose from the dead?**
 - **Why was Jesus' resurrection such good news for His followers? Why is it still good news for us today?**

IMAGES | The Chilean Mine Collapse

- In 2010, there was a disaster in the country of Chile. Thirty-three miners were at work underground, just like they did every day, when the ground shifted and a rock bigger than a skyscraper fell into the only path that existed for the miners to exit the mine.
 - These men were completely trapped below ground. In the dark. With limited food and supplies. And dwindling oxygen. If ever there was a moment that felt helpless, it would've been this one.
 - However, after almost 70 days of planning, innovating, failing, succeeding, and a whole lot of drilling, an international team of miners and scientists had a breakthrough.
 - They drilled a hole that reached deep into the earth, to the place where the miners were stuck, and then built an extraction tube to rescue them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you teach, show a few images of the Chilean mine rescue, like [this one](#) of the extraction tube that was built for this escape plan or [this one](#) of one of the men after his rescue.*
- This device could only pull up one of the miners at a time and it took roughly 15 minutes to slowly climb all the way to the surface. A man named Florencio Ávalos was the first to make the trip.
 - No one was confident he could survive or that it would work. No one had ever built a device like this before. Certainly, no one had ever tested it to see if it could work.
 - Thirty-three families, friends, scientists, and media outlets from all over the world watched as Florencio emerged from the extraction device. Safe. Alive.
 - After Florencio successfully broke this trail, every single one of those 33 miners followed in his footsteps and took their trips to the surface too.
- Florencio blazed a trail for his fellow miners. It was a trail that led from death to life, if only they were willing to follow his lead.

SCRIPTURE | I Corinthians 15:21-26

- It's not a perfect analogy, but in some ways, Jesus' resurrection was similar to that first trip taken by Florencio. When Jesus rose from the dead, He showed all of us the way to finding new life too.

- Here's how the apostle Paul talks about it . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read *I Corinthians 15:21-26*.
- When Paul says we can be made alive again in Jesus, he means two things:
 - When we die, we don't stay dead. Just like Jesus, we can rise again and live an eternal life with God.
 - But with Jesus, we can also find new life right here and right now. The things in our lives or hearts that seem dead don't have to stay that way.
- At the core of our faith is the belief that God can . . .
 - Turn death into life.
 - Redeem anything that's gone wrong.
 - Resurrect anyone and anything.
- Seeing dead things come back to life is kind of what following Jesus is all about. **Jesus is alive.** And with Jesus, so are we.

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.
 - ★ **Without Jesus' resurrection, how would the world be hopelessly broken?**
 - ★ **Without Jesus' resurrection, how would you and I be hopelessly broken?**
 - **Read Romans 7:21-25. Have you ever wanted to do what was right, but couldn't do it? Why does Jesus' resurrection matter in those moments?**
 - ★ **What's something in your life, or in the world, you want to see Jesus resurrect?**

STORY | Finish talking about your hopeless situation.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Wrap up your story from earlier. How God bring your hopeless situation back to life?
- With God, any hopeless situation can turn for the better. Anything dead can come back to life. With Jesus, there truly is no such thing as hopelessness.

VIDEO | A Clip from a Video about Animals in States of Torpor

- With Jesus, I sometimes feel a little bit like this mouse.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (0:00-0:40, 1:15-1:25, 2:30-2:40) of a man reviving a mouse from a state of torpor. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- Okay, this little mouse is super cute and it's totally acceptable if you giggled with glee when he started hopping around again.
 - This little guy had been in a hopeless situation. He was stuck in a trench, powerless to free himself, unless someone bigger and more powerful came to rescue him.

- Honestly, this video really resonates with me. Not just because we're both adorable and like to take naps, but I know what it's like to get stuck in a state of torpor.

PRAYER | Hoping for New Life

- What about you? Is there part of your life where you've lost hope?
 - **YOUR FAITH:** Has it been a while since you really gave your faith a chance? Maybe you haven't spent much time with Jesus. Maybe it feels like that part of you is in the past or was never real to begin with. Maybe you've never before made a decision to follow Jesus, but you think you might want to start today.
 - **YOUR DREAMS:** Do you feel like all of your hopes and plans are falling apart? Maybe it seems like it's time to give up and stop trying.
 - **YOUR WORLD:** You may have been fighting for a long time now to try and see things change in our city or around the world. You see brokenness and want to see change, but nothing ever seems to get better.
 - **YOUR RELATIONSHIPS:** Maybe there is someone you love and have been praying for, but you're beginning to lose hope they'll ever overcome the problem they are facing.
- It's not easy to hold out hope when things seem so dark. Jesus is alive, but there was a time when Jesus was truly dead and His followers' faith was still shaken to its core.
- I don't know what the future holds, but I believe Jesus can do things none of us would expect. There is no prayer too big for the One who died and decided not to stay dead.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Invite students to spend a moment asking Jesus to bring life into their situations that seem dead. As they pray, begin to play some music quietly in preparation for a time of worship.*

MUSIC | Easter Worship

- There are things in our life that we cannot bring life to on our own, but thanks to Jesus, nothing has to remain dead, lost, or hopeless.
 - Not us.
 - Not our faith.
 - Not our dreams.
 - Not our world.
 - Not the people we love.
- Yes, Jesus died, but that's not the end of the story. Jesus *got up*. He left death, hopelessness, and the power of sin behind — not for Himself, but for you and me. Death and sin don't have to have the last word for this one reason: **Jesus is alive!** And thanks to Him, we can be too.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you can, end a little early this week so you can spend some extra time in worship to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. You can use any songs you like best, but here are a few specifically about the fact that Jesus is alive . . .*
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 - "Graves Into Gardens" (Elevation Worship)
 - "You Keep Hope Alive" (Mandisa, Jon Reddick)
 - "O What a Miracle" (North Point Worship)

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 many times do you think you've heard the Easter story? How do you think we can keep ourselves from getting bored by the story of Jesus' resurrection?**
 - **If it's true Jesus is alive, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

WEEK 5 SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus can be trusted.

THE BIBLE

John 20:19-31; Proverbs 3:5-6;
Philippians 4:4-6

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | A Special Guest

- Welcome to Week 5 of *Break Trail!* This isn't just an ordinary week. We have a very special guest who wants to say hi before we get started. It's somebody you may have heard of before, but you probably never thought you'd be hearing directly from them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, arrange to have a celebrity or influencer record a video greeting for your students. You can either pay for a video like this through a site like [cameo.com](https://www.cameo.com) or you can identify a local celebrity you or your church is connected to and reach out! Either way, be sure to pick someone who your students would recognize and be excited to hear from.*

IMAGE | A Verified Account

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Choose a celebrity or influencer your students would recognize who is "verified" on social media. It could be the same person you used in your opening activity, but it can be anyone you'd like! Take a screenshot of their social media profile where the "verified" symbol is visible and display it on your screen.*
- Look closely at this image. **Can anyone tell me what that little symbol means next to this person's name?**
 - Yeah, that little symbol shows us the account is "verified." Whether the account belongs to a celebrity, business, team, or organization, that little check mark is really useful!
 - For some people, it's a really exciting moment when they reach "blue check status" and get their social media accounts verified.

- That blue check mark is necessary because so many fake accounts exist. To be sure we can trust the posts we're seeing actually come from our favorite singer, athlete, actor, or team, that "verified" symbol is really important.

STORY | Talk about a famous adventurer.

- We all know there are famous celebrity singers, actors, athletes, and more . . . but did you know there are also famous celebrity hikers?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell the story of a famous adventurer who needed to rely on the information, guides, or equipment they were given to succeed in their adventures. This could be a story from a book or movie you've seen or you can choose one of the 14 stories [found here](#). Be sure to emphasize how they blazed a new trail for other hikers.*
- There have been some pretty trailblazing hikers throughout history. At some point in each of their journeys, all of them probably had to decide who and what they could trust. Could they trust . . .
 - Their guide?
 - Their equipment?
 - Their training?
 - Themselves?

POLL | "On a scale of 1-5 . . ."

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For each of the following questions, have students respond by holding up their fingers, numbering 1-5. "1" means "absolutely not" and "5" means "100% me."*
- **On a scale of 1-5 . . .**
 - **How trustworthy are you?**
 - **How easily do you trust others?**
 - **How much do you trust the food at fast food restaurants?**
 - **How strong is your trust in ladders? Bridges? Plastic chairs?**
 - **How much do you trust that famous people tell the truth?**
 - **How trustworthy are your friends?**
- Looks like we have some people who trust pretty easily and others who don't trust people quite as much! I get it. It's hard to trust other people sometimes — especially when . . .
 - Someone broke your trust in the past.
 - A lot of people have broken your trust, over and over again.
 - Someone hasn't taken the time to earn your trust.
- For these reasons and more, it can be difficult to trust other people. And because we sometimes assume God is a lot like the people we know, it can be difficult to trust God too.

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

STORY | Talk about a time you doubted someone.

- For the last few weeks, we've been on a "journey" toward Easter. But even though Easter Sunday has come and gone, our journey isn't over yet because Jesus' journey didn't end with His resurrection. When Jesus rose from the dead, it was only the beginning of a brand new path.

- Last week, we saw how Jesus' closest friends and followers first heard the news of Jesus' miraculous resurrection from the dead. But here's the thing – although they were *told* Jesus was back, they hadn't actually seen proof yet. An empty tomb, after all, could mean a lot of things.
- You can imagine why Jesus's disciples might have some trust issues with Jesus, right? After three years of following Jesus around and listening to His teachings, their hero was killed in a public execution. Everything they had worked toward for three years seemed to have suddenly disappeared.
- I'm sure they wanted to believe Jesus was back, but it makes sense that they still found it difficult to trust. I'm sure we can all relate.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you doubted someone would come through for you, but were proven wrong. It could be a lighthearted story (like doubting your friends would remember your birthday) or something more vulnerable (like doubting someone would still love you after you made a scary confession). Either way, share why you doubted them, how they proved you wrong, and why you should never have doubted them in the first place.*

SCRIPTURE | John 20:19-31

- For Jesus' friends and followers, losing Him was terrible. He had been their spiritual leader – their trailblazer. But then he was gone.
 - Who was going to lead them now? Now that Jesus was gone, was everything He'd said about God untrustworthy? What were they going to do now?
 - They were disappointed, grieving, and terrified – after all, the people who killed Jesus might want to kill them too. So let's see what happened next.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 20:19-31.*
- All of the disciples were having a hard time with Jesus's death and rumored resurrection, but Thomas seemed to be struggling more than the rest. Thomas wasn't with the rest of the disciples when Jesus showed up, so he missed the big moment. When everyone began to tell Thomas what had happened, he was still hesitant to believe.
 - Maybe Thomas thought his friends were messing with him.
 - Maybe Thomas thought someone else was pretending to be Jesus and messing with all of them.
 - Maybe Thomas thought they were delusional and their grief was causing them to believe in impossible things.
- So when Thomas got his moment with Jesus, he was curious, but hesitant.
 - He probably didn't want to get his hopes up. Thomas had invested so much of his life and so much hope into following Jesus. Imagine how much more it would hurt to be convinced that a miracle had happened, only to find out it was all a lie?
 - So Thomas asks Jesus if he could touch the wounds that Jesus received on the cross. Not because Thomas was weird, but because Thomas needed confirmation he wasn't imagining things.

OBJECT LESSON | Six-Inch Nails

- Thomas had to see Jesus's wounds to verify that Jesus was who he claimed to be. Thomas needed to be absolutely certain that there was nothing fake about the man talking to him.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you teach, hold up a few six-inch nails [like these](#). If you'd like, pass a few more out to your students so they can pass them around.*
- These nails are six inches long. The nails in Jesus's hands, sides, and ankles were likely to be seven to nine inches long, so a little bigger than these. They would have been made from a heavy iron material, just like these.
- Crucifixion was a brutal, extremely violent, and inhumane act. But unfortunately, it was also a form of execution that was common enough that a person like Thomas would understand how it worked. Thomas would've known . . .
 - Nobody can survive a crucifixion.
 - Nobody's wounds would be gone in just a few days if they had been crucified.
 - The wounds resulting from a crucifixion would be obvious. Nothing else would look the way these would look.
- Thomas needed to see Jesus's wounds so he could believe the truth.
- Before this moment, it's likely Thomas felt . . .
 - **Betrayed.** This was a leader who Thomas thought would bring hope, peace, and change to the entire world, but in a moment that dream died with Jesus. What if Jesus had been a fraud the entire time?
 - **Lost.** If Jesus was gone, what was Thomas supposed to do next? He had built his whole life around this man and His message. Now what?
 - **Foolish.** He probably felt like he had bet his life on the wrong leader. Maybe he thought back to all of the miracles he saw Jesus perform and wondered if they were all just elaborate illusions or magic tricks.
 - **Devastated.** Jesus was not just Thomas's leader. Jesus was Thomas' friend. They spent all day, every day, together for years and it was over way too soon.
- Thomas . . .
 - Trusted Jesus when He was alive.
 - Wondered if his trust had been misplaced after Jesus died.
 - But then trusted Him more deeply than ever after Jesus' resurrection.
- When everything Thomas had hoped about Jesus was shown to be true, Thomas realized without question that Jesus can be trusted.

SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 3:5-6

- There is another character from the Bible who might be able to help us understand trust. This was a guy named Solomon who lived centuries before Jesus was even born.
 - Solomon was a king of Israel who achieved great wealth and success, and was widely known for being a wise leader.
 - I don't know much about being a king or being overwhelmingly wealthy, but I think we can relate to Solomon when it comes to how Solomon saw God.

- Solomon never saw Jesus with his own eyes. Solomon never got the chance to touch the wounds in Jesus’s hands when he rose from the dead. Solomon didn’t even know that God would be sending someone named Jesus to change the world forever.
- But even though there was a lot Solomon couldn’t see for himself, he saw the importance of trusting God. That’s why he wrote some poetry, which we know today as the book of Proverbs, to help us understand that trusting God is the most crucial element for us to find true wisdom.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Proverbs 3:5-6.*
- This passage says to trust in God with all of our hearts. Even when we don’t understand what’s going on, or why something terrible has happened, or if Jesus is who He says He is . . . we can still trust God.
 - When our trust in God is shaky, Jesus won’t get angry with us, just like He didn’t get angry with Thomas. Instead, He’ll offer us His scarred hand and invite us to keep trusting.
 - If we do choose to keep trusting, we’ll one day see what Thomas saw — that Jesus has always been trustworthy. Because **Jesus can be trusted.**

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

STORY | Talk about a time you needed to trust God.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you needed to trust God. This could be a time when you had to make a tough decision, or do something scary you knew God was calling you to do, or show love to another person even though it seemed impossible or unnecessary.*
- I may not have been able to see, hear, or touch Jesus like His friends and followers once did, but I still knew Jesus could be trusted (even when it was scary). How? I knew I could trust Him because of . . .
 - The evidence of His presence in my life.
 - The evidence of God’s faithfulness to us in the Bible.
 - The stories of other people who have found God to be trustworthy.

HOW TO TRUST

- When it comes to knowing God, Jesus blazed a new trail for us by proving He could be trusted. But how do we grow our trust in Him?
 - **BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR QUESTIONS.** Thomas didn’t hide his hesitations and questions from Jesus. He didn’t fake his trust. He asked Jesus to give him the evidence he needed in order to trust Him better, and Jesus did. You can be honest with God about your doubts.
 - **REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY DONE.** If you’re struggling to trust, reflect on how God has been proven trustworthy in the past. Look at your life, the lives of people you know and trust, and the lives of the people whose stories are told in Scripture. God has been trustworthy in the past and will continue to be trustworthy.

- **PRACTICE TRUSTING.** If you're struggling to trust God right now, start where you are. Even if you can't say, "God, I trust You," maybe you can say, "God, I'm trying to trust You," or, "God, please help me trust You."

MUSIC | "Do It Again" (Elevation Worship)

- We're going to close today with a song declaring our trust in God.
 - If you're not sure if you believe these words just yet, that's okay. You can be honest with God about that. Remember the patience, kindness, and grace Jesus showed Thomas when he had his doubts? Jesus will show the same to you.
 - And if you can sing these words with full trust and confidence in God, do it! As you sing, say thank you for the ways God has been faithful to you in the past.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the song "Do It Again" (Elevation Worship), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here's a link to [preview the song](#) for your personal use.*
- We all find ourselves like Thomas sometimes. We all have moments where we wonder if Jesus can really be verified as trustworthy. But the more we look, and the more questions we ask, I believe the more we will see that **Jesus can be trusted**. He has proven trustworthy before and I'm believing He'll do it again.

WEEK 5

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus can be trusted.

THE BIBLE

John 20:19-31; Proverbs 3:5-6;
Philippians 4:4-6

- **Who's one famous person you'd trust with one of your biggest secrets? Why do you trust them?**
- **How can you tell if someone is trustworthy?**
- **What are some reasons why people might struggle to trust God?**
- **Can you relate to Thomas and his doubts? Why or why not?**
- **When Thomas had doubts about Jesus, how did Jesus treat him? What does this tell us about our doubts?**
- **How does Jesus show us God is trustworthy?**
- **Have you ever had an experience that showed you God could be trusted? If so, what happened?**
- **Read Philippians 4:4-6. What's causing you anxiety right now? How can you trust Jesus with that situation?**
- **What are some practical steps we can take to grow our trust in God?**
- **If it's true Jesus can be trusted, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

WEEK 5

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



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WEEK 5 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

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THE BIBLE

John 20:19-31; Proverbs 3:5-6;
Philippians 4:4-6

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 - Their guide?
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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.*
 - **Who's one famous person you'd trust with one of your biggest secrets? Why do you trust them?**
 - **How can you tell if someone is trustworthy?**

POLL | "On a scale of 1-5 . . ."

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For each of the following questions, have students respond by holding up their fingers, numbering 1-5. "1" means "absolutely not" and "5" means "100% me."*
- **On a scale of 1-5 . . .**
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 - **How much do you trust the food at fast food restaurants?**
 - **How strong is your trust in ladders? Bridges? Plastic chairs?**
 - **How much do you trust that famous people tell the truth?**
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- Looks like we have some people who trust pretty easily and others who don't trust people quite as much! I get it. It's hard to trust other people sometimes — especially when . . .
 - Someone broke your trust in the past.
 - A lot of people have broken your trust, over and over again.
 - Someone hasn't taken the time to earn your trust.

- For these reasons and more, it can be difficult to trust other people. And because we sometimes assume God is a lot like the people we know, it can be difficult to trust God too.

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

STORY | Talk about a time you doubted someone.

- For the last few weeks, we've been on a "journey" toward Easter. But even though Easter Sunday has come and gone, our journey isn't over yet because Jesus' journey didn't end with His resurrection. When Jesus rose from the dead, it was only the beginning of a brand new path.
 - Last week, we saw how Jesus' closest friends and followers first heard the news of Jesus' miraculous resurrection from the dead. But here's the thing – although they were *told* Jesus was back, they hadn't actually seen proof yet. An empty tomb, after all, could mean a lot of things.
 - You can imagine why Jesus's disciples might have some trust issues with Jesus, right? After three years of following Jesus around and listening to His teachings, their hero was killed in a public execution. Everything they had worked toward for three years seemed to have suddenly disappeared.
 - I'm sure they wanted to believe Jesus was back, but it makes sense that they still found it difficult to trust. I'm sure we can all relate.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you doubted someone would come through for you, but were proven wrong. It could be a lighthearted story (like doubting your friends would remember your birthday) or something more vulnerable (like doubting someone would still love you after you made a scary confession). Either way, share why you doubted them, how they proved you wrong, and why you should never have doubted them in the first place.*

SCRIPTURE | John 20:19-31

- For Jesus' friends and followers, losing Him was terrible. He had been their spiritual leader – their trailblazer. But then he was gone.
 - Who was going to lead them now? Now that Jesus was gone, was everything He'd said about God untrustworthy? What were they going to do now?
 - They were disappointed, grieving, and terrified – after all, the people who killed Jesus might want to kill them too. So let's see what happened next.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 20:19-31.*
- All of the disciples were having a hard time with Jesus's death and rumored resurrection, but Thomas seemed to be struggling more than the rest. Thomas wasn't with the rest of the disciples when Jesus showed up, so he missed the big moment. When everyone began to tell Thomas what had happened, he was still hesitant to believe.
 - Maybe Thomas thought his friends were messing with him.
 - Maybe Thomas thought someone else was pretending to be Jesus and messing with all of them.

- Maybe Thomas thought they were delusional and their grief was causing them to believe in impossible things.
- So when Thomas got his moment with Jesus, he was curious, but hesitant.
 - He probably didn't want to get his hopes up. Thomas had invested so much of his life and so much hope into following Jesus. Imagine how much more it would hurt to be convinced that a miracle had happened, only to find out it was all a lie?
 - So Thomas asks Jesus if he could touch the wounds that Jesus received on the cross. Not because Thomas was weird, but because Thomas needed confirmation he wasn't imagining things.

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 might struggle to trust God?**
 - ☆ **Can you relate to Thomas and his doubts? Why or why not?**

OBJECT LESSON | Six-Inch Nails

- Thomas had to see Jesus's wounds to verify that Jesus was who he claimed to be. Thomas needed to be absolutely certain that there was nothing fake about the man talking to him.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As you teach, hold up a few six-inch nails [like these](#). If you'd like, pass a few more out to your students so they can pass them around.
- These nails are six inches long. The nails in Jesus's hands, sides, and ankles were likely to be seven to nine inches long, so a little bigger than these. They would have been made from a heavy iron material, just like these.
- Crucifixion was a brutal, extremely violent, and inhumane act. But unfortunately, it was also a form of execution that was common enough that a person like Thomas would understand how it worked. Thomas would've known . . .
 - Nobody can survive a crucifixion.
 - Nobody's wounds would be gone in just a few days if they had been crucified.
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- Thomas needed to see Jesus's wounds so he could believe the truth.
- Before this moment, it's likely Thomas felt . . .
 - **Betrayed.** This was a leader who Thomas thought would bring hope, peace, and change to the entire world, but in a moment that dream died with Jesus. What if Jesus had been a fraud the entire time?
 - **Lost.** If Jesus was gone, what was Thomas supposed to do next? He had built his whole life around this man and His message. Now what?
 - **Foolish.** He probably felt like he had bet his life on the wrong leader. Maybe he thought back to all of the miracles he saw Jesus perform and wondered if they were all just elaborate illusions or magic tricks.

- **Devastated.** Jesus was not just Thomas’s leader. Jesus was Thomas’ friend. They spent all day, every day, together for years and it was over way too soon.
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 - Wondered if his trust had been misplaced after Jesus died.
 - But then trusted Him more deeply than ever after Jesus’ resurrection.
- When everything Thomas had hoped about Jesus was shown to be true, Thomas realized without question that Jesus can be trusted.

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 Thomas had doubts about Jesus, how did Jesus treat him? What does this tell us about our doubts?**
 - **How does Jesus show us God is trustworthy?**

SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 3:5-6

- There is another character from the Bible who might be able to help us understand trust. This was a guy named Solomon who lived centuries before Jesus was even born.
 - Solomon was a king of Israel who achieved great wealth and success, and was widely known for being a wise leader.
 - I don’t know much about being a king or being overwhelmingly wealthy, but I think we can relate to Solomon when it comes to how Solomon saw God.
 - Solomon never saw Jesus with his own eyes. Solomon never got the chance to touch the wounds in Jesus’s hands when he rose from the dead. Solomon didn’t even know that God would be sending someone named Jesus to change the world forever.
 - But even though there was a lot Solomon couldn’t see for himself, he saw the importance of trusting God. That’s why he wrote some poetry, which we know today as the book of Proverbs, to help us understand that trusting God is the most crucial element for us to find true wisdom.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Proverbs 3:5-6.*
- This passage says to trust in God with all of our hearts. Even when we don’t understand what’s going on, or why something terrible has happened, or if Jesus is who He says He is . . . we can still trust God.
 - When our trust in God is shaky, Jesus won’t get angry with us, just like He didn’t get angry with Thomas. Instead, He’ll offer us His scarred hand and invite us to keep trusting.
 - If we do choose to keep trusting, we’ll one day see what Thomas saw — that Jesus has always been trustworthy. Because **Jesus can be trusted.**

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

STORY | Talk about a time you needed to trust God.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you needed to trust God. This could be a time when you had to make a tough decision, or do something scary you knew God was calling you to do, or show love to another person even though it seemed impossible or unnecessary.*
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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 had an experience that showed you God could be trusted? If so, what happened?**
 - **Read Philippians 4:4-6. What’s causing you anxiety right now? How can you trust Jesus with that situation?**

HOW TO TRUST

- When it comes to knowing God, Jesus blazed a new trail for us by proving He could be trusted. But how do we grow our trust in Him?
 - **BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR QUESTIONS.** Thomas didn’t hide his hesitations and questions from Jesus. He didn’t fake his trust. He asked Jesus to give him the evidence he needed in order to trust Him better, and Jesus did. You can be honest with God about your doubts.
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 - **PRACTICE TRUSTING.** If you’re struggling to trust God right now, start where you are. Even if you can’t say, “God, I trust You,” maybe you can say, “God, I’m trying to trust You,” or, “God, please help me trust You.”

MUSIC | “Do It Again” (Elevation Worship)

- We’re going to close today with a song declaring our trust in God.

- If you're not sure if you believe these words just yet, that's okay. You can be honest with God about that. Remember the patience, kindness, and grace Jesus showed Thomas when he had his doubts? Jesus will show the same to you.
- And if you can sing these words with full trust and confidence in God, do it! As you sing, say thank you for the ways God has been faithful to you in the past.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play the song "Do It Again" (Elevation Worship), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here's a link to [preview the song](#) for your personal use.
- We all find ourselves like Thomas sometimes. We all have moments where we wonder if Jesus can really be verified as trustworthy. But the more we look, and the more questions we ask, I believe the more we will see that **Jesus can be trusted**. He has proven trustworthy before and I'm believing He'll do it again.

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 practical steps we can take to grow our trust in God?**
 - **If it's true Jesus can be trusted, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

WEEK 6 SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus gives us a mission.

THE BIBLE

John 21:1-3, 15-17; Matthew 28:16-20;
Acts 9:1-20; I Peter 2:21

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Build-Your-Own Trail Mix Bar

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, set up a trail mix bar of candies, seeds, [popcorn](#), [dried fruit](#), and [pretzels](#). We recommend avoiding nuts since they're a common allergy. Give each student a bowl or bag and allow them to make their own trail mix to snack on while you teach.
- We're in the last week of *Break Trail*, so it seems appropriate we get a snack to help us make it to the end of this path we've been journeying together. There's no more appropriately named (and delicious) snack I could think of than some good old fashioned trail mix!

VIDEO | A Clip from *The Fellowship of the Ring*

- We don't actually have anywhere to hike to today, but the next best thing might be to watch some other people take a hike — a really, really long hike.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip (2:30-3:30) from [The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring](#), where the fellowship is first formed. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- If you've never seen this movie before, this scene is the start of the longest hike in the history of cinema. Literally, the next eight hours in this trilogy are mostly following this crew's one long hike through a mountain range, scary forests, a river, some marshes, and finally leading to one particular volcano.
 - On its own, that might not sound like the most exciting plot, but what makes this hike worth following is the mission of the main characters.

- In this trilogy, the world needs to be saved! The solution is an unlikely group of heroes on a journey that will change everything.
- These stories are fun to watch or read because, deep down, we sort of know how they'll end, and the end will be worth the journey! But what if, in the end, Sauron won and destroyed the world? That would not be a very satisfying ending.

STORY | Talk about a time you did something that took forever.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you got stuck doing something that both took forever and was kind of pointless. Maybe you waited in line for a ride just for it to close when you got to the front, or maybe you were on hold for hours before you realized you had called the wrong number, or maybe you drove for hours before you realized you had put the wrong destination into your maps app.*
- There's nothing as frustrating as investing a ton of time or effort into something that isn't leading us anywhere. Don't get me wrong — it's fun to waste some time watching a show, playing a game, or going down a YouTube rabbit hole, but when we decide to focus a lot of time or energy on something, we usually want it to be something that matters.

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

VIDEO | The Toughest Race

- Have you ever heard of adventure racing? It's when a team of people race against other teams or against a preset time through super intense courses. There's a show about it called *The World's Toughest Race*, and it is wild.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip (0:30-1:14) from the trailer for [Amazon's World's Toughest Race](#). For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- People are literally putting their lives at risk in each episode as they . . .
 - Swim through freezing cold water.
 - Climb steep mountains.
 - Sleep outside during intense storms.
 - Have run-ins with wild animals.
 - And do all of this with very little rest or food.
- These people survive these intense conditions because, as a team, they're focused on accomplishing the goal of winning this race. It's also because each team has a captain who takes responsibility for finding a route and breaking a trail that is best for the team.
 - "Breaking trail" is a hiking term — it's what you do when you encounter terrain that's tough to navigate.
 - When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind. It's so much easier to walk in the tracks of someone else who has already "broken" the trail.
- For the last five weeks, we've been talking about how Jesus "broke" trails for us in the ways we understand God, follow God, and love others.

- But where is Jesus' path leading?
- What's our role on the journey?
- And why are we on this journey in the first place?

SCRIPTURE | John 21:2-3

- In the last five weeks we've talked about how Jesus . . .
 - Never gives up on us.
 - Understands our pain.
 - Shows us love.
 - Is alive.
 - Can be trusted.
- Now, to close out this series, we're going to talk a little bit about the role that we get to play on this team Jesus is leading.
- Last week we talked about how Jesus' friend and follower Thomas had a hard time trusting Jesus after Jesus' death and resurrection. Today, we're going to read about another time Jesus encountered some members of his "team" after rising from the dead.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 21:2-3.*
- Before Jesus' disciples became His disciples, they were professional fishermen. Following Jesus around the country probably wasn't much of a money-making endeavor, so it's understandable if they continued fishing in order to make a living.
 - But the fact that this story takes place during one of their fishing expeditions might be significant.
 - The disciples knew Jesus was alive, which seems like it should be a life-changing piece of information. Yet they were back doing exactly what they had been doing before they ever met Jesus.
 - After the shock of Jesus' return, they had easily fallen into their regular rhythms and comfortable routines.

OBJECT LESSON | Your Comfort Zone

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Reveal a personal item that represents comfort for you – something that represents what you would do on a day when you just needed a moment to yourself or a chance to relax. Maybe it's a blanket and a book, or a video game controller, or a pair of walking shoes.*
- When I'm stressed or overwhelmed, this is how I spend my time. When I do, I don't have to think. There's no pressure. It's just an opportunity to do something comfortable that I've known how to do for years.
- There's nothing at all wrong with taking a moment for ourselves, but when we're on a mission we can't live in our comfort zone forever.

SCRIPTURE | John 21:15-17

- But while Jesus' disciples may have started this fishing trip feeling comfortable and confident, God had other plans.

- While Peter and the other disciples were almost finished fishing, a man showed up and challenged them to throw their nets into the water one last time. When they did, they caught a literal boat-load of fish.
- Instantly, Peter recognized this was Jesus who had told them to cast the nets again (because only Jesus could do what this man had just done). So he jumped out of the boat and swam to shore to hang out with Jesus and eat some breakfast.
- If you were here in Week 1, you might remember this interaction we're about to read. In this conversation, we already saw how Jesus forgives Peter for his betrayal, but that's not the only thing Jesus does for Peter.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 21:15-17.*
- Jesus challenged Peter by asking, "Do you really love me? Do you really trust me? Did you really believe all the things that happened in the last three years really happened? Because if you do, you can't be content to just be a fisherman again. You have a new path to follow."
 - Was Jesus literally asking Peter to switch careers, from fisherman to shepherd? No. Jesus didn't literally want him to feed sheep.
 - Instead, Jesus was inviting Peter on a brand new mission. He was asking Peter to teach and care for the people who followed Jesus, as well as people who hadn't yet come to trust in Him.
- Jesus wanted Peter to accept a brand new mission.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 28:16-20

- In this moment, Peter had a choice. He could either stick with his comfortable life or reset everything. He could either follow his own path or walk the path Jesus was blazing for him.
 - Peter did choose the mission Jesus had for him – and it changed everything. He became a significant leader in the early church, wrote some letters that eventually became books of the Bible, and had a lasting impact in the story of Jesus both then and now.
 - But for you and me, what is our mission? What does it look like for us to be on the path Jesus blazed for us?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 28:16-20.*
- This mission wasn't just for the people present in this moment. It's a mission that applies to all of us. Jesus broke a trail for us, and now our mission is to continue the work Jesus started. Because **Jesus gives us a mission** – and it's a mission that really matters.

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

QUESTION | "When did you first . . . ?"

- Sometimes it's difficult to remember the first time we experienced things that are commonplace to us now. For example . . .
 - **When was the first time you watched your favorite television show?**
 - **When did you eat your first slice of pizza?**

- **When did you first open a laptop?**
- **When did you first put on deodorant?**
- It can be tough to remember moments like these, even though they've totally changed your life!

STORY | Talk about your first encounter with Jesus.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life of the first time you remember hearing about Jesus. Be sure to talk about who it was that first introduced you to Jesus, sharing how they "broke a trail" for you and your faith.*
- I will always remember this moment because it changed my life. The person who first introduced me to Jesus blazed a new trail for me because they accepted the mission Jesus had given them — the mission to share the good news of Jesus.

STORY | Share the story of a gospel trailblazer in your community.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, identify someone connected to your church or community who is sharing the gospel with others in significant or unique ways. Interview them live or play a video of your interview. Ask them questions like . . .*
 - **What is the "mission" Jesus has given you?**
 - **How are you breaking trails to help others know God?**
 - **What do you wish you'd known about Jesus' mission when you were a teenager?**
 - **What's one piece of encouragement or advice you'd give students who want to embrace Jesus' mission for their lives?**

REFLECTION | How Can I Be a Trailblazer?

- Just like the trailblazers you've heard about today, Jesus has given you and me a mission too:
 - To follow Jesus on the trails He's broken for us.
 - To break trails for others so they can meet Jesus too.
- Everywhere there are people who don't know how to find the trail that would lead them toward Jesus. They may have heard the name of Jesus, but don't know that Jesus came to bring hope, love, humility, and life to the world and to their story.
- You and I have the opportunity to guide people toward the path that Jesus broke for the whole world. So how can we become better trailblazers and guides for people who are looking for Jesus?
- We can start by following Jesus on the trails He has broken for us. And since Jesus **never gives up on us, understands us, shows us love, is alive, and can be trusted . . .**
 - **DON'T GIVE UP.** Not on yourself. Not on others. Let your life reflect the hope that no one is ever so far from God that they can't be rescued.
 - **GET TO KNOW JESUS.** Just like Jesus understands us, He invites us to better understand Him. When we do, we'll be more willing to make sacrifices for God and others, like Jesus did.
 - **SHOW PEOPLE LOVE.** Just like Jesus loved us with His actions and not just His words, we're called to make our love for others apparent through our compassion, care, and mercy.

- **LIVE LIKE YOU'RE ALIVE.** Jesus' resurrection gave us new life both now and for eternity. If you want others to want that kind of life, let them see it in you. Live like Jesus has put your sin to death, because He has. Live like Jesus has come to bring new life to a broken world, because He's done that too.
- **TRUST GOD.** The good news of Jesus will change lives, even if you and I are imperfect at sharing it. Trust God is at work in the world and in people's lives, even when it's difficult to trust.
- **EMBRACE YOUR MISSION.** It's okay if you're not perfect. None of us are! Go anyway. Share the good news of Jesus however you can, with whoever you can.

MUSIC | "Follow You Anywhere" (Passion)

- We have a mission – and to accomplish this mission, we need to start doing what we are called to do. So for you, how will you carry out this mission this week? Reflect on that as we sing.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the song "Follow You Anywhere" (Passion), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here's a link to [preview the song](#) for your personal use.*
- Jesus broke a new trail just by existing – never before had anyone been fully human and fully God at the same time. He broke more trails by teaching us new ways of loving God and loving others. And then He broke one last trail with the good news of His resurrection. Before He left earth, you could say Jesus pointed to the trail He had made, invited us to follow along, and asked us to bring others with us. **Jesus gave us a mission** – to follow Him.

WEEK 6

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus gives us a mission.

THE BIBLE

John 21:1-3, 15-17; Matthew 28:16-20;
Acts 9:1-20; I Peter 2:21

- **What's your favorite story about a secret mission? If you could be part of that mission, what would your role be?**
- **In your own words, what do you think Jesus' mission was when He was on earth?**
- **What is the mission Jesus gave us?**
- **How is our role in our mission different from Jesus' role? How is it the same?**
- **If we choose not to participate in the mission Jesus gave us, what would we be missing out on?**
- **Who are some of the people who have helped you get to know Jesus? How did they do that?**
- **What's one thing you can do to help someone else know Jesus better?**
- **Read I Peter 2:21. How might following in Jesus' footsteps sometimes get uncomfortable?**
- **What's the biggest thing holding you back from fully embracing Jesus' mission?**
- **If it's true Jesus has given you a mission, what's one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?**

WEEK 6

SMALL GROUP GUIDE
→ for middle schoolers



If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that too. In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that **Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.**

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WEEK 6 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

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THE BIBLE

John 21:1-3, 15-17; Matthew 28:16-20;
Acts 9:1-20; I Peter 2:21

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Build-Your-Own Trail Mix Bar

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, set up a trail mix bar of candies, seeds, [popcorn](#), [dried fruit](#), and [pretzels](#). We recommend avoiding nuts since they're a common allergy. Give each student a bowl or bag and allow them to make their own trail mix to snack on while you teach.
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VIDEO | A Clip from *The Fellowship of the Ring*

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STORY | Talk about a time you did something that took forever.

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

VIDEO | The Toughest Race

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- People are literally putting their lives at risk in each episode as they . . .
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 - And do all of this with very little rest or food.
- These people survive these intense conditions because, as a team, they're focused on accomplishing the goal of winning this race. It's also because each team has a captain who takes responsibility for finding a route and breaking a trail that is best for the team.
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- For the last five weeks, we've been talking about how Jesus "broke" trails for us in the ways we understand God, follow God, and love others.
 - But where is Jesus' path leading?
 - What's our role on the journey?
 - And why are we on this journey in the first place?

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 your favorite story about a secret mission? If you could be part of that mission, what would your role be?**
 - ★ **In your own words, what do you think Jesus' mission was when He was on earth?**

SCRIPTURE | John 21:2-3

- In the last five weeks we've talked about how Jesus . . .
 - Never gives up on us.
 - Understands our pain.
 - Shows us love.
 - Is alive.
 - Can be trusted.
- Now, to close out this series, we're going to talk a little bit about the role that we get to play on this team Jesus is leading.
- Last week we talked about how Jesus' friend and follower Thomas had a hard time trusting Jesus after Jesus' death and resurrection. Today, we're going to read about another time Jesus encountered some members of his "team" after rising from the dead.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 21:2-3.*
- Before Jesus' disciples became His disciples, they were professional fishermen. Following Jesus around the country probably wasn't much of a money-making endeavor, so it's understandable if they continued fishing in order to make a living.
 - But the fact that this story takes place during one of their fishing expeditions might be significant.
 - The disciples knew Jesus was alive, which seems like it should be a life-changing piece of information. Yet they were back doing exactly what they had been doing before they ever met Jesus.
 - After the shock of Jesus' return, they had easily fallen into their regular rhythms and comfortable routines.

OBJECT LESSON | Your Comfort Zone

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Reveal a personal item that represents comfort for you — something that represents what you would do on a day when you just needed a moment to yourself or a chance to relax. Maybe it's a blanket and a book, or a video game controller, or a pair of walking shoes.*

- When I'm stressed or overwhelmed, this is how I spend my time. When I do, I don't have to think. There's no pressure. It's just an opportunity to do something comfortable that I've known how to do for years.
- There's nothing at all wrong with taking a moment for ourselves, but when we're on a mission we can't live in our comfort zone forever.

SCRIPTURE | John 21:15-17

- But while Jesus' disciples may have started this fishing trip feeling comfortable and confident, God had other plans.
 - While Peter and the other disciples were almost finished fishing, a man showed up and challenged them to throw their nets into the water one last time. When they did, they caught a literal boat-load of fish.
 - Instantly, Peter recognized this was Jesus who had told them to cast the nets again (because only Jesus could do what this man had just done). So he jumped out of the boat and swam to shore to hang out with Jesus and eat some breakfast.
- If you were here in Week 1, you might remember this interaction we're about to read. In this conversation, we already saw how Jesus forgives Peter for his betrayal, but that's not the only thing Jesus does for Peter.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read John 21:15-17.
- Jesus challenged Peter by asking, "Do you really love me? Do you really trust me? Did you really believe all the things that happened in the last three years really happened? Because if you do, you can't be content to just be a fisherman again. You have a new path to follow."
 - Was Jesus literally asking Peter to switch careers, from fisherman to shepherd? No. Jesus didn't literally want him to feed sheep.
 - Instead, Jesus was inviting Peter on a brand new mission. He was asking Peter to teach and care for the people who followed Jesus, as well as people who hadn't yet come to trust in Him.
- Jesus wanted Peter to accept a brand new mission.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 28:16-20

- In this moment, Peter had a choice. He could either stick with his comfortable life or reset everything. He could either follow his own path or walk the path Jesus was blazing for him.
 - Peter did choose the mission Jesus had for him — and it changed everything. He became a significant leader in the early church, wrote some letters that eventually became books of the Bible, and had a lasting impact in the story of Jesus both then and now.
 - But for you and me, what is our mission? What does it look like for us to be on the path Jesus blazed for us?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 28:16-20.
- This mission wasn't just for the people present in this moment. It's a mission that applies to all of us. Jesus broke a trail for us, and now our mission is to continue the work Jesus started. Because **Jesus gives us a mission** — and it's a mission that really matters.

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.*
 - **What is the mission Jesus gave us?**
 - ☆ **How is our role in our mission different from Jesus' role? How is it the same?**
 - ☆ **If we choose not to participate in the mission Jesus gave us, what would we be missing out on?**

QUESTION | "When did you first . . . ?"

- Sometimes it's difficult to remember the first time we experienced things that are commonplace to us now. For example . . .
 - **When was the first time you watched your favorite television show?**
 - **When did you eat your first slice of pizza?**
 - **When did you first open a laptop?**
 - **When did you first put on deodorant?**
- It can be tough to remember moments like these, even though they've totally changed your life!

STORY | Talk about your first encounter with Jesus.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life of the first time you remember hearing about Jesus. Be sure to talk about who it was that first introduced you to Jesus, sharing how they "broke a trail" for you and your faith.*
- I will always remember this moment because it changed my life. The person who first introduced me to Jesus blazed a new trail for me because they accepted the mission Jesus had given them – the mission to share the good news of Jesus.

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.*
 - **Who are some of the people who have helped you get to know Jesus? How did they do that?**
 - **What's one thing you can do to help someone else know Jesus better?**

STORY | Share the story of a gospel trailblazer in your community.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, identify someone connected to your church or community who is sharing the gospel with others in significant or unique ways. Interview them live or play a video of your interview. Ask them questions like . . .*

- What is the “mission” Jesus has given you?
- How are you breaking trails to help others know God?
- What do you wish you’d known about Jesus’ mission when you were a teenager?
- What’s one piece of encouragement or advice you’d give students who want to embrace Jesus’ mission for their lives?

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.
 - Read **1 Peter 2:21**. How might following in Jesus’ footsteps sometimes get uncomfortable?
 - ★ What’s the biggest thing holding you back from fully embracing Jesus’ mission?
 - If it’s true Jesus has given you a mission, what’s one thing you can do this week to respond to that truth?

REFLECTION | How Can I Be a Trailblazer?

- Just like the trailblazers you’ve heard about today, Jesus has given you and me a mission too:
 - To follow Jesus on the trails He’s broken for us.
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 - **LIVE LIKE YOU’RE ALIVE.** Jesus’ resurrection gave us new life both now and for eternity. If you want others to want that kind of life, let them see it in you. Live like Jesus has put your sin to death, because He has. Live like Jesus has come to bring new life to a broken world, because He’s done that too.
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- **EMBRACE YOUR MISSION.** It's okay if you're not perfect. None of us are! Go anyway. Share the good news of Jesus however you can, with whoever you can.

MUSIC | "Follow You Anywhere" (Passion)

- We have a mission – and to accomplish this mission, we need to start doing what we are called to do. So for you, how will you carry out this mission this week? Reflect on that as we sing.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the song "Follow You Anywhere" (Passion), but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) Here's a link to [preview the song](#) for your personal use.*
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ONE-MINUTE SERMON SCRIPTS



ONE-MINUTE SERMONS

After you teach each week, we recommend **filming a video of yourself re-teaching your message in one minute or less**. Then post it on social media! We've written the beginnings of a script for you each week, and we've also filmed complete [One-Minute Sermon Videos](#) for you too, in partnership with [Rescue a Generation](#). Make your own or post ours — whatever you want!

WEEK 1

Have you ever given up on someone? Someone who really deserved it? Maybe you got sick of them ghosting you, or breaking your trust, or never putting in the effort to hang out, or the way they really hurt you. It's pretty normal to hurt each other, get fed up with each other, and fail each other. It's kind of part of being human, I think. It even happened to Jesus when Judas, one of his closest friends and disciples, betrayed Him. Now, if one of my friends did to me what Judas did to Jesus, well, let's just say I would not handle it well. But Judas isn't the only person who has let Jesus down — you and I have let Him down too. In fact, we do it a lot. Which is why I'm so glad Jesus isn't like you and me. Because even though you and I might give up on each other, even when we deserve it, **Jesus never gives up on us.**

WEEK 2

Do you ever blast some really sad music and just feel all the feelings? Maybe stare dramatically out a window and think about how no one understands you? No? Just me? Cool, cool, cool. Well, look. Even if you're not as dramatic as me, I'm guessing we've all had moments when we felt alone and misunderstood, like we're the only people alive who ever experienced the specific kind of hurt or stress or frustration or sadness we were feeling. But that's what's so powerful about the Easter story. I know Easter is usually about celebrations and happiness and cute animals popping out of eggs or whatever, but before Easter Sunday came Good Friday, where Jesus suffered and died, all for you and me. So Easter is a reminder that we don't follow a God who can't understand us. We follow a Savior who is right there with us when we're hurting, because **Jesus understands our pain.**

WEEK 3

So listen. I won't go into details because we only have a minute, but I recently really hurt someone who matters a lot to me. I didn't mean to. I wasn't trying to. But I hurt them. And when I realized what I'd done, I felt horrible. Sad. Embarrassed. Ashamed. Have you ever been there? Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the weight of something you'd done? Ever worried your mistakes make you a "bad" person? If you can relate, I want to talk about Good Friday. That's the day, 2,000 years ago, when Jesus hung on a cross, an innocent man dying between two criminals. But when Jesus looked at one of those "bad" guys, he didn't shame him or reject him. He welcomed and embraced him with love. You and I have done a lot of things that break God's heart, but just like that man discovered, **Jesus shows us love** when He looks at us too.

WEEK 4

It's cool that we celebrate Easter every year, but sometimes I get a little numb to it, you know? Cross, tomb, resurrection — I've heard it so many times it's easy for it to lose its significance. So let's try something. No matter how many times you've heard the Easter story, let's try to hear it like it's the very first time. Here's what happened. Two thousand years ago, God, the Creator of the whole universe, stepped into a human body with a plan to do something that had never happened before and would never happen again. Jesus, God Himself, was killed. He could have stopped it, but He didn't come to save Himself. He came to rescue us. But then, a few days after He died, Jesus just *got up*. He left death, hopelessness, and the power of sin behind — not for Himself, but for you and me. Death and sin don't have to have the last word for this one reason: **Jesus is alive!**

WEEK 5

It's not always easy to know who to trust. Some of us trust just about everyone, no questions asked. Others take our time vetting people before we really open up. And some of us just assume no one is trustworthy — maybe because we've been hurt, betrayed, or let down one too many times. But here's the thing. When enough people break our trust, we might start to wonder if God is like that too. We're not sure if God can be trusted. There's a guy in the Bible named Thomas, who was one of Jesus' closest followers. He heard Jesus had risen from the dead, but he wasn't sure if he could trust that story. It makes sense. He had just watched Jesus die. The idea that Jesus could be back probably seemed too good to be true. But when Jesus showed up in person, He proved to Thomas what He wants us to know too: that **Jesus can be trusted.**

WEEK 6

If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of their group and clears the way so others can follow behind more easily. A trail breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along. In so many ways, that's what Jesus does for us. He broke a new trail just by existing — never before had anyone been fully human and fully God at the same time. He broke more trails by teaching us new ways of loving God and loving others. And then He broke one last trail with the good news of His resurrection. Before He left earth, you could say Jesus pointed to the trail He had made, invited us to follow along, and asked us to bring others with us. **Jesus gave us a mission** — to follow Him.

MARKETING CHECKLIST



BEFORE THE SERIES

✓ TO DO

	Print your Series Promo Poster and Series Promo Cards and display them where families and volunteers can see them.
	Customize your Volunteer Hub and Parent Hub web pages for this series.
	Customize and send the Parent Email for this series.
	Send the Volunteer Email for Week 1 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.
	Review the suggested Social Media Posts and Captions for this series.
	Post the Bumper Video on social media with this caption: We're starting a new series on Easter this week called Break Trail! 🌲🍁🌲 Hiking shoes and backpacks are optional.

AFTER WEEK 1

✓ TO DO

	Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 1 on social media with this caption: In case you missed it, Week 1 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus never gives up on us. Here's a recap.
	Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 1 on social media and/or send with this caption: Remember, Jesus didn't give up on His friends, even when they gave up on themselves – and He does the same for you.
	Send the Volunteer Email for Week 2 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.

AFTER WEEK 2

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 2 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, Week 2 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus understands our pain. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 2 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, whatever kind of pain you're experiencing right now, whether it's physical, emotional, or spiritual pain, you're not in this alone. Jesus knows what you're going through.</p>
	<p>Send the Volunteer Email for Week 3 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.</p>

AFTER WEEK 3

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 3 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, Week 3 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus shows us love. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 3 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, even when you're a mess, Jesus shows you love that is kind, compassionate, and gracious. And in His name, you can reflect that same love to others.</p>
	<p>Send the Volunteer Email for Week 4 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.</p>

AFTER WEEK 4

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 4 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, Week 4 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus is alive. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 4 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, because of Easter Sunday, death and sin don't have to have the last word for this one reason: Jesus is alive! And thanks to Him, we can be too.</p>
	<p>Send the Volunteer Email for Week 5 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.</p>

AFTER WEEK 5

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 5 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, Week 5 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus can be trusted. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 5 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember the story of Thomas? Like him, the more we look for evidence that Jesus is who He says He is, the more we'll see He's trustworthy.</p>
	<p>Send the Volunteer Email for Week 6 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.</p>

AFTER WEEK 6

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 6 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, Week 6 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus gives us a mission. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 6 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, our mission is to continue the work Jesus started here on earth. And the mission Jesus gave us really matters.</p>
	<p>Get ready for the next series!</p>

Grow students

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS & CAPTIONS



Need some help deciding what to post on social media before and during this series? Here's our suggestion: each week, share the media we've provided in your Graphics and Videos folder using the captions below.

BEFORE THE SERIES



BUMPER VIDEO

We're starting a new series on Easter this week called Break Trail! 🌲🍄🌲 Hiking shoes and backpacks are optional.

AFTER WEEK 1



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 1)

In case you missed it, Week 1 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus never gives up on us. Here's a recap.

AFTER WEEK 2



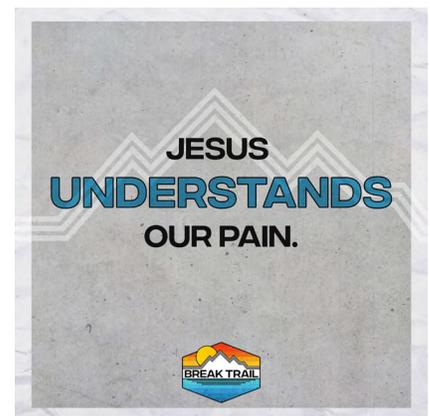
1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 2)

In case you missed it, Week 2 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus understands our pain. Here's a recap.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 1)

Remember, Jesus didn't give up on His friends, even when they gave up on themselves — and He does the same for you.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 2)

Remember, whatever kind of pain you're experiencing right now, whether it's physical, emotional, or spiritual pain, you're not in this alone. Jesus knows what you're going through.

AFTER WEEK 3



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 3)

In case you missed it, Week 3 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus shows us love. Here's a recap.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 3)

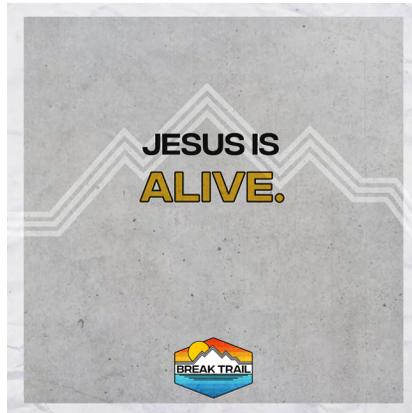
Remember, even when you're a mess, Jesus shows you love that is kind, compassionate, and gracious. And in His name, you can reflect that same love to others.

AFTER WEEK 4



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 4)

In case you missed it, Week 4 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus is alive. Here's a recap.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 4)

Remember, because of Easter Sunday, death and sin don't have to have the last word for this one reason: Jesus is alive! And thanks to Him, we can be too.

AFTER WEEK 5



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 5)

In case you missed it, Week 5 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus can be trusted. Here's a recap.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 5)

Remember the story of Thomas? Like him, the more we look for evidence that Jesus is who He says He is, the more we'll see He's trustworthy.

AFTER WEEK 6



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 6)

In case you missed it, Week 6 of Break Trail was all about how Jesus gives us a mission. Here's a recap.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 6)

Remember, our mission is to continue the work Jesus started here on earth. And the mission Jesus gave us really matters.

what we're teaching



ADD YOUR LOGO HERE



what we're teaching



ADD YOUR LOGO HERE



what we're teaching



ADD YOUR LOGO HERE



what we're teaching



ADD YOUR LOGO HERE

