



A 4-WEEK SERIES ON

FRIENDSHIP

FROM OUR ANNUAL **TEACHING STRATEGY**

BY BIANCA QUEZADA (WITH ROBERT DEVORE)



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ABOUT THIS SERIES

Being a good friend is easy! As long as you make time to hang out, remember their birthday, and answer their texts, you're eligible for the Great Friend Award . . . right? Friendship might feel easy when life is easy, but it gets more complicated when your friends are hurting or struggling. What should you do? What should you say? What should you not say? When our friends need help, there are no easy answers, but in this 4-week series, we'll follow the lead of a few people who've been there. Through the stories of Job, Ruth, Naomi, Elijah, and Eli, we'll see how God invites us to "be with" people when they're **grieving, lonely, in need, or feeling hopeless**, and how God is already with them.

THIS SERIES AT A GLANCE

WEEK 1

This week, we'll see what the story of Job and his friends can teach us about helping others deal with loss.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Be with people when they're grieving.
- **THE BIBLE:** Job 2:11-13, 16:2; Psalm 34:18; Romans 8:28
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Question, Story, Image, Object Lesson, Response, Discussion

WEEK 2

This week, we'll see what the story of Naomi and Ruth can teach us about helping others feel less alone.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Be with people when they're lonely.
- **THE BIBLE:** Ruth 1:1-18; I John 4:11-13; John 14:16
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Poll, Story, Object Lesson, Discussion

WEEK 3

This week, we'll see what the story of Elijah and the widow can teach us about helping others when they're in need.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Be with people when they're in need.
- **THE BIBLE:** I Kings 17:8-16; Matthew 25:40; Luke 12:32-34
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Question, Discussion, Music

WEEK 4

This week, we'll see what the story of Hannah can teach us about sharing hope when someone is feeling hopeless.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Be with people when they need hope.
- **THE BIBLE:** I Samuel 1:1-20; Romans 15:13; John 8:12
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Question, Story, Prayer, Discussion



Week 4 of this series could lead to conversations about clinical anxiety or depression, self-harm, or suicide. Before you begin, be sure you're familiar with the mandated reporting policies in your area and remind your volunteers of their responsibilities too.

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

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 recommend using either large panels of plywood, foam insulation boards, or refrigerator boxes**. Once you've got your backdrop, cover it in as much [construction paper](#), butcher paper, and newspaper or magazine pages as you can find. If you want to stick with the same color scheme as the series graphics, use primarily red, white, teal, and black paper. Rip the paper by hand into irregular shapes and sizes and glue it to your backdrop in a layered collage.

Since this series is all about friendships, try personalizing the backdrop **by adding photos of your youth group to the collage**. Look for photos with multiple students in the picture to symbolize togetherness, but make sure you have a wide variety of students represented — not just the students who like to pose for pictures. If you're short on photos, set up a photo booth each week of the series and add more photos to the backdrop each week.

Finish things off by **painting or printing the series title on top of the backdrop**.



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 these fonts!

The title of this series was created using this [vector image](#), rather than a font. But if you're not sure how to edit vectors, here's a similar font you could use instead!

RANSOM

Download this font [here!](#)

And use these colors!



HEX #DF0708
CMYK: 6/100/100/1



HEX #A11214
CMYK: 24/100/100/20



HEX #196D6F
CMYK: 87/40/52/17



HEX #C38B8B
CMYK: 23/50/38/0

MUSIC by David Magallanes & Elle Campbell

Here are a few worship songs that tie into this month's theme by praising God for being with us during difficult times.

- **"Never Leave"** (Maverick City Music)
- **"Not Going Anywhere"** (Amanda Lindsey Cook)
- **"Another In the Fire"** (Hillsong United)
- **"You Hold it All Together"** (UPPERROOM, Maverick City Music)
- **"Strength Is Rising"** (SEU Worship)
- **"Comforter"** (Amanda Lindsey Cook)
- **"Evidence"** (Josh Baldwin)
- **"Best Friends"** (Hillsong Young & Free)
- **"Closer"** (Maverick City Music)
- **"Do It Again"** (Elevation Worship)

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 . . .

- **"With You"** (GAWVI)
- **"Friends"** (Andy Mineo)
- **"No Further"** (Wande)
- **"Millionaire (Good Like That)"** (Tauren Wells, Kirk Franklin)
- **"Us"** (Tedashii, Jawan)
- **"I Look To You"** (Stars Go Dim)
- **"Higher"** (Danielle Apicella)

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 . . .

- [Answer + Answer = Answer](#)
- [Mellow On A Fellow](#)
- [Taste Buds](#)
- [You With Me?](#)

Since this series is about friendship, all of these games involve plenty of teamwork — you know, so your students can practice being great pals! 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

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 . . .

WHAT TO GET

WEEK 1:

- Cardboard
- 2 bags or containers for the cardboard pieces
- Small dry erase board
- An image [like this one](#) of Job and his friends
- [Floor cushions](#) or [low stools](#)
- The handouts provided in your Week 1 folder
- Pens

WEEK 2:

- Props and costumes (like robes, beards, and suitcases)
- Your phone

WEEK 3:

- [A large bucket](#)
- [Ponchos](#)
- [Tarps](#)
- Jell-O
- [Tennis balls](#)
- [White board](#) or [sticky notes](#)
- The song "[If You Got a Problem](#)" by Joy Oladokun

WHAT TO MAKE

WEEK 1:

- For the "Face-Off" activity, cut out cardboard pieces and draw different sets of expressive eyes and mouths, [like these](#), where different combinations of eyes and mouths show different emotions.
- Before your teaching time, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 1 folder on card stock. Place one under each seat, along with a pen.

WEEK 3:

- If you plan to fill your bucket with anything weird for the "Bucket Balance" activity (like Jell-O), be sure to prep your supplies in advance.

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 Shala Graham and Porfirio Caldera



REVISE

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

In Week 1, move the "I'm With You" response time to small groups. Because your middle schoolers may need some extra help identifying people who are experiencing grief and loss, this activity might be better received if there's an adult available to help and talk them through it.

In Week 2, shorten the teaching about Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah and spend more time talking about middle-school-specific situations. It might be hard for middle schoolers to emotionally connect with the idea of adults losing their spouses. Keep this part of the story short and spend more time talking about comparable situations for middle schoolers, like when a friendship falls apart, or they're not invited to an event, or their friends hang out without them.

In Week 3, be prepared to help them define "practical needs."

In Week 4, revise the "With You Prayers" by giving middle schoolers more examples to help them pray. Middle schoolers are at a stage where they're still figuring out their faith, so don't assume they know how to talk to God with confidence. At this page, prayer might seem foreign or awkward, so help them understand prayer is as simple as having a conversation.



REMEMBER

Keep in mind that your middle schoolers are still in the process of developing their empathy muscles, which is why this series is so important! But while their brains are still growing, they'll need lots of practical and relatable examples to help them understand other people's emotional and physical needs. This series includes lots of examples already, so be sure not to skip those for your middle schoolers.

HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS by Travis Bannon and Jada Price



REVISE

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

In Week 3, revise the application section by.

If you would like to start smaller in individual groups (while doing something like a clothing drive or volunteering as an entire youth group, for example), have students brainstorm ways to use their individual gifts and talents to serve those in need. Give each student a notecard and have them write down at least 2-3 things they think they are good at and/or enjoy doing. Then go around and brainstorm how they could individually or in teams serve others with that gift.

In Week 4, let students lead the "Strike a Pose" activity instead of adults.

Rather than having an adult lead the group in the poses for this activity, recruit a few high schoolers to lead the rest of the group — especially if you have a few students who like to be the center of attention. This will help the rest of your students stay engaged and help you avoid any accusations of cheesiness from your older students.



REMEMBER

Throughout this series, remember that your high schoolers are more ready than your middle schoolers to start thinking about the nuances of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Because this series is all about supporting others when they're in need, one way to deepen this conversation with your high schoolers is by talking about codependency and unhealthy boundaries. Remind your high schoolers it's not their job to rescue anyone from their grief, loneliness, needs, or hopelessness. They can be present for others without taking on unhealthy amounts of responsibility for them.

HACKS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

by Addison Roberts and Stephanie Newland



REVISE

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

In Week 1, be sensitive to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder during the "Face Off" activity. Some folks with Autism Spectrum Disorder struggle with identifying the emotions of others, so be careful about your wording on this activity. The curriculum is already worded in a way that takes this into account, but when ad-libbing, be careful not to tease anyone who struggles with this or imply they're not intelligent.

In Week 2, if you have students with certain kinds of disabilities, revise the "Fastest Draw" activities so they're no longer a race. If you have students who may have difficulty completing this activity quickly, don't make this activity a race. Instead of timing each round, let students move at their own pace and score them whenever they're finished.

In Week 3, highlight the story of a person with special needs who is helping to meet others' needs. While they may be well-intentioned, teenagers may tend to see their peers who have special needs as people they need to help. That might sometimes be true, but this is a great opportunity to remind all of your students that people with needs and disabilities are still capable of helping meet others' needs.



REPLACE

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

In Week 3, replace the "Bucket Balance" activity with a more inclusive game for those who with physical disabilities. For more free game ideas, check out the [Grow Games and Icebreakers app](#) and apply the "friendship" filter to find tons of games that require teamwork to play. When you've found one you like, point out the ways teammates had to help each other when they were in need.



REMEMBER

Throughout the series, remember to communicate well to all families that this series covers some hard life situations — especially your families with students who have special needs. For some students who already struggle with being overstimulated by their everyday circumstances, bringing up these hard topics unexpectedly may trigger an unexpected emotional or behavioral response.



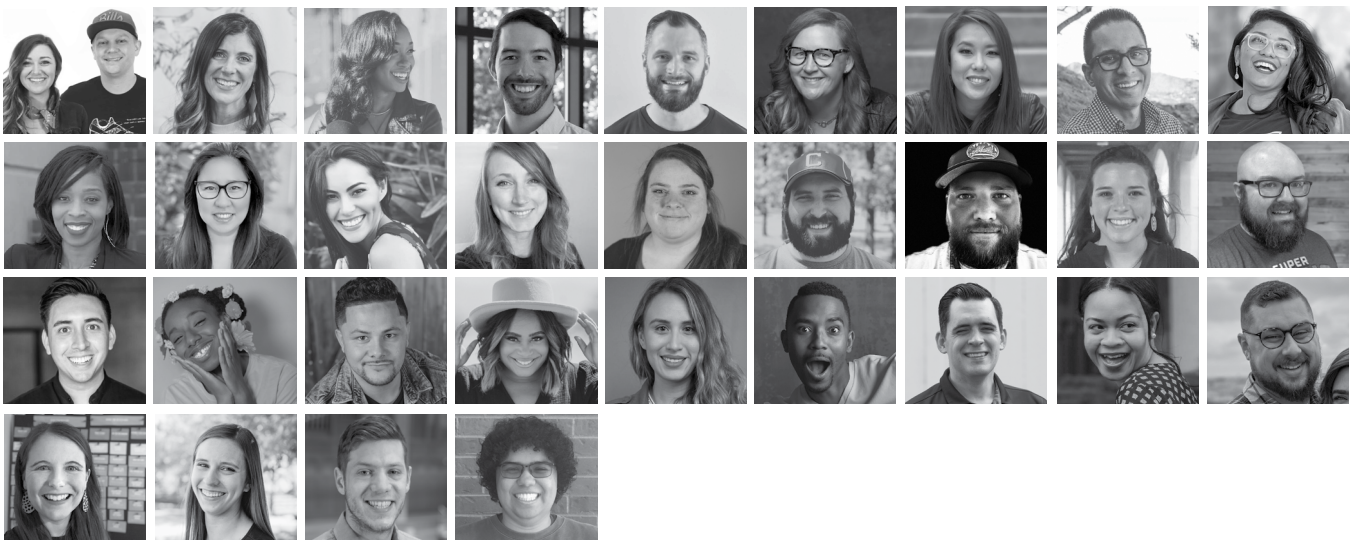
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bianca Quezada is the Children's Ministry Director at Bethany Presbyterian Church in the Queen Anne neighborhood of Seattle. The role involves coordinating many generous volunteers and crafting creative ways for kids to meet Jesus. If you'd like to chat with Bianca about how to get youth talking, equipping volunteers, or science (Bianca has a B.S. in Physics and Astronomy), reach out! She would love to connect with you!

CONNECT WITH BIANCA!



ALONG WITH . . .



SERIES DEVELOPMENT: Bianca Quezada, Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Amber Stephens, David Magallanes, Stephen Switzer, Emily Acton, Jeremiah Herring, Amber Gaddis, Kellee Gentry

HACKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS: Shala Graham, Porfirio Caldera

HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS: Travis Bannon, Jada Price

HACKS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: Addison Roberts, Stephanie Newland

GAMES: Jeremiah Herring, Tyler Grant, Jordan Floro

MUSIC: David Magallanes, Elle Campbell

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

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LAYOUT DESIGN: Jules Gray, Elle Campbell

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DEVOTIONAL

FOR VOLUNTEERS

WITH YOU

STUDY

Sometimes life gives us more than we can handle. We aren't sure what to do, where to go, or who to confide in. And all of us know others who are going through "it" too. What they need most is still a mystery to them and an even deeper mystery to you. So what can you do to help? One of the things God gives us during difficult seasons is each other. You'll be helping students see beyond cliché reactions to other people's problems into a world where they can do something practical and loving. Search for yourself to receive the encouragement to **be with people when they're grieving, lonely, in need, or lacking hope.**

To get ready for this series on friendship, **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: Be with people when they're grieving. (Job 2:11-13, 16:2; Psalm 34:18; Romans 8:28)

WEEK 2: Be with people when they're lonely. (Ruth 1:1-18; I John 4:11-13; John 14:16)

WEEK 3: Be with people when they're in need. (I Kings 17:8-16; Matthew 25:40; Luke 12:32-34).

WEEK 4: Be with people when they need hope. (I Samuel 1:1-20; Romans 15:13; John 8:12)

PRAY

When's the last time you experienced **grief? Loneliness? Need? Hopelessness?** When you experienced those things, what (and who) helped you most? Ask God to bring to mind people who were really helpful and supportive during those moments of breakthrough. What were they like? Thank God for them.

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

Now, take a few seconds to think about someone else who is experiencing **grief, loneliness, a prolonged need, or feelings of hopelessness.** Think of a step you can take toward being with them in a way that communicates God's love and presence. **Whatever your next step is right now, take it. Then help students do the same.**



WEEK 1 SERMON GUIDE

WITH YOU

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're grieving.

THE BIBLE

Job 2:11-13, 16:2; Psalm 34:18;
Romans 8:28

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Face-Off

- Welcome to *With You!* The goal of the next few weeks is pretty simple. When a friend is having a hard time, we want to figure out how to be there for them. That starts with something called “emotional intelligence.”
- Everyone in this room is intelligent, of course, but there are different kinds of intelligences. You can be intelligent about music, or language, or math, or athletics, or the Marvel universe. So let’s see how smart you are about feelings.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Use cardboard to make different sets of expressive eyes and mouths, like [these](#), where different combinations of eyes and mouths show different emotions. Put the eyes in one bag and the mouths in another bag. For each round, have one student draw from the eye bag and another student draw from the mouth bag, and then put them together to make a face. Have those students both attempt to imitate the face and choose a winner. Play as many rounds as you’d like, with as many students as you’d like.
- **Sometimes, people’s emotions can be easy to read. Other times when it might take a little more effort.**

ACTIVITY | Reverse Emotion Charades

- Did you know scientists used to believe that there were only six distinct human emotions? Now, they identify at least 27! Those are a lot of feelings to keep up with.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Split your students into two teams and call two students to the front to be the guessers. Have them stand facing the rest of the students. While you stand behind the guessers (where they can't see you) hold up a dry erase board where you can write emotions for the audience to act out. Remind your actors not to use words or sounds and award points to the team that guesses each emotion correctly, like . . .
 - In love.
 - Scared.
 - Excited.
 - Bored.
 - Relieved.
 - Insulted.
 - Confused.
 - Annoyed.

QUESTION | "Has anyone ever acted before?"

- Being a good actor can help you win a game of Reverse Charades, but acting is also a great way to imagine what it's like to be someone else. Actors are really good at putting themselves in others' shoes.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to raise their hands in response to the first question below. Then ask a few of those students to respond to the follow-up questions.
 - **Has anyone ever acted before?**
 - **Who was your favorite character to play?**
 - **Have you ever had to perform a really emotional scene?**
 - **Which emotion is the most difficult for you to portray? Why?**
- Acting can help us put ourselves in the shoes of other people, but the ability to understand other people's emotions and perspectives isn't just a skill actors need. It's something every follower of Jesus needs to learn too.

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

STORY | Talk about a time someone was insensitive while someone else was grieving.

- Emotions are complicated. Take grief, for example, which we feel when we experience the loss of someone or something that matters to us. Grief isn't one of the 27 emotions we mentioned because grief is a combination of a lot of feelings, like . . .
 - Sadness.
 - Fear.
 - Confusion.
 - Nostalgia.
 - Anxiety.
 - And more.

- When a friend is experiencing all of those feelings at once, it's understandable that you might have feelings of your own, like . . .
 - Sympathy.
 - Anxiety.
 - Awkwardness.
 - Confusion.
- When a friend is grieving, you don't always know what to say or do, and you definitely don't want to do the wrong thing. Should you call them? Give them space? Act sad? Try to make them laugh? Say something? Not say anything?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time someone said something unhelpful when someone was grieving. This could be a story about your own grief, or your own mistake when someone else was grieving, or a situation you only witnessed. Either way, share what was said and why that comment was not helpful.*

QUESTION | "Why aren't these statements helpful?"

- When someone is experiencing loss, people usually mean well, but sometimes say the wrong thing.
 - "God needed an angel!"
 - "Everything happens for a reason."
 - "God will never give you more than you can handle."
 - "There are plenty of fish in the sea."
 - "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."
 - Or even, "I know exactly how you feel," followed by a story that is not at all relevant.
- **When someone is grieving, why do you think these statements aren't helpful?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*
- When someone is grieving, comments like these can be hurtful because they minimize a person's pain or rush them to "just get over it." So if we want to be people who love God by loving others well, we've got to figure out how to love others when they're grieving.

IMAGE | Job's Friends

- The Bible is full of clear guidance and wisdom about how to love God and others, but the Bible is full of stories that show us what not to do as well. One of these stories is the story of Job and his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you teach, show the image of Job and his friends, [like this one](#), on screen.*
- Job is the main character in the Old Testament book of Job, and he had it all — ten kids, a wife, tons of animals, and a bunch of land. He was happy, wealthy, and he loved God too.
 - But suddenly, everything was taken away from Job.
 - His animals were either stolen or killed.
 - All of his children died in a natural disaster.
 - He got sick, with horrible sores all over his body.
 - His only remaining family member, his wife, told him to give up, "curse God, and die."
 - Then his friends showed up and lectured him!

SCRIPTURE | Job 16:2

- While Job was grieving, his friends gave long speeches, telling him what to do, making assumptions about his character, and making judgments about why God let this happen to Job. God eventually spoke and said Job's friends needed to stop talking. Job reacted this way . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Job 16:2.*

SCRIPTURE | Job 2:11-13

- But Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar didn't have it all wrong. Before the lectures and misinformed speeches, they actually had a few things right.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Job 2:11-13.*
- When Job's friends first heard about his troubles, they . . .
 - **SYMPATHIZED WITH JOB.** They had compassion for Job when he was hurting. They cared!
 - **WORKED TOGETHER.** Together, they made plans to comfort their friend. They knew him, knew each other, and knew he shouldn't be alone.
 - **SHOWED UP FOR JOB.** They cared enough about Job to make the trip to see him.
 - **EMPATHIZED WITH JOB.** Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar didn't simply show Job sympathy. They went the extra mile and showed him empathy. Empathy isn't just feeling bad for someone — it's feeling their feelings with them, either because you've experienced what they're experiencing before, or because you're trying to put yourself in their shoes.
- In our culture, we're not accustomed to tearing our clothes or sprinkling dust on our heads when we're grieving, but we can see how affected Job's friends were. Although the catastrophes that happened to Job hadn't happened to them, they made Job's pain their pain.
 - Job's friends sat with him for an entire week. They were patient because they knew grief is not a quick process.
 - They were also silent. They knew Job's pain couldn't be fixed with a few kind words, so they didn't speak — at least, not for a while. This was probably difficult, but they seemed to know Job's circumstances were so overwhelming there were no words that could capture what was happening.
 - Later, God would correct Job's friends for all the words they said after that first week. But God never corrected them for being present, sitting nearby, or simply being with their friend.

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 34:18

- When someone is grieving, they don't need us to lecture them, correct them, or quickly fix it. They need us to be with them, like God is with us.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 34:18.*

OBJECT LESSON | Sitting Shiva

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, place some [floor cushions](#) or [low stools](#) at the front of your room. Sit down as you teach. If you'd like, invite one or two people to sit with you, or invite all of your students to sit on the floor for the rest of the teaching time.
- There's a Jewish tradition inspired by the story of Job and his friends called "sitting shiva." In this tradition, after a funeral, the friends and family of those who are grieving live with and care for them for seven days. Depending on the family, sitting shiva might include traditions like:
 - Sitting on low stools, like Job and his friends sat on the ground.
 - Washing their hands before entering the house.
 - Lighting the same candle for all seven days.
 - Covering all the mirrors.
- Sitting shiva looks different for different families, but the purpose is always to make sure people who are grieving are not alone.
- So what would it look like for you and I to show up for our friends when they're grieving the loss of someone or something that really matters to them?
 - Instead of avoiding awkwardness and hoping our friends will "just get over it," how can we show them how much we care about them?
 - How can we make their loss our loss?
 - How can we **be with people when they're grieving?**

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

HOW TO BE WITH SOMEONE IN GRIEF

- It can be pretty uncomfortable to be with people during one of the worst moments of their life, but it's worth it. When we show up for our friends who are grieving . . .
 - Our friends can see God's love and care for them through our love and care for them.
 - We get to see God at work in our friend's life.
 - God can work not only through us, but in us as well, as God's Spirit helps us become more compassionate, patient, selfless, and loving.
- With practice (and God's help) we can learn how to be the kind of friend our friends need when they're going through something challenging. And wouldn't it be great if we could learn that now, before our friends really need us?
- Grieving looks different for everyone, so there's not one correct way to be with a friend who's grieving, but here's a start. When a friend is grieving . . .
 - **LET THEM KNOW YOU'RE THERE.** You don't even have to talk! Just let them know you're there through your words and actions. Offer them a ride to church or school. Ask if they want to hang out. Send a text. Get a few of your friends together (like Job's friends did) if it will help your friend feel less alone.
 - **LISTEN:** They may not want to talk a lot about what's going on, but when they do, try not to interrupt.

- **BE PATIENT:** Your friend may need your support for days, weeks, or even years. What they need from you may look different over time as the grief eases, but keep checking in with your friend as time goes on. Even if they don't seem as sad as they did at the beginning, it doesn't mean they're not still grieving.
- **REMEMBER IMPORTANT DATES:** Your friend may be sad around big anniversaries, so do things to make life a little less stressful for them. You could pick up their homework for them, bake some cookies, write a card, or even confidentially explain to teachers what's going on if they're absent or struggling.
- **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:** When a friend is grieving, remember they might have outbursts or mood swings that are not about you. Try not to take it personally. Talk about how you're feeling with a trusted adult and make sure you have the support you need to support your friend.
- What Job's friends got right was being willing to sit with Job without saying a word, because that's what he needed. As you leave today, think about how equipped you are to sit and be with your friends they need you.

RESPONSE | I'm With You

- You may be thinking, "This sounds good in theory, but there's one problem: I don't even have friends who would come to me, or who I would go to, during a time of crisis."
 - If that's you, I get it. I've had times in my life when I felt that way too. Making and keeping friends isn't easy for everyone all the time. But if you feel a little friendless right now, remember it won't always feel this way.
 - Whether you feel this way or not, I want to challenge you all to start thinking of each other as a community you can rely on. We can be the kind of people who care for each other and look out for each other. Keep an eye out for people in this group who may be searching for friends or someone to talk to and start building those relationships.
- No matter your situation right now, ask yourself . . .
 - How aware am I of the feelings of my friends and family?
 - How comfortable am I with reaching out when someone needs support?
 - How comfortable am I with listening to people and not needing to respond?
 - How comfortable am I with silence?
 - Who do I know who is grieving?
 - What would it look like to "be with" them?
- Remember, if we want someone to know God is with them, we need to be with them too. So this week, I hope you'll go out of your way to **be with someone when they're grieving.**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 1 folder on card stock. Place one under each seat, along with a pen. Encourage students to write a note to someone who is grieving or needs a friend.

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WITH YOU

Being a good friend is easy! As long as you make time to hang out, remember their birthday, and answer their texts, you're eligible for the Great Friend Award . . . right? Friendship might feel easy when life is easy, but it gets more complicated when your friends are hurting or struggling. What should you do? What should you say? What should you not say? When our friends need help, there are no easy answers, but in this 4-week series, we'll follow the lead of a few people who've been there. Through the stories of Job, Ruth, Naomi, Elijah, and Eli, we'll see how God invites us to "be with" people when they're **grieving, lonely, in need**, or **feeling hopeless**, and how God is already with them.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're grieving.

THE BIBLE

Job 2:11-13, 16:2; Psalm 34:18;
Romans 8:28

- In 10 seconds or less, try to name every emotion you've felt so far today.
- How good do you think you are reading other people's emotions? Explain!
- How could someone get better at understanding other people's emotions?
- Have you ever felt awkward around someone who was experiencing a big emotion like grief? Why were you uncomfortable?
- What are some reasons a person might experience grief?
- When Job was grieving, what did his friends do that was helpful? What did they do that wasn't helpful?
- Read Romans 8:28. Even though this verse is true, why is it not the most helpful verse to quote to someone who's grieving? What's a verse you could share instead?
- When someone is grieving, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?
- When someone is grieving, how could the response of Jesus-followers help or hurt their faith?
- Who do you know who is grieving right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?

ACTIVITY

Identify someone who is grieving and write them notes of encouragement, letting them know you are holding their loss along with them. Collect and mail the notes.

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers

WITH YOU

Being a good friend is easy! As long as you make time to hang out, remember their birthday, and answer their texts, you're eligible for the Great Friend Award . . . right? Friendship might feel easy when life is easy, but it gets more complicated when your friends are hurting or struggling. What should you do? What should you say? What should you not say? When our friends need help, there are no easy answers, but in this 4-week series, we'll follow the lead of a few people who've been there. Through the stories of Job, Ruth, Naomi, Elijah, and Eli, we'll see how God invites us to "be with" people when they're **grieving, lonely, in need**, or **feeling hopeless**, and how God is already with them.

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Be with people when they're grieving.

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- In 10 seconds or less, try to name every emotion you've felt so far today.
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- What are some reasons a person might experience grief?
- When Job was grieving, what did his friends do that was helpful? What did they do that wasn't helpful?
- When someone is grieving, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?
- Who do you know who is grieving right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?

ACTIVITY

Identify someone who is grieving and write them notes of encouragement, letting them know you are holding their loss along with them. Collect and mail the notes.

WEEK 1 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

WITH YOU

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're grieving.

THE BIBLE

Job 2:11-13, 16:2; Psalm 34:18;
Romans 8:28

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Face-Off

- Welcome to *With You!* The goal of the next few weeks is pretty simple. When a friend is having a hard time, we want to figure out how to be there for them. That starts with something called “emotional intelligence.”
- Everyone in this room is intelligent, of course, but there are different kinds of intelligences. You can be intelligent about music, or language, or math, or athletics, or the Marvel universe. So let’s see how smart you are about feelings.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Use cardboard to make different sets of expressive eyes and mouths, like [these](#), where different combinations of eyes and mouths show different emotions. Put the eyes in one bag and the mouths in another bag. For each round, have one student draw from the eye bag and another student draw from the mouth bag, and then put them together to make a face. Have those students both attempt to imitate the face and choose a winner. Play as many rounds as you’d like, with as many students as you’d like.
- **Sometimes, people’s emotions can be easy to read. Other times when it might take a little more effort.**

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.

- In 10 seconds or less, try to name every emotion you've felt so far today.
- ☆ How good do you think you are reading other people's emotions? Explain!

ACTIVITY | Reverse Emotion Charades

- Did you know scientists used to believe that there were only six distinct human emotions? Now, they identify at least 27! Those are a lot of feelings to keep up with.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Split your students into two teams and call two students to the front to be the guessers. Have them stand facing the rest of the students. While you stand behind the guessers (where they can't see you) hold up a dry erase board where you can write emotions for the audience to act out. Remind your actors not to use words or sounds and award points to the team that guesses each emotion correctly, like . . .
 - In love.
 - Scared.
 - Excited.
 - Bored.
 - Relieved.
 - Insulted.
 - Confused.
 - Annoyed.

QUESTION | "Has anyone ever acted before?"

- Being a good actor can help you win a game of Reverse Charades, but acting is also a great way to imagine what it's like to be someone else. Actors are really good at putting themselves in others' shoes.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to raise their hands in response to the first question below. Then ask a few of those students to respond to the follow-up questions.
 - **Has anyone ever acted before?**
 - **Who was your favorite character to play?**
 - **Have you ever had to perform a really emotional scene?**
 - **Which emotion is the most difficult for you to portray? Why?**
- Acting can help us put ourselves in the shoes of other people, but the ability to understand other people's emotions and perspectives isn't just a skill actors need. It's something every follower of Jesus needs to learn too.

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.

- ☆ How could someone get better at understanding other people's emotions?
- Have you ever felt awkward around someone who was experiencing a big emotion like grief? Why were you uncomfortable?

STORY | Talk about a time someone was insensitive while someone else was grieving.

- Emotions are complicated. Take grief, for example, which we feel when we experience the loss of someone or something that matters to us. Grief isn't one of the 27 emotions we mentioned because grief is a combination of a lot of feelings, like . . .
 - Sadness.
 - Fear.
 - Confusion.
 - Nostalgia.
 - Anxiety.
 - And more.
- When a friend is experiencing all of those feelings at once, it's understandable that you might have feelings of your own, like . . .
 - Sympathy.
 - Anxiety.
 - Awkwardness.
 - Confusion.
- When a friend is grieving, you don't always know what to say or do, and you definitely don't want to do the wrong thing. Should you call them? Give them space? Act sad? Try to make them laugh? Say something? Not say anything?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time someone said something unhelpful when someone was grieving. This could be a story about your own grief, or your own mistake when someone else was grieving, or a situation you only witnessed. Either way, share what was said and why that comment was not helpful.

QUESTION | "Why aren't these statements helpful?"

- When someone is experiencing loss, people usually mean well, but sometimes say the wrong thing.
 - "God needed an angel!"
 - "Everything happens for a reason."
 - "God will never give you more than you can handle."
 - "There are plenty of fish in the sea."
 - "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."
 - Or even, "I know exactly how you feel," followed by a story that is not at all relevant.
- **When someone is grieving, why do you think these statements aren't helpful?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.
- When someone is grieving, comments like these can be hurtful because they minimize a person's pain or rush them to "just get over it." So if we want to be people who love God by loving others well, we've got to figure out how to love others when they're grieving.

IMAGE | Job's Friends

- The Bible is full of clear guidance and wisdom about how to love God and others, but the Bible is full of stories that show us what not to do as well. One of these stories is the story of Job and his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As you teach, show the image of Job and his friends, [like this one](#), on screen.
- Job is the main character in the Old Testament book of Job, and he had it all — ten kids, a wife, tons of animals, and a bunch of land. He was happy, wealthy, and he loved God too.
 - But suddenly, everything was taken away from Job.
 - His animals were either stolen or killed.
 - All of his children died in a natural disaster.
 - He got sick, with horrible sores all over his body.
 - His only remaining family member, his wife, told him to give up, “curse God, and die.”
 - Then his friends showed up and lectured him!

SCRIPTURE | Job 16:2

- While Job was grieving, his friends gave long speeches, telling him what to do, making assumptions about his character, and making judgments about why God let this happen to Job. God eventually spoke and said Job's friends needed to stop talking. Job reacted this way . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Job 16:2.

SCRIPTURE | Job 2:11-13

- But Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar didn't have it all wrong. Before the lectures and misinformed speeches, they actually had a few things right.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Job 2:11-13.
- When Job's friends first heard about his troubles, they . . .
 - **SYMPATHIZED WITH JOB.** They had compassion for Job when he was hurting. They cared!
 - **WORKED TOGETHER.** Together, they made plans to comfort their friend. They knew him, knew each other, and knew he shouldn't be alone.
 - **SHOWED UP FOR JOB.** They cared enough about Job to make the trip to see him.
 - **EMPATHIZED WITH JOB.** Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar didn't simply show Job sympathy. They went the extra mile and showed him empathy. Empathy isn't just feeling bad for someone — it's feeling their feelings with them, either because you've experienced what they're experiencing before, or because you're trying to put yourself in their shoes.
- In our culture, we're not accustomed to tearing our clothes or sprinkling dust on our heads when we're grieving, but we can see how affected Job's friends were. Although the catastrophes that happened to Job hadn't happened to them, they made Job's pain their pain.
 - Job's friends sat with him for an entire week. They were patient because they knew grief is not a quick process.

- They were also silent. They knew Job's pain couldn't be fixed with a few kind words, so they didn't speak — at least, not for a while. This was probably difficult, but they seemed to know Job's circumstances were so overwhelming there were no words that could capture what was happening.
- Later, God would correct Job's friends for all the words they said after that first week. But God never corrected them for being present, sitting nearby, or simply being with their friend.

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 a person might experience grief?**
 - **When Job was grieving, what did his friends do that was helpful? What did they do that wasn't helpful?**

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 34:18

- When someone is grieving, they don't need us to lecture them, correct them, or quickly fix it. They need us to be with them, like God is with us.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Psalm 34:18.

OBJECT LESSON | Sitting Shiva

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, place some [floor cushions](#) or [low stools](#) at the front of your room. Sit down as you teach. If you'd like, invite one or two people to sit with you, or invite all of your students to sit on the floor for the rest of the teaching time.
- There's a Jewish tradition inspired by the story of Job and his friends called "sitting shiva." In this tradition, after a funeral, the friends and family of those who are grieving live with and care for them for seven days. Depending on the family, sitting shiva might include traditions like:
 - Sitting on low stools, like Job and his friends sat on the ground.
 - Washing their hands before entering the house.
 - Lighting the same candle for all seven days.
 - Covering all the mirrors.
- Sitting shiva looks different for different families, but the purpose is always to make sure people who are grieving are not alone.
- So what would it look like for you and I to show up for our friends when they're grieving the loss of someone or something that really matters to them?
 - Instead of avoiding awkwardness and hoping our friends will "just get over it," how can we show them how much we care about them?
 - How can we make their loss our loss?
 - How can we **be with people when they're grieving?**

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

HOW TO BE WITH SOMEONE IN GRIEF

- It can be pretty uncomfortable to be with people during one of the worst moments of their life, but it's worth it. When we show up for our friends who are grieving . . .
 - Our friends can see God's love and care for them through our love and care for them.
 - We get to see God at work in our friend's life.
 - God can work not only through us, but in us as well, as God's Spirit helps us become more compassionate, patient, selfless, and loving.
- With practice (and God's help) we can learn how to be the kind of friend our friends need when they're going through something challenging. And wouldn't it be great if we could learn that now, before our friends really need us?
- Grieving looks different for everyone, so there's not one correct way to be with a friend who's grieving, but here's a start. When a friend is grieving . . .
 - **LET THEM KNOW YOU'RE THERE.** You don't even have to talk! Just let them know you're there through your words and actions. Offer them a ride to church or school. Ask if they want to hang out. Send a text. Get a few of your friends together (like Job's friends did) if it will help your friend feel less alone.
 - **LISTEN:** They may not want to talk a lot about what's going on, but when they do, try not to interrupt.
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 - **REMEMBER IMPORTANT DATES:** Your friend may be sad around big anniversaries, so do things to make life a little less stressful for them. You could pick up their homework for them, bake some cookies, write a card, or even confidentially explain to teachers what's going on if they're absent or struggling.
 - **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:** When a friend is grieving, remember they might have outbursts or mood swings that are not about you. Try not to take it personally. Talk about how you're feeling with a trusted adult and make sure you have the support you need to support your friend.
- What Job's friends got right was being willing to sit with Job without saying a word, because that's what he needed. As you leave today, think about how equipped you are to sit and be with your friends they need you.

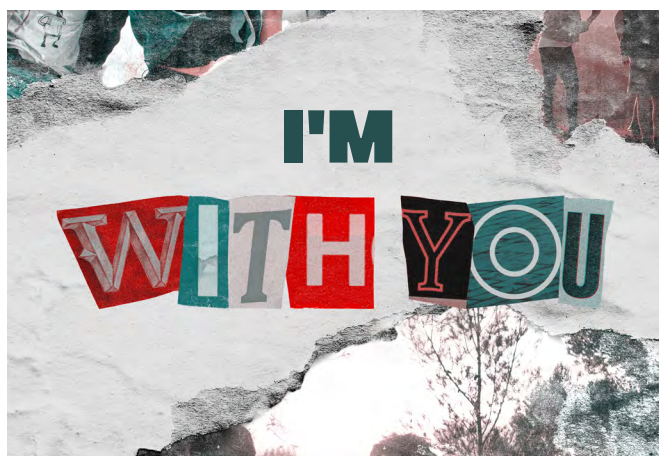
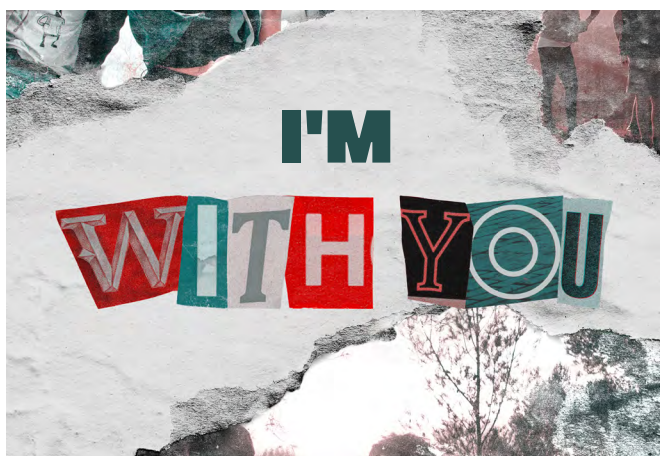
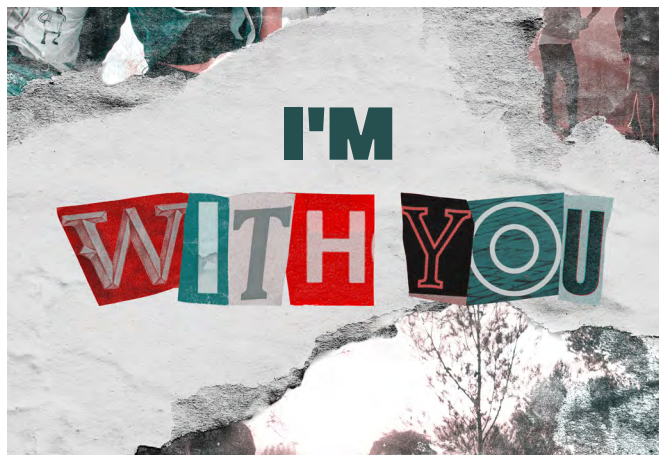
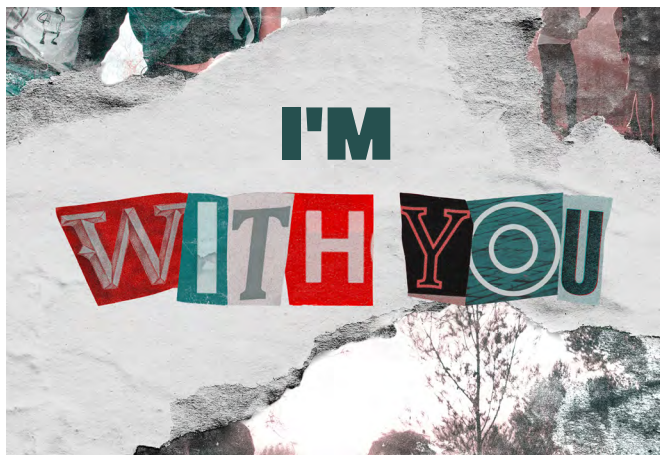
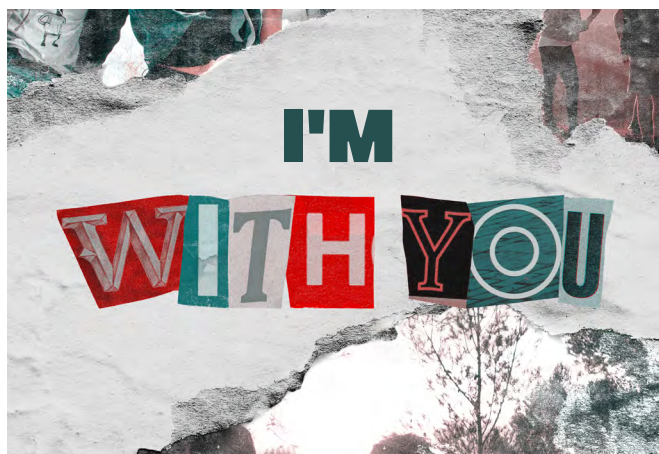
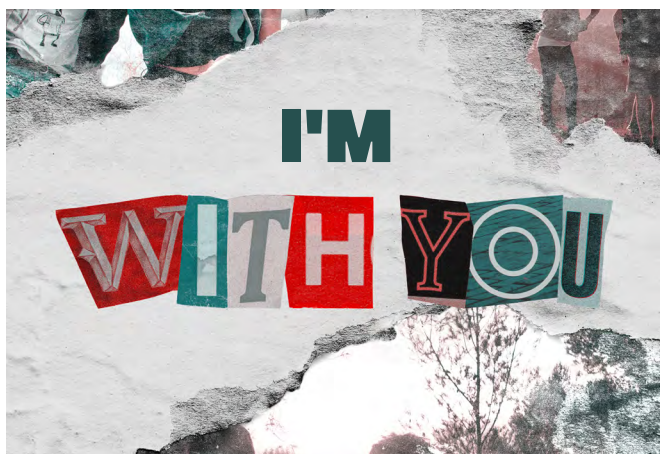
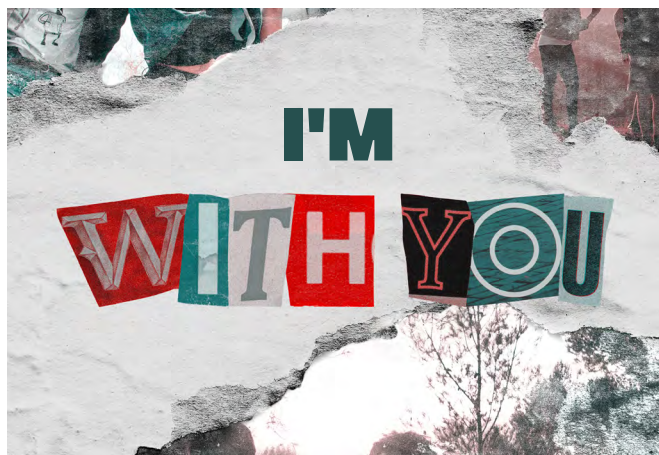
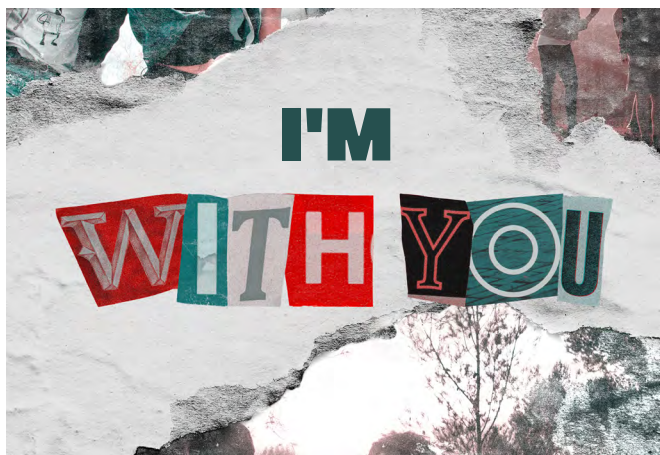
DISCUSSION

- **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 Romans 8:28. Even though this verse is true, why is it not the most helpful verse to quote to someone who's grieving? What's a verse you could share instead?
- When someone is grieving, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?
- ★ When someone is grieving, how could the response of Jesus-followers help or hurt their faith?
- Who do you know who is grieving right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?

RESPONSE | I'm With You

- You may be thinking, "This sounds good in theory, but there's one problem: I don't even have friends who would come to me, or who I would go to, during a time of crisis."
 - If that's you, I get it. I've had times in my life when I felt that way too. Making and keeping friends isn't easy for everyone all the time. But if you feel a little friendless right now, remember it won't always feel this way.
 - Whether you feel this way or not, I want to challenge you all to start thinking of each other as a community you can rely on. We can be the kind of people who care for each other and look out for each other. Keep an eye out for people in this group who may be searching for friends or someone to talk to and start building those relationships.
- No matter your situation right now, ask yourself . . .
 - How aware am I of the feelings of my friends and family?
 - How comfortable am I with reaching out when someone needs support?
 - How comfortable am I with listening to people and not needing to respond?
 - How comfortable am I with silence?
 - Who do I know who is grieving?
 - What would it look like to "be with" them?
- Remember, if we want someone to know God is with them, we need to be with them too. So this week, I hope you'll go out of your way to **be with someone when they're grieving.**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 1 folder on card stock. Place one under each seat, along with a pen. Encourage students to write a note to someone who is grieving or needs a friend.



WEEK 2 SERMON GUIDE

WITH YOU

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when
they're lonely.

THE BIBLE

Ruth 1:1-18; I John 4:11-13;
John 14:16

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Fastest Draw: Solo

- Welcome to Week 2 of *With You!* In this series, we're talking about what to do when our friends are experiencing something difficult. So let's see how well you handle difficult circumstances.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Call two students to the front of the room to compete against each other. For each round, have them race to create a shape with their bodies, like the letter P, a star, a diamond, or a hashtag. These shapes should be difficult or even impossible to create.*

ACTIVITY | Fastest Draw: Teamwork

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *After a few rounds of the Solo version of this game, have your players recruit four teammates. Restart the game, giving the teams the same shapes (and some new ones) to create with their bodies. For each round, the teams must use every person in their group to create the shape. It's a race, so they need to be fast, but their shape needs to be recognizable too! Try shapes like . . .*
 - *The letters P, A, or Z.*
 - *Heart.*
 - *Tree.*
 - *Star.*
 - *Diamond.*
 - *Hashtag.*
 - *House.*

- Sometimes going solo can make life easy and uncomplicated. After all, when you're solo, you don't have to worry about anyone else or their issues! But going solo isn't always the best option.
- We all want and need friends who know us, like us, and are there for us — especially when we're facing a challenge.

POLL | "Have you ever felt lonely?"

- We were built for community! But whether you have tons of friends or just one or two close friends, we all know what it's like to feel lonely.
- There are so many reasons someone might feel lonely, and some of us feel lonely more often than others. Sometimes people feel lonely it's because they're . . .
 - Fighting with their friends.
 - New and haven't made many friends yet.
 - Not getting noticed or invited to things.
 - Feeling misunderstood by others.
 - Feeling like everyone is laughing at or excluding them.
 - Experiencing anxiety or depression.
 - Dealing with the consequences of a damaged reputation.
 - Struggling with a loss or challenge no one knows about or can relate to.
- Sometimes people feel lonely and they're not really sure why! There might even be people in this room right now, surrounded by people and friends, who still feel lonely. So how about you? **Have you ever felt lonely?** Even if it was just for a moment?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to respond by raising their hands. If you'd like, ask a few students to share more about when and why they felt that way.
- Last week we started this conversation about putting ourselves in the shoes of other people so we can better understand what they're going through. Why? Because as followers of Jesus, when someone is having a hard time, we need to figure out how to be there for them — and loneliness is something a lot of people are feeling.

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

STORY | Talk about a time you felt lonely.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you felt lonely, using the list of scenarios in the "Poll" module just above this as inspiration. Share in detail how you felt, what led you to feeling that way, and what would have made you feel less lonely.
- As we talk today, think about the people in your school, your neighborhood, or our church. Because if we want to be people who love God by loving others well, we've got to figure out how to love others when they're feeling alone.
 - Who might be feeling lonely?
 - Who needs someone to reach out to them in friendship?
 - Even if you're feeling a little lonely too, who could you reach out to?

OBJECT LESSON | The Story of Ruth & Naomi (Ruth 1:1-16)

- In the Bible, there's a book about two women named Ruth and Naomi who knew some things about loneliness.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you tell the story of Ruth and Naomi, get your students involved as silent actors. You'll need students to portray Elimelek, Naomi, Mahlon, Kilion, Orpah, and Ruth. If you'd like, provide props and costumes like robes, beards, and suitcases. As you read or summarize the Scripture, have your actors act out what they're hearing — dramatic death scenes are highly encouraged.*
- Long ago, in the nation of Judah, in the city of Bethlehem, there was a famine. To survive the famine, a man named Elimelek, his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.
 - After a long journey, they finally arrived in Moab.
 - But when they arrived in Moab, Elimelek died, leaving Naomi a widow.
 - In time, Naomi's two sons married Moabite women named Orpah and Ruth.
 - But then Mahlon and Kilion also died.
 - Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah were left without their husbands and Naomi was left without her sons.
- With no family of her own left in Moab, Naomi decided to pack her bags and go home to Bethlehem.
 - Naomi told Ruth and Orpah to go home to their families — she would go back to Bethlehem alone.
 - Ruth and Orpah said they'd go with Naomi, but Naomi refused.
 - Naomi wasn't in a good place. She was grieving the loss of her family, but her grief was greater than just sadness. Naomi felt like God had abandoned her. She was so lonely that she pushed away the only family she had left.
 - Orpah went home to her family, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi.
- Although Naomi tried to push Ruth away, Ruth said . . .

SCRIPTURE | Ruth 1:16-18

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Ruth 1:16-18.*
- Can you imagine how difficult this must have been?
 - Naomi must have felt so alone after losing her husband, then losing her children, all while living in a foreign country separated from her people.
 - Losing a family member is always difficult, but there is another layer to Naomi and Ruth's trouble. In this time and culture, women didn't have the same opportunities they do today. Back then, they needed the men in their families to survive. Their fathers, sons, husbands, or brothers were the only way women could secure things like homes, food, and land.
 - So Ruth and Naomi weren't only sad. They were feeling alone, powerless, and abandoned.

- Like Orpah, Ruth probably still had family in Moab, but she also had a mother-in-law who was desperately lonely. Instead of staying in Moab, she decided to make a sacrifice and go with Naomi back to Bethlehem.
- If you want to know what happens next you can always read the four chapters of the Book of Ruth, but I'll summarize it for you.
 - Naomi and Ruth go to Bethlehem and Ruth finds a new husband named Boaz.
 - Ruth and Boaz have a son named Obed. Generations later, their descendants would give birth to a baby named Jesus. (Yes, *that* Jesus.)
 - In the process, Naomi discovers that she wasn't as alone as she once feared. Ruth never left her and God didn't either.
- Ruth's decision to stick with Naomi probably wasn't an easy one, but it was a choice she made in love. She saw Naomi's loneliness and knew she couldn't leave her alone.

SCRIPTURE | I John 4:11-13

- Many generations after Ruth and Naomi lived, letters were written about Ruth's descendant, Jesus. One of these letters later became the book of I John in the Bible. In it, followers of Jesus are given this instruction . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I John 4:11-13.*
- God has a lot to say about loneliness.
 - Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live in us so we would never be alone.
 - But I think this passage shows us God knew we'd sometimes need each other too. That's why we're told to love each other, show up for each other, and be with each other. When we love each other, it's evidence of God's love for us.
- Whether you're the one who's lonely or you notice someone else experiencing loneliness, don't try to make it alone.
 - Reach out to God, who never leaves you alone.
 - If you're like Naomi, feeling abandoned and frustrated, don't push everyone away. You were made to be in relationships with others. Let the people around you help you feel less alone.
 - And if you're like Ruth and you notice someone is wrestling with loneliness, don't let them wrestle alone. Reach out and decide to stick with them, even when it's difficult to do. Because if we want someone to know God is with them, we can start by **being with people when they're lonely.**

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

OBJECT LESSON | Your Friend List

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Take out your phone and scroll through your contacts or friend list on social media. If you'd like to show this on screen, mirror your device to your screen or create a screen recording in advance.*

- If you don't usually feel lonely, you might be thinking, "How can anyone feel lonely? We're constantly connected through our devices."
 - You're right! But you don't actually have to be alone in order to feel alone.
 - It's ironic how, even though we're more connected than ever through our devices, many of us are still feeling lonelier than ever.

DISCUSSION | When did you feel included?

- We can probably all remember a moment when we felt excluded or alone, but let's take a moment right now to think: **when did someone (or a group of someones) make you feel welcome or included?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give students a moment to think. Then ask a few students a chance to share their examples.

HOW TO BE WITH SOMEONE IN LONELINESS

- Just like Ruth took a risk to be with Naomi when she was alone, I wonder if there are some risks we need to take in order to be with someone who is feeling lonely. We might have to risk . . .
 - Our reputations.
 - Our schedules.
 - Our plans.
 - Our comfort.
- But if you're willing to take a risk in order to show someone how much God loves them, here are some ways you can "be with" someone who's lonely.
 - **LOOK AROUND:** Most people who are feeling lonely aren't going to tell you, "Hey! I feel lonely." Instead, you're going to need to look around and wonder about the people around you. Does someone always seem to be sitting alone? What about the quiet kid? Or the person who doesn't usually fit in? Do you know someone is going through a hard time? Do you know someone who's fighting with a friend or going through a break-up? There are so many reasons someone might be feeling lonely and need a friend.
 - **REACH OUT:** Even if you don't feel lonely or left out right now, you've felt it before, right? Start with a smile or a hello. Ask if you can sit with them or how they're doing. Small gestures are a great place to start, but you and your friends can make someone feel welcome with just one question: "Hey, want to hang out?"
 - **KEEP IT SMALL:** If they're opening up to you, that's great! But don't scare them by bringing your whole crew over at once. Consider smaller hangouts of just a few people rather than large groups so they feel noticed, heard, and important.
 - **DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY:** Just like Naomi pushed people away when she was lonely, it's okay if someone doesn't respond the way you want them to. Maybe you misread the situation or maybe they're just not ready to connect with you yet. If they seem standoffish or rude, try approaching them with curiosity instead of jumping to conclusions.

- **KEEP TRYING:** Even if they say no the first time, don't be scared to keep trying. It took Ruth a few tries to reach out to Naomi too. Try setting a reminder on your phone to text them regularly, even if it's just to say hi or ask what they're up to.

ACTIVITY | The Friend Test

- If we really want to be ready and prepared to support someone, practice is key! Let's see if we can use some of the ideas we've learned to plan how we might reach out to someone who's lonely.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a group, in pairs, or with a few people at the front of the room, run through a few scenarios and formulate a response together. You can either act this out or just strategize together. Try some scenarios like these, or have students propose their own:*
 - *Someone is sitting alone at lunch.*
 - *Someone is wearing headphones and avoiding talking to anyone.*
 - *Someone says, "I don't have any real friends."*
 - *You find out someone is disappointed they weren't invited to a hangout.*
 - *You know there is drama happening between friends.*
- We all know what it feels like to be left out, so what if we decided to be the kind of people who make sure . . .
 - The people around us don't have to feel lonely?
 - Everyone feels welcome?
 - It's easier for people to believe God loves them because they can see how much we love them?
- What if we started with our group right here?
 - What if we decided to make our church a place where people who feel lonely could feel included?
 - How could we make our church a place where everyone feels welcome?
 - How do you think it would change the way people see God?
- You don't have to do something as dramatic as Ruth moving to another country for Naomi because there are so many small but meaningful ways you can reach out to someone who is feeling alone, left out, or excluded — even when you're feeling that way too.
- So the next time you meet a "Naomi," find a way to be a "Ruth." Because if we want someone to know God is with them, we can start by **being with people when they're lonely.**

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WITH YOU

Being a good friend is easy! As long as you make time to hang out, remember their birthday, and answer their texts, you're eligible for the Great Friend Award . . . right? Friendship might feel easy when life is easy, but it gets more complicated when your friends are hurting or struggling. What should you do? What should you say? What should you not say? When our friends need help, there are no easy answers, but in this 4-week series, we'll follow the lead of a few people who've been there. Through the stories of Job, Ruth, Naomi, Elijah, and Eli, we'll see how God invites us to "be with" people when they're **grieving, lonely, in need**, or **feeling hopeless**, and how God is already with them.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're lonely.

THE BIBLE

Ruth 1:1-18; I John 4:11-13;
John 14:16

- **When you're stressed, would you rather be alone or surrounded by friends? Why?**
- **What's the difference between being alone and being lonely?**
- **What are some reasons why a person might feel lonely?**
- **When's the last time you felt lonely? What would have helped you feel less alone?**
- **Why do you think Ruth decided to stick with Naomi? What would you have done if you were her?**
- **Read John 14:16. When someone is lonely, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?**
- **Why is it hard to reach out to people who are lonely?**
- **How can you tell if someone is feeling lonely? What if they try to hide their loneliness?**
- **What are some ways we could make people feel less alone here at church?**
- **Who's someone who seems lonely right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?**

ACTIVITY

Make a list of things your group could do to make someone feel welcome at church. Next time someone new shows up, pull out the list and get to work!

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers

WITH YOU

Being a good friend is easy! As long as you make time to hang out, remember their birthday, and answer their texts, you're eligible for the Great Friend Award . . . right? Friendship might feel easy when life is easy, but it gets more complicated when your friends are hurting or struggling. What should you do? What should you say? What should you not say? When our friends need help, there are no easy answers, but in this 4-week series, we'll follow the lead of a few people who've been there. Through the stories of Job, Ruth, Naomi, Elijah, and Eli, we'll see how God invites us to "be with" people when they're **grieving, lonely, in need**, or **feeling hopeless**, and how God is already with them.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're lonely.

THE BIBLE

Ruth 1:1-18; I John 4:11-13;
John 14:16

- **When you're stressed, would you rather be alone or surrounded by friends? Why?**
- **When's the last time you felt lonely? What would have helped you feel less alone?**
- **Why do you think Ruth decided to stick with Naomi? What would you have done if you were her?**
- **Read John 14:16. When someone is lonely, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?**
- **What are some ways we could make people feel less alone here at church?**
- **Who's someone who seems lonely right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?**

ACTIVITY

Make a list of things your group could do to make someone feel welcome at church. Next time someone new shows up, pull out the list and get to work!

WEEK 2 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

WITH YOU

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when
they're lonely.

THE BIBLE

Ruth 1:1-18; I John 4:11-13;
John 14:16

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Fastest Draw: Solo

- Welcome to Week 2 of *With You!* In this series, we're talking about what to do when our friends are experiencing something difficult. So let's see how well you handle difficult circumstances.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Call two students to the front of the room to compete against each other. For each round, have them race to create a shape with their bodies, like the letter P, a star, a diamond, or a hashtag. These shapes should be difficult or even impossible to create.*

ACTIVITY | Fastest Draw: Teamwork

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *After a few rounds of the Solo version of this game, have your players recruit four teammates. Restart the game, giving the teams the same shapes (and some new ones) to create with their bodies. For each round, the teams must use every person in their group to create the shape. It's a race, so they need to be fast, but their shape needs to be recognizable too! Try shapes like . . .*
 - *The letters P, A, or Z.*
 - *Heart.*
 - *Tree.*
 - *Star.*
 - *Diamond.*
 - *Hashtag.*
 - *House.*

- Sometimes going solo can make life easy and uncomplicated. After all, when you're solo, you don't have to worry about anyone else or their issues! But going solo isn't always the best option.
- We all want and need friends who know us, like us, and are there for us — especially when we're facing a challenge.

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 you're stressed, would you rather be alone or surrounded by friends? Why?**
 - ☆ **What's the difference between being alone and being lonely?**

POLL | "Have you ever felt lonely?"

- We were built for community! But whether you have tons of friends or just one or two close friends, we all know what it's like to feel lonely.
- There are so many reasons someone might feel lonely, and some of us feel lonely more often than others. Sometimes people feel lonely it's because they're . . .
 - Fighting with their friends.
 - New and haven't made many friends yet.
 - Not getting noticed or invited to things.
 - Feeling misunderstood by others.
 - Feeling like everyone is laughing at or excluding them.
 - Experiencing anxiety or depression.
 - Dealing with the consequences of a damaged reputation.
 - Struggling with a loss or challenge no one knows about or can relate to.
- Sometimes people feel lonely and they're not really sure why! There might even be people in this room right now, surrounded by people and friends, who still feel lonely. So how about you? **Have you ever felt lonely?** Even if it was just for a moment?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to respond by raising their hands. If you'd like, ask a few students to share more about when and why they felt that way.
- Last week we started this conversation about putting ourselves in the shoes of other people so we can better understand what they're going through. Why? Because as followers of Jesus, when someone is having a hard time, we need to figure out how to be there for them — and loneliness is something a lot of people are feeling.

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

STORY | Talk about a time you felt lonely.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you felt lonely, using the list of scenarios in the "Poll" module just above this as inspiration. Share in detail how you felt, what led you to feeling that way, and what would have made you feel less lonely.

- As we talk today, think about the people in your school, your neighborhood, or our church. Because if we want to be people who love God by loving others well, we've got to figure out how to love others when they're feeling alone.
 - Who might be feeling lonely?
 - Who needs someone to reach out to them in friendship?
 - Even if you're feeling a little lonely too, who could you reach out to?

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 a person might feel lonely?**
 - **When's the last time you felt lonely? What would have helped you feel less alone?**

OBJECT LESSON | The Story of Ruth & Naomi (Ruth 1:1-16)

- In the Bible, there's a book about two women named Ruth and Naomi who knew some things about loneliness.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you tell the story of Ruth and Naomi, get your students involved as silent actors. You'll need students to portray Elimelek, Naomi, Mahlon, Kilion, Orpah, and Ruth. If you'd like, provide props and costumes like robes, beards, and suitcases. As you read or summarize the Scripture, have your actors act out what they're hearing — dramatic death scenes are highly encouraged.*
- Long ago, in the nation of Judah, in the city of Bethlehem, there was a famine. To survive the famine, a man named Elimelek, his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.
 - After a long journey, they finally arrived in Moab.
 - But when they arrived in Moab, Elimelek died, leaving Naomi a widow.
 - In time, Naomi's two sons married Moabite women named Orpah and Ruth.
 - But then Mahlon and Kilion also died.
 - Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah were left without their husbands and Naomi was left without her sons.
- With no family of her own left in Moab, Naomi decided to pack her bags and go home to Bethlehem.
 - Naomi told Ruth and Orpah to go home to their families — she would go back to Bethlehem alone.
 - Ruth and Orpah said they'd go with Naomi, but Naomi refused.
 - Naomi wasn't in a good place. She was grieving the loss of her family, but her grief was greater than just sadness. Naomi felt like God had abandoned her. She was so lonely that she pushed away the only family she had left.
 - Orpah went home to her family, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi.
- Although Naomi tried to push Ruth away, Ruth said . . .

SCRIPTURE | Ruth 1:16-18

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Ruth 1:16-18.*
- Can you imagine how difficult this must have been?
 - Naomi must have felt so alone after losing her husband, then losing her children, all while living in a foreign country separated from her people.
 - Losing a family member is always difficult, but there is another layer to Naomi and Ruth's trouble. In this time and culture, women didn't have the same opportunities they do today. Back then, they needed the men in their families to survive. Their fathers, sons, husbands, or brothers were the only way women could secure things like homes, food, and land.
 - So Ruth and Naomi weren't only sad. They were feeling alone, powerless, and abandoned.
- Like Orpah, Ruth probably still had family in Moab, but she also had a mother-in-law who was desperately lonely. Instead of staying in Moab, she decided to make a sacrifice and go with Naomi back to Bethlehem.
- If you want to know what happens next you can always read the four chapters of the Book of Ruth, but I'll summarize it for you.
 - Naomi and Ruth go to Bethlehem and Ruth finds a new husband named Boaz.
 - Ruth and Boaz have a son named Obed. Generations later, their descendants would give birth to a baby named Jesus. (Yes, *that* Jesus.)
 - In the process, Naomi discovers that she wasn't as alone as she once feared. Ruth never left her and God didn't either.
- Ruth's decision to stick with Naomi probably wasn't an easy one, but it was a choice she made in love. She saw Naomi's loneliness and knew she couldn't leave her alone.

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 Ruth decided to stick with Naomi? What would you have done if you were her?**
 - **Read John 14:16. When someone is lonely, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?**

SCRIPTURE | I John 4:11-13

- Many generations after Ruth and Naomi lived, letters were written about Ruth's descendant, Jesus. One of these letters later became the book of I John in the Bible. In it, followers of Jesus are given this instruction . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I John 4:11-13.*
- God has a lot to say about loneliness.

- Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live in us so we would never be alone.
- But I think this passage shows us God knew we'd sometimes need each other too. That's why we're told to love each other, show up for each other, and be with each other. When we love each other, it's evidence of God's love for us.
- Whether you're the one who's lonely or you notice someone else experiencing loneliness, don't try to make it alone.
 - Reach out to God, who never leaves you alone.
 - If you're like Naomi, feeling abandoned and frustrated, don't push everyone away. You were made to be in relationships with others. Let the people around you help you feel less alone.
 - And if you're like Ruth and you notice someone is wrestling with loneliness, don't let them wrestle alone. Reach out and decide to stick with them, even when it's difficult to do. Because if we want someone to know God is with them, we can start by **being with people when they're lonely.**

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

OBJECT LESSON | Your Friend List

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Take out your phone and scroll through your contacts or friend list on social media. If you'd like to show this on screen, mirror your device to your screen or create a screen recording in advance.
- If you don't usually feel lonely, you might be thinking, "How can anyone feel lonely? We're constantly connected through our devices."
 - You're right! But you don't actually have to be alone in order to feel alone.
 - It's ironic how, even though we're more connected than ever through our devices, many of us are still feeling lonelier than ever.

DISCUSSION | When did you feel included?

- We can probably all remember a moment when we felt excluded or alone, but let's take a moment right now to think: **when did someone (or a group of someones) make you feel welcome or included?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give students a moment to think. Then ask a few students a chance to share their examples.

HOW TO BE WITH SOMEONE IN LONELINESS

- Just like Ruth took a risk to be with Naomi when she was alone, I wonder if there are some risks we need to take in order to be with someone who is feeling lonely. We might have to risk . . .
 - Our reputations.
 - Our schedules.
 - Our plans.
 - Our comfort.

- But if you're willing to take a risk in order to show someone how much God loves them, here are some ways you can "be with" someone who's lonely.
 - **LOOK AROUND:** Most people who are feeling lonely aren't going to tell you, "Hey! I feel lonely." Instead, you're going to need to look around and wonder about the people around you. Does someone always seem to be sitting alone? What about the quiet kid? Or the person who doesn't usually fit in? Do you know someone is going through a hard time? Do you know someone who's fighting with a friend or going through a break-up? There are so many reasons someone might be feeling lonely and need a friend.
 - **REACH OUT:** Even if you don't feel lonely or left out right now, you've felt it before, right? Start with a smile or a hello. Ask if you can sit with them or how they're doing. Small gestures are a great place to start, but you and your friends can make someone feel welcome with just one question: "Hey, want to hang out?"
 - **KEEP IT SMALL:** If they're opening up to you, that's great! But don't scare them by bringing your whole crew over at once. Consider smaller hangouts of just a few people rather than large groups so they feel noticed, heard, and important.
 - **DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY:** Just like Naomi pushed people away when she was lonely, it's okay if someone doesn't respond the way you want them to. Maybe you misread the situation or maybe they're just not ready to connect with you yet. If they seem standoffish or rude, try approaching them with curiosity instead of jumping to conclusions.
 - **KEEP TRYING:** Even if they say no the first time, don't be scared to keep trying. It took Ruth a few tries to reach out to Naomi too. Try setting a reminder on your phone to text them regularly, even if it's just to say hi or ask what they're up to.

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 is it hard to reach out to people who are lonely?**
 - ☆ **How can you tell if someone is feeling lonely? What if they try to hide their loneliness?**

ACTIVITY | The Friend Test

- If we really want to be ready and prepared to support someone, practice is key! Let's see if we can use some of the ideas we've learned to plan how we might reach out to someone who's lonely.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a group, in pairs, or with a few people at the front of the room, run through a few scenarios and formulate a response together. You can either act this out or just strategize together. Try some scenarios like these, or have students propose their own:
 - Someone is sitting alone at lunch.
 - Someone is wearing headphones and avoiding talking to anyone.

- Someone says, "I don't have any real friends."
- You find out someone is disappointed they weren't invited to a hangout.
- You know there is drama happening between friends.
- We all know what it feels like to be left out, so what if we decided to be the kind of people who make sure . . .
 - The people around us don't have to feel lonely?
 - Everyone feels welcome?
 - It's easier for people to believe God loves them because they can see how much we love them?
- What if we started with our group right here?
 - What if we decided to make our church a place where people who feel lonely could feel included?
 - How could we make our church a place where everyone feels welcome?
 - How do you think it would change the way people see God?
- You don't have to do something as dramatic as Ruth moving to another country for Naomi because there are so many small but meaningful ways you can reach out to someone who is feeling alone, left out, or excluded — even when you're feeling that way too.
- So the next time you meet a "Naomi," find a way to be a "Ruth." Because if we want someone to know God is with them, we can start by **being with people when they're lonely.**

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 ways we could make people feel less alone here at church?**
 - **Who's someone who seems lonely right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?**

WEEK 3 SERMON GUIDE

WITH YOU

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're in need.

THE BIBLE

I Kings 17:8-16; Matthew 25:40;
Luke 12:32-34

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Bucket Balance

- Welcome to Week 3 of *With You!* As you know if you've been here for the last couple of weeks, the goal of this series is pretty simple: when a friend is having a hard time, we want to figure out how to be there for them.
- But it's not always easy to be there for our friends when we're also dealing with so many problems of our own. So let's get started today by working on our multitasking abilities.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this game, you'll need a [large bucket](#) filled with objects (or a liquid) of your choice, and maybe some [ponchos](#) and [tarps](#) if you choose something messy. Fill the bucket with water, Jell-O, [tennis balls](#), candy — whatever you've got laying around. To play, choose 4-6 students who are all wearing socks and shoes. Have them untie their shoes and then lay down circle with their feet up in the air. Hold the bucket in the center of the circle and have them all scoot together until they're holding the bucket with their feet. In the first round of the game, have each student take turns removing their shoes while the other students keep the bucket suspended. In the second round, have them remove their socks. If the contents fall on anyone, that player is out and the remaining students must continue holding the bucket without them.
- Let me point out a few things I saw during this game.
 - When someone needed to take off their shoes or socks, the other players had to work a little harder to keep the bucket steady.
 - If the other players didn't keep the bucket steady when that person needed them, there was a good chance that player was going to get knocked out of the game.

- When players got knocked out of the game, the game got harder for the other players too. If they didn't do their part in keeping the bucket steady for others, when they needed help, there weren't enough people to keep the bucket steady for them.
- In real life, you won't often need help holding up a bucket with your bare feet, but there are some things we can learn for the times we really do need each other.

QUESTION | "What are some things every person needs?"

- In real life, **what are some things every person needs?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.
- There are so many reasons why we might need each other's help. At any given time, we might have . . .
 - An emotional need.
 - A practical need.
 - A relational need.
 - A spiritual need.
- In the last two weeks, we've talked about some of the ways we can help meet each other's needs emotionally and relationally, but today let's focus on how we can help meet each other's practical needs.

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

DISCUSSION | Our Practical Needs

- We're human, which means we all have the same important practical needs. **What do you think those practical needs are?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** With a [white board](#) or [sticky notes](#), make a list of practical needs all humans have. For each need, ask students to share an example of what happens when those needs aren't met. Be sure the discussion includes our need for . . .
 - Food.
 - Water.
 - Shelter.
 - Clothing.
 - Education.
 - Safety.
 - Medical care.
 - Caring adults, like parents.
- There are people everywhere (all over the world and close to home too) who need greater access to essential things like clean water, shelter, food, education, and more.

SCRIPTURE | I Kings 17:8-16

- One of the most common messages in the Bible is the reminder to be on the lookout for those in need, and often those needs are practical. Jesus and His disciples said it many times, but it's a common theme in the Old Testament too.
- Today, let's see how God used the prophet Elijah to help meet some people's needs.
 - A prophet is a messenger from God. God would often give a message to a prophet and then the prophet would share it with as many people as possible.
 - In Elijah's day, the nation of Israel (God's chosen people) were being led by kings. There were good kings and bad kings — kings that followed God and kings that rejected God and followed other fake gods instead.
 - One of these kings was King Ahab, the seventh king of Israel and the most evil Israelite king so far. Ahab and his wife Jezebel both rejected God and worshipped a fake god named Baal instead.
 - God sent Elijah to give Ahab a message: because of their wickedness, there would be a drought in the land.
- In the midst of this drought, even Elijah was struggling to find food, so God sent him to a creek to get water and sent ravens to bring him food. When the creek dried up and the ravens ran out of food, here's what happened . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize I Kings 17:8-16.*
- Let's think about how weird this story is for a minute.
 - At first, God and Elijah kind of sound like jerks. Sure, Elijah is hungry and thirsty, but so is this widow! In fact, she and her son are preparing to die of hunger and thirst when Elijah shows up and says, "Hey, God told you to give me the rest of your stuff."
 - But because Elijah knows God's character, he understands why he's been sent. Elijah wasn't sent to this widow to take whatever she had left. God sent Elijah to help her.
 - Through Elijah, God provides this woman and her son with the miracle they need. As a result, they're able to make all the food they (and Elijah) need.
 - But here's something you may not have noticed: Elijah doesn't just secure food and water for this family and leave. He stays with them for some time too.
- This is a simple story, but I think it communicates a few important things about how what to do when someone is in need. Whether you identify more with Elijah or with the widow and her son, this story shows us:
 - **WE NEED EACH OTHER.** God gives us each other to help meet each other's needs. Elijah may have helped provide for the widow and her son, but the widow provided for Elijah's needs too.
 - **GOD WORKS THROUGH US.** There are many people in our world, country, neighborhoods, and schools who are in need, but like Elijah, we have to be willing to go where God sends us.
 - **THERE'S ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE.** Rather than being driven by selfishness or fear, Elijah and the widow trusted God would provide enough for all of them. But it required sharing their extra resources instead of hoarding them.

- **RELATIONSHIPS MATTER.** Elijah didn't just send this family a check in the mail or perform a miracle and leave. This wasn't just an obligation or charity work. They also built real relationship over time.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 25:40

- In Elijah's time, it was clear God cared about caring for people in need. It's clear that was still God's heart when Jesus was here on earth.
 - In Jesus' time some people believed God wanted certain people to suffer. They thought maybe those people deserved it. But when Jesus showed up, He showed us a different way.
 - Jesus cared deeply about people. He sought out people who had needs, and helped meet those needs, but He also spent time with them.
- In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said when He returns, He'll ask all of us how we helped our neighbors when they were in need. Did we . . .
 - Give food and water to the hungry and thirsty?
 - Take care of strangers?
 - Give clothes to those who need them?
 - Care for sick people?
 - Visit prisoners?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 25:40.*
- Jesus saw people's needs — but He also saw their humanity. And He calls us to do the same. Instead of ignoring or not noticing the needs of the people around us, we are asked to do what Elijah and the widow did, and what Jesus did, and **be with people when they're in need.**

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

MUSIC | "If You Got a Problem" (Joy Oladokun)

- But why don't more people do more to help meet the needs of others? It's a question we should all be asking ourselves. What about you? What barriers prevent you from meeting the needs of others?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the song "If You Got a Problem" (Joy Oladokun), 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. While the song plays, put some reflection question on screen, like . . .*
 - ***When's the last time you noticed someone else's needs?***
 - ***When you see someone in need, what's your usual reaction?***
 - ***Is your reaction different depending on the person's need?***
 - ***Have you ever been judgmental when you've seen someone in need?***
 - ***Have you ever felt powerless or overwhelmed when you've seen someone in need?***
 - ***What is preventing you from helping to meet more people's needs?***

DISCUSSION | What is Shalom?

- There's a Hebrew word in the Bible that is often translated as "peace." But when the Bible says "peace," it's not only talking about "the absence of war." It's talking about a world that's complete, whole, and in perfect balance. The word is *shalom*.
- In the world, in our country, and in our neighborhoods and schools, there are needs, but there is also excess. Some people have more than enough while others are in desperate need.
 - Some people think there isn't enough to go around, so they hoard things and only help people who they think are valuable. Do you believe there's enough to go around, or do you think we need to hold tightly to what we have?
 - Other people think there isn't enough to go around because they've never had enough. They may only have secondhand shoes that don't fit right. Their pantry might be empty because their family can only afford to buy food one day at a time. They might be new to this country and are still trying to acquire the things they need. For some of you, you don't have to imagine this because you already live with needs like these daily.
- The tragedy is, although people all over the world struggle to get access to basic resources like food, water, sanitation and education, there is enough to go around.
 - There's enough food in the world to feed everyone, but our systems don't prioritize sending food to all the places in need.
 - There are enough shoes for everyone. We won't run out if everyone has a few good pairs.
 - There is enough space and materials for houses, and many houses all over the world are standing vacant, but some people are still without homes.
- There are imbalances in the world, but we can help bring shalom by working to put things back in balance. **How could we help create shalom wherever needs exist?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Return to your white board or sticky notes. Use the needs you already brainstormed and discuss what "shalom" would look like for some or all of those needs. Start by discussing needs in the world, then in your country, then in your neighborhoods or schools. Once again, try to cover as many of these necessities as you can:*
 - Food.
 - Water.
 - Shelter.
 - Clothing.
 - Education.
 - Safety.
 - Medical care.
 - Caring adults, like parents.
- One person working alone can't cure these immense imbalances. It takes a community to care for people in need — that's why Jesus tells His followers to help set things right.

HOW TO BE WITH PEOPLE IN NEED

- God seriously cares about people in need. If you follow Jesus, meeting the needs of those who are in need is a huge part of this whole Jesus-following thing. So here are a few tangible ways we can be with people who are in need.
 - **START SMALL:** The big needs we've talked about today might seem overwhelming, so start by looking for small needs around you. Maybe someone in class needs to borrow a pencil or someone forgot their lunch money. Once you notice these little things, it will be easier notice the big needs around you too.
 - **IDENTIFY NEEDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY:** There are so many programs and non-profits working to meet needs for our neighborhoods, and there are plenty of ways to get involved. We can fundraise, show up to help, or donate supplies that they give to people who need them — like food for food banks, socks and coats for homeless shelters, or school supplies for students who can't afford them.
 - **IDENTIFY NEEDS AT CHURCH:** Our church is working to meet needs too! See if there are any needs here that could be helped with your energy and time. Maybe the children's ministry needs all their chairs washed, or there is garbage outside that needs picking up, or the care ministry needs someone to distribute supplies.
 - **BRING YOUR OWN TALENTS:** Think of unique talents you have, like playing sports, calligraphy, making movies, or being a leader people follow. Think of the groups you are already involved with from school or outside of school. Then get creative about ways you can use the activities you already enjoy to help meet other people's needs.
- We all have the power to address the imbalance in the world and help set it right. The only way we can do this is in community and with God's help. Sometimes you're the one in need and sometimes you're the one who has more, but whether it's someone across the ocean or across the street, we're called to **be with people when they're in need.**

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WITH YOU

Being a good friend is easy! As long as you make time to hang out, remember their birthday, and answer their texts, you're eligible for the Great Friend Award . . . right? Friendship might feel easy when life is easy, but it gets more complicated when your friends are hurting or struggling. What should you do? What should you say? What should you not say? When our friends need help, there are no easy answers, but in this 4-week series, we'll follow the lead of a few people who've been there. Through the stories of Job, Ruth, Naomi, Elijah, and Eli, we'll see how God invites us to "be with" people when they're **grieving, lonely, in need**, or **feeling hopeless**, and how God is already with them.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're in need.

THE BIBLE

I Kings 17:8-16; Matthew 25:40;
Luke 12:32-34

- What's one thing you really want, but don't really need?
- What are some things every person needs?
- What's one practical need you have but hardly ever think about? Why don't you think about it?
- How would your life be different if you didn't have access to that thing you need?
- In the story of Elijah and the widow, how did their needs get met? Why do you think God decided to do it that way?
- What are some of the needs that exist in the world? In our country? In your community or school? In our church?
- What can we do to become more aware of other people's practical needs?
- What are some of the barriers that keep you from helping meet the needs of others?
- Read Luke 12:32-34. What is Jesus saying here? Which part do you most need to hear right now?
- Who is someone with a need you can help meet? What's one way you're going to be "with" them?

ACTIVITY

Find a shelter, food bank, local library, school, or organization in your area and find one need they need help meeting. Collect that item and deliver it together, or set up a time to volunteer and help in a more hands-on way!

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers

WITH YOU

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THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're in need.

THE BIBLE

I Kings 17:8-16; Matthew 25:40;
Luke 12:32-34

- **What's one thing you really want, but don't really need?**
- **What are some things every person needs?**
- **What's one practical need you have but hardly ever think about? Why don't you think about it?**
- **What are some of the needs that exist in the world? In our country? In your community or school? In our church?**
- **What are some of the barriers that keep you from helping meet the needs of others?**
- **Who is someone with a need you can help meet? What's one way you're going to be "with" them?**

ACTIVITY

Find a shelter, food bank, local library, school, or organization in your area and find one need they need help meeting. Collect that item and deliver it together, or set up a time to volunteer and help in a more hands-on way!

WEEK 3 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

WITH YOU

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're in need.

THE BIBLE

I Kings 17:8-16; Matthew 25:40;
Luke 12:32-34

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Bucket Balance

- Welcome to Week 3 of *With You!* As you know if you've been here for the last couple of weeks, the goal of the this series is pretty simple: when a friend is having a hard time, we want to figure out how to be there for them.
- But it's not always easy to be there for our friends when we're also dealing with so many problems of our own. So let's get started today by working on our multitasking abilities.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need a [large bucket](#) filled with objects (or a liquid) of your choice, and maybe some [ponchos](#) and [tarps](#) if you choose something messy. Fill the bucket with water, Jell-O, [tennis balls](#), candy — whatever you've got laying around. To play, choose 4-6 students who are all wearing socks and shoes. Have them untie their shoes and then lay down circle with their feet up in the air. Hold the bucket in the center of the circle and have them all scoot together until they're holding the bucket with their feet. In the first round of the game, have each student take turns removing their shoes while the other students keep the bucket suspended. In the second round, have them remove their socks. If the contents fall on anyone, that player is out and the remaining students must continue holding the bucket without them.*
- Let me point out a few things I saw during this game.
 - When someone needed to take off their shoes or socks, the other players had to work a little harder to keep the bucket steady.
 - If the other players didn't keep the bucket steady when that person needed them, there was a good chance that player was going to get knocked out of the game.

- When players got knocked out of the game, the game got harder for the other players too. If they didn't do their part in keeping the bucket steady for others, when they needed help, there weren't enough people to keep the bucket steady for them.
- In real life, you won't often need help holding up a bucket with your bare feet, but there are some things we can learn for the times we really do need each other.

QUESTION | "What are some things every person needs?"

- In real life, **what are some things every person needs?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.
- There are so many reasons why we might need each other's help. At any given time, we might have . . .
 - An emotional need.
 - A practical need.
 - A relational need.
 - A spiritual need.
- In the last two weeks, we've talked about some of the ways we can help meet each other's needs emotionally and relationally, but today let's focus on how we can help meet each other's practical needs.

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

DISCUSSION | Our Practical Needs

- We're human, which means we all have the same important practical needs. **What do you think those practical needs are?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** With a [white board](#) or [sticky notes](#), make a list of practical needs all humans have. For each need, ask students to share an example of what happens when those needs aren't met. Be sure the discussion includes our need for . . .
 - Food.
 - Water.
 - Shelter.
 - Clothing.
 - Education.
 - Safety.
 - Medical care.
 - Caring adults, like parents.
- There are people everywhere (all over the world and close to home too) who need greater access to essential things like clean water, shelter, food, education, and more.

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 one thing you really want, but don't really need?**
 - **What's one practical need you have but hardly ever think about? Why don't you think about it?**
 - ★ **How would your life be different if you didn't have access to that thing you need?**

SCRIPTURE | I Kings 17:8-16

- One of the most common messages in the Bible is the reminder to be on the lookout for those in need, and often those needs are practical. Jesus and His disciples said it many times, but it's a common theme in the Old Testament too.
- Today, let's see how God used the prophet Elijah to help meet some people's needs.
 - A prophet is a messenger from God. God would often give a message to a prophet and then the prophet would share it with as many people as possible.
 - In Elijah's day, the nation of Israel (God's chosen people) were being led by kings. There were good kings and bad kings — kings that followed God and kings that rejected God and followed other fake gods instead.
 - One of these kings was King Ahab, the seventh king of Israel and the most evil Israelite king so far. Ahab and his wife Jezebel both rejected God and worshipped a fake god named Baal instead.
 - God sent Elijah to give Ahab a message: because of their wickedness, there would be a drought in the land.
- In the midst of this drought, even Elijah was struggling to find food, so God sent him to a creek to get water and sent ravens to bring him food. When the creek dried up and the ravens ran out of food, here's what happened . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read or summarize I Kings 17:8-16.
- Let's think about how weird this story is for a minute.
 - At first, God and Elijah kind of sound like jerks. Sure, Elijah is hungry and thirsty, but so is this widow! In fact, she and her son are preparing to die of hunger and thirst when Elijah shows up and says, "Hey, God told you to give me the rest of your stuff."
 - But because Elijah knows God's character, he understands why he's been sent. Elijah wasn't sent to this widow to take whatever she had left. God sent Elijah to help her.
 - Through Elijah, God provides this woman and her son with the miracle they need. As a result, they're able to make all the food they (and Elijah) need.
 - But here's something you may not have noticed: Elijah doesn't just secure food and water for this family and leave. He stays with them for some time too.
- This is a simple story, but I think it communicates a few important things about how what to do when someone is in need. Whether you identify more with Elijah or with the widow and her son, this story shows us:

- **WE NEED EACH OTHER.** God gives us each other to help meet each other's needs. Elijah may have helped provide for the widow and her son, but the widow provided for Elijah's needs too.
- **GOD WORKS THROUGH US.** There are many people in our world, country, neighborhoods, and schools who are in need, but like Elijah, we have to be willing to go where God sends us.
- **THERE'S ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE.** Rather than being driven by selfishness or fear, Elijah and the widow trusted God would provide enough for all of them. But it required sharing their extra resources instead of hoarding them.
- **RELATIONSHIPS MATTER.** Elijah didn't just send this family a check in the mail or perform a miracle and leave. This wasn't just an obligation or charity work. They also built real relationship over time.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 25:40

- In Elijah's time, it was clear God cared about caring for people in need. It's clear that was still God's heart when Jesus was here on earth.
 - In Jesus' time some people believed God wanted certain people to suffer. They thought maybe those people deserved it. But when Jesus showed up, He showed us a different way.
 - Jesus cared deeply about people. He sought out people who had needs, and helped meet those needs, but He also spent time with them.
- In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said when He returns, He'll ask all of us how we helped our neighbors when they were in need. Did we . . .
 - Give food and water to the hungry and thirsty?
 - Take care of strangers?
 - Give clothes to those who need them?
 - Care for sick people?
 - Visit prisoners?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 25:40.
- Jesus saw people's needs — but He also saw their humanity. And He calls us to do the same. Instead of ignoring or not noticing the needs of the people around us, we are asked to do what Elijah and the widow did, and what Jesus did, and **be with people when they're in need.**

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

MUSIC | "If You Got a Problem" (Joy Oladokun)

- But why don't more people do more to help meet the needs of others? It's a question we should all be asking ourselves. What about you? What barriers prevent you from meeting the needs of others?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play the song “If You Got a Problem” (Joy Oladokun), 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. While the song plays, put some reflection question on screen, like

- **When’s the last time you noticed someone else’s needs?**
- **When you see someone in need, what’s your usual reaction?**
- **Is your reaction different depending on the person’s need?**
- **Have you ever been judgmental when you’ve seen someone in need?**
- **Have you ever felt powerless or overwhelmed when you’ve seen someone in need?**
- **What is preventing you from helping to meet more people’s needs?**

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.
 - ☆ **In the story of Elijah and the widow, how did their needs get met? Why do you think God decided to do it that way?**
 - **What are some of the needs that exist in the world? In our country? In your community or school? In our church?**

DISCUSSION | What is Shalom?

- There’s a Hebrew word in the Bible that is often translated as “peace.” But when the Bible says “peace,” it’s not only talking about “the absence of war.” It’s talking about a world that’s complete, whole, and in perfect balance. The word is *shalom*.
- In the world, in our country, and in our neighborhoods and schools, there are needs, but there is also excess. Some people have more than enough while others are in desperate need.
 - Some people think there isn’t enough to go around, so they hoard things and only help people who they think are valuable. Do you believe there’s enough to go around, or do you think we need to hold tightly to what we have?
 - Other people think there isn’t enough to go around because they’ve never had enough. They may only have secondhand shoes that don’t fit right. Their pantry might be empty because their family can only afford to buy food one day at a time. They might be new to this country and are still trying to acquire the things they need. For some of you, you don’t have to imagine this because you already live with needs like these daily.
- The tragedy is, although people all over the world struggle to get access to basic resources like food, water, sanitation and education, there is enough to go around.
 - There’s enough food in the world to feed everyone, but our systems don’t prioritize sending food to all the places in need.
 - There are enough shoes for everyone. We won’t run out if everyone has a few good pairs.
 - There is enough space and materials for houses, and many houses all over the world are standing vacant, but some people are still without homes.

- There are imbalances in the world, but we can help bring shalom by working to put things back in balance. **How could we help create shalom wherever needs exist?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Return to your white board or sticky notes. Use the needs you already brainstormed and discuss what “shalom” would look like for some or all of those needs. Start by discussing needs in the world, then in your country, then in your neighborhoods or schools. Once again, try to cover as many of these necessities as you can:*
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 - Clothing.
 - Education.
 - Safety.
 - Medical care.
 - Caring adults, like parents.
- One person working alone can’t cure these immense imbalances. It takes a community to care for people in need — that’s why Jesus tells His followers to help set things right.

HOW TO BE WITH PEOPLE IN NEED

- God seriously cares about people in need. If you follow Jesus, meeting the needs of those who are in need is a huge part of this whole Jesus-following thing. So here are a few tangible ways we can be with people who are in need.
 - **START SMALL:** The big needs we’ve talked about today might seem overwhelming, so start by looking for small needs around you. Maybe someone in class needs to borrow a pencil or someone forgot their lunch money. Once you notice these little things, it will be easier notice the big needs around you too.
 - **IDENTIFY NEEDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY:** There are so many programs and non-profits working to meet needs for our neighborhoods, and there are plenty of ways to get involved. We can fundraise, show up to help, or donate supplies that they give to people who need them — like food for food banks, socks and coats for homeless shelters, or school supplies for students who can’t afford them.
 - **IDENTIFY NEEDS AT CHURCH:** Our church is working to meet needs too! See if there are any needs here that could be helped with your energy and time. Maybe the children’s ministry needs all their chairs washed, or there is garbage outside that needs picking up, or the care ministry needs someone to distribute supplies.
 - **BRING YOUR OWN TALENTS:** Think of unique talents you have, like playing sports, calligraphy, making movies, or being a leader people follow. Think of the groups you are already involved with from school or outside of school. Then get creative about ways you can use the activities you already enjoy to help meet other people’s needs.
- We all have the power to address the imbalance in the world and help set it right. The only way we can do this is in community and with God’s help. Sometimes you’re the one in need and sometimes you’re the one who has more, but whether it’s someone across the ocean or across the street, we’re called to **be with people when they’re in need.**

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 do to become more aware of other people's practical needs?**
 - **What are some of the barriers that keep you from helping meet the needs of others?**
 - ✪ **Read Luke 12:32-34. What is Jesus saying here? Which part do you most need to hear right now?**
 - **Who is someone with a need you can help meet? What's one way you're going to be "with" them?**

WEEK 4 SERMON GUIDE

WITH YOU

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they need hope.

THE BIBLE

I Samuel 1:1-20; Romans 15:13;
John 8:12

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Strike a Pose

- Welcome to our final week of *With You!* The goal of this series has been pretty simple: when a friend is having a hard time, we want to figure out how to show them God's love by being there for them.
 - We started this series with a conversation about our emotions because being able to recognize and empathize with other people's feelings is an important step in figuring out how to be there for other people.
 - Today let's talk about our emotions again. Sometimes we think about our feelings as something that only happen in our minds or on our faces, but the truth is, we feel our emotions with our whole bodies.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Bring a student or volunteer to the front to lead this activity, or do it yourself! Have your students stand and have your leader strike each pose with your students following along. For some background reading, check out this [article](#) and use [this image](#) as a reference.*
- Sometimes the posture of your body shows how you're feeling inside. The funny thing is, the opposite is sometimes true as well. If your body is communicating an emotion, then your mind might actually start to believe it too.
 - **HAPPY:** Let's start with something happy. Smile as wide as you can. Keep smiling while you try to think of something sad. It's hard to do both, right?
 - **SAD:** Now look sad. Slump your shoulders. Put your head down. Keep doing that while you think of something that makes you laugh. Not easy, is it?

- **ANGRY:** Make the angriest face you can and look at the person next to you. Now give them a sincere compliment.
- **NERVOUS:** Think about something that makes you nervous, like a test you're not ready for or a person you're afraid to talk to. What does your body want to do? You might want to cross your arms, raise your shoulders, or tense your muscles.
- **CONFIDENT:** Now let's try a "power pose." Put your chin up. Stand up straight. Smile. Stand with a wider stance than usual. Put your hands on your hips or stretch them out in a "V" shape over your head. Do you feel a little more confident or hopeful than you did a moment ago? It's hard to feel powerless or defeated when you're in this pose, right?

QUESTION | "When makes us feel hopeful? Hopeless?"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond to each question.
 - It's always great to feel confident, in control, and full of hope. **What are some situations that could make someone feel hopeful?**
 - It's not such a great experience to feel weak, powerless, and without hope. **What are some situations that could make someone feel hopeless?**
- Even if you're usually a happy or optimistic person, it's okay to have moments when you feel a little less-than-hopeful. But what do we do when we, or someone we care about, seems stuck in a place of hopelessness?

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

STORY | Talk about a time you or a friend felt hopeless.

- Has a friend ever come to you for encouragement or help, but you found yourself at a total loss for words? It's sometimes hard to know how to give our friends guidance, but it's even more challenging when we know our friends are in a really dark place.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you or a loved one felt hopeless and why they felt that way. If you're talking about yourself, talk about someone who showed up and helped you feel hopeful again. If you're talking about a friend, share what you did to help them find hope again. **NOTE: If your story involves clinical anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns, be sure to share how help was found from professionals and not just friends.**
- There are so many reasons we find ourselves feeling hopeless, like when . . .
 - Things aren't going our way.
 - We keep facing one disappointment after another.
 - Something is wrong in our lives or in the world.
 - We're hurting and can't find relief.
 - A prayer we've been praying still hasn't been answered.
- Some reasons are tiny molehills that are easy to move past with a little time. Others can be huge mountains that take time to work through. Either way, a few things are true.

- **WE NEED SOMEONE.** Whether you're helping someone find hope or you're searching for hope for yourself, you weren't meant to do it alone. When we're feeling hopeless, disappointed, or lost, we need each other.
- **WE NEED A LIGHT.** When you're walking through a dark room at night, there's one thing you need to help you not bump into anymore furniture: light! In the same way, when someone is feeling lost in hopelessness, they need someone to turn on a light and help them find their way.
- It's normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes — but when someone we love gets stuck in a dark or hopeless place, they might need some extra help finding their way back to the light again.

SCRIPTURE | I Samuel 1:1-16

- There's a story in the Bible about a woman named Hannah, who knows what it's like to feel hopeless. As we read this story, keep in mind this takes place in a very different time and culture, where women and marriage were not viewed the same way they are today.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize I Samuel 1:1-16.*
- We don't exactly know which Jewish holiday Hannah's family was celebrating when this encounter at the temple took place, but we know it would have been a time of singing, dancing praise, worship, and feasting. It would have been a celebration — that is, for everyone except Hannah.
- Hannah had a lot of reasons to feel hopeless.
 - Hannah desperately wanted to have children, but couldn't. Although her husband loved her, having children was seen as a very important function for women. If a woman couldn't have children, she wasn't seen as valuable.
 - Hannah and her husband's other wife were rivals, which doesn't sound like a very easy or peaceful way to live. Because Peninnah was jealous of their husband's love for Hannah, she was cruel and bullied her.
 - After years and years, Hannah couldn't take it anymore. She wept. She couldn't eat. She felt desperate, anxious, grieved, and worthless.
 - Even Eli, a prophet of God, added to Hannah's pain when he accused her of being drunk in one of her most vulnerable and hopeless moments.

SCRIPTURE | I Samuel 1:17-18

- Now watch what happened when the prophet Eli realized his mistake.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Samuel 1:17-18.*
- Eli saw Hannah needed hope and gave her the hope she desperately needed. Eli joined Hannah and made her prayer his prayer too.
 - Shortly afterward, God did answer that prayer. After years of hoping for a child, being mercilessly mocked, and dealing with unending frustration, disappointment, and hopelessness, *bam!* Hannah became pregnant.
 - If we keep reading, we see Hannah's hopelessness turn into hope as she praises God for answering her prayers.

- When her baby was born, Hannah didn't forget the hope God gave her during a very dark time. Remembering how she once poured out her heart to God, she named her son Samuel — a name that means "heard by God."
- Samuel eventually grew up and became a prophet who was mentored by Eli. But that's a story for another day. Today, we're concentrating on the faith of Samuel's mom and Eli's role in her story.
- Eli couldn't fix Hannah's situation, but he did what he could do.
 - He saw her hopelessness and had compassion for her.
 - He spoke with God on her behalf.
 - He encouraged her and told her to have peace.
- It's almost like Eli was saying, "Hannah, let me be hopeful for you until you're ready to be hopeful again."

SCRIPTURE | Romans 15:13

- You hear a lot about hope in the Bible. In the New Testament (the part of the Bible written after Jesus came to earth), the apostle Paul writes about it in one of his letters to the Jesus-followers in Rome, Italy.
 - When Paul wrote this letter, the followers of Jesus were being persecuted by the Roman empire. They were thrown in prison, thrown out of the country in exile, and sometimes even killed.
 - With so many reasons for Jesus-followers to feel hopeless, take a look at one of Paul's prayers for them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Romans 15:13.
- The Christians in Rome were having a difficult time, but Paul knew there was still a reason to hope. With God, there always is. So Paul went to God on their behalf (like Eli did for Hannah) in order to give them hope.
 - Sometimes you'll be like Hannah, feeling desperate and alone.
 - Sometimes you'll feel like the believers in Rome — not alone, but still up against a seemingly hopeless situation.
 - Sometimes when you're feeling lost in the dark, you'll need someone to hold up a light to point you back toward hope.
 - And sometimes, like Eli and Paul, you'll have the privilege of holding up a light for others.
- This is the beauty of God's community. Sometimes we give and sometimes we receive, but we always have the privilege of **being with people when they need hope.**

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

HOW TO BE WITH PEOPLE IN HOPELESSNESS

- Although this story of a woman getting exactly what she wanted is in the Bible, sometimes it's hard to believe. After all, not every prayer gets answered the way we want it to, and we all have plenty of . . .
 - Things we hope for, but haven't received.
 - Situations we hope will happen, but have yet to see.
 - Problems we hope will be solved, but are still waiting to see resolved.
- So when a friend is feeling hopeless, how do we give them hope? Do we promise God's going to make all their dreams come true? Uh, no. But here's what we can do. If you think a friend might be feeling hopeless . . .
 - **PAY ATTENTION:** Is your friend acting differently than they usually do? Are they quieter or more distant? Are they hanging out with friends or returning your messages less than usual? Do they seem angrier or even meaner than usual? Sometimes these can be signs that a friend isn't doing well.
 - **ASK AND LISTEN:** Ask how they're doing and really listen to their response. What's going on? Are they experiencing something difficult right now? How are they feeling? What do they need? Practice offering a safe space free of judgment. If they speak negatively about themselves, others, or even God, show them patience and grace.
 - **FEEL WITH THEM:** Whether they're feeling angry, sad, frustrated, or desperate, try to feel those things with them. Don't minimize their feelings by saying things like, "It'll be fine," or "It's not that bad." Instead, let them know it's okay to feel however they're feeling, and that you'll do your best to understand.
 - **BE CONSISTENT:** If they are having a hard time, check-in with them at least once a week so they know you care. Show them with your words, actions, and presence you're there for them.
 - **PRAY FOR THEM:** Pray with your friend so they're not alone, and pray for them even when they're not around.
 - **GET HELP WHEN THEY NEED IT:** Sometimes hopelessness is more than just passing feelings of disappointment or frustration. If you're worried your friend is dealing with anxiety, depression, or another mental health crisis, talk to an adult you trust right away.
 - **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:** Share with a trusted adult how it feels to care for your friend. Just like your friend needs hope, you need people to help you stay hopeful too.
- You'll never be able to fix everyone's problems for them, and there are some times when a friend will need help you're not qualified to give them. But here's one thing you can always do: when you think someone might be feeling hopeless, you can let the hope you've found in Jesus overflow from you to them.

PRAYER | “With You” Prayers

- Just like Eli did for Hannah, you have the ability to help others find hope when they’re feeling hopeless through your presence and your prayers.
 - Through your presence, your friend will be reminded that hope can still exist, even when they can’t see it. By being with them in their hopelessness, you can hold onto hope when they’re unable to.
 - Through your prayers, you have the privilege of helping your friend hold the weight of their hopelessness. You get to ask God to hear their prayer and give them hope again.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Spend a few moments in prayer. Invite students to pray for anyone they worry might be losing hope, and provide at least one adult leader who is willing to pray for anyone who needs hope.*
- There are a lot of reasons to think the world is dark or scary, but we have the opportunity to be light in the darkness.
 - Because of our hope in Jesus, we can shine for others when they’ve lost their way.
 - And when our lights go a little dim, we can look to each other so our collective lights can continue shining bright.
- In big ways and small ways, there are a lot of hurting people around us all the time. But don’t let that be a reason for you to lose hope. Instead, let it be an invitation to show people how much God loves them by showing them how much you love them. You can be a light in the darkness when you choose to **be with people . . .**
 - **When they’re grieving.**
 - **When they’re lonely.**
 - **When they’re in need.**
 - **And when they need hope.**

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WITH YOU

Being a good friend is easy! As long as you make time to hang out, remember their birthday, and answer their texts, you're eligible for the Great Friend Award . . . right? Friendship might feel easy when life is easy, but it gets more complicated when your friends are hurting or struggling. What should you do? What should you say? What should you not say? When our friends need help, there are no easy answers, but in this 4-week series, we'll follow the lead of a few people who've been there. Through the stories of Job, Ruth, Naomi, Elijah, and Eli, we'll see how God invites us to "be with" people when they're **grieving, lonely, in need**, or **feeling hopeless**, and how God is already with them.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they need hope.

THE BIBLE

I Samuel 1:1-20; Romans 15:13;
John 8:12

- What's something you're really hoping will happen?
- What does "hope" mean to you?
- What makes you feel hopeful?
- What are some reasons a person might feel hopeless?
- Is having hope the same as believing God will say "yes" to your prayers? Why or why not?
- When a friend is really hoping for something specific, what should we say? What should we pray for?
- When someone feels hopeless, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?
- Read Matthew 5:14-16. How can Jesus-followers be a light for people who are feeling hopeless?
- When and how should you get help for a friend who is feeling hopeless?
- Who do you know who might need some hope right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers

WITH YOU

Being a good friend is easy! As long as you make time to hang out, remember their birthday, and answer their texts, you're eligible for the Great Friend Award . . . right? Friendship might feel easy when life is easy, but it gets more complicated when your friends are hurting or struggling. What should you do? What should you say? What should you not say? When our friends need help, there are no easy answers, but in this 4-week series, we'll follow the lead of a few people who've been there. Through the stories of Job, Ruth, Naomi, Elijah, and Eli, we'll see how God invites us to "be with" people when they're **grieving, lonely, in need, or feeling hopeless**, and how God is already with them.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they need hope.

THE BIBLE

I Samuel 1:1-20; Romans 15:13;
John 8:12

- What's something you're really hoping will happen?
- What are some reasons a person might feel hopeless?
- When someone feels hopeless, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?
- Read Matthew 5:14-16. How can Jesus-followers be a light for people who are feeling hopeless?
- When and how should you get help for a friend who is feeling hopeless?
- Who do you know who might need some hope right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?

WEEK 4 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

WITH YOU

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they need hope.

THE BIBLE

I Samuel 1:1-20; Romans 15:13;
John 8:12

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Strike a Pose

- Welcome to our final week of *With You!* The goal of this series has been pretty simple: when a friend is having a hard time, we want to figure out how to show them God's love by being there for them.
 - We started this series with a conversation about our emotions because being able to recognize and empathize with other people's feelings is an important step in figuring out how to be there for other people.
 - Today let's talk about our emotions again. Sometimes we think about our feelings as something that only happen in our minds or on our faces, but the truth is, we feel our emotions with our whole bodies.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Bring a student or volunteer to the front to lead this activity, or do it yourself! Have your students stand and have your leader strike each pose with your students following along. For some background reading, check out this [article](#) and use [this image](#) as a reference.*
- Sometimes the posture of your body shows how you're feeling inside. The funny thing is, the opposite is sometimes true as well. If your body is communicating an emotion, then your mind might actually start to believe it too.
 - **HAPPY:** Let's start with something happy. Smile as wide as you can. Keep smiling while you try to think of something sad. It's hard to do both, right?
 - **SAD:** Now look sad. Slump your shoulders. Put your head down. Keep doing that while you think of something that makes you laugh. Not easy, is it?

- **ANGRY:** Make the angriest face you can and look at the person next to you. Now give them a sincere compliment.
- **NERVOUS:** Think about something that makes you nervous, like a test you're not ready for or a person you're afraid to talk to. What does your body want to do? You might want to cross your arms, raise your shoulders, or tense your muscles.
- **CONFIDENT:** Now let's try a "power pose." Put your chin up. Stand up straight. Smile. Stand with a wider stance than usual. Put your hands on your hips or stretch them out in a "V" shape over your head. Do you feel a little more confident or hopeful than you did a moment ago? It's hard to feel powerless or defeated when you're in this pose, right?

QUESTION | "When makes us feel hopeful? Hopeless?"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond to each question.
 - It's always great to feel confident, in control, and full of hope. **What are some situations that could make someone feel hopeful?**
 - It's not such a great experience to feel weak, powerless, and without hope. **What are some situations that could make someone feel hopeless?**
- Even if you're usually a happy or optimistic person, it's okay to have moments when you feel a little less-than-hopeful. But what do we do when we, or someone we care about, seems stuck in a place of hopelessness?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - **What's something you're really hoping will happen?**
 - ☆ **What does "hope" mean to you?**
 - ☆ **What makes you feel hopeful?**
 - **What are some reasons a person might feel hopeless?**

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

STORY | Talk about a time you or a friend felt hopeless.

- Has a friend ever come to you for encouragement or help, but you found yourself at a total loss for words? It's sometimes hard to know how to give our friends guidance, but it's even more challenging when we know our friends are in a really dark place.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you or a loved one felt hopeless and why they felt that way. If you're talking about yourself, talk about someone who showed up and helped you feel hopeful again. If you're talking about a friend, share what you did to help them find hope again. **NOTE: If your story involves clinical anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns, be sure to share how help was found from professionals and not just friends.**

- There are so many reasons we find ourselves feeling hopeless, like when . . .
 - Things aren't going our way.
 - We keep facing one disappointment after another.
 - Something is wrong in our lives or in the world.
 - We're hurting and can't find relief.
 - A prayer we've been praying still hasn't been answered.
- Some reasons are tiny molehills that are easy to move past with a little time. Others can be huge mountains that take time to work through. Either way, a few things are true.
 - **WE NEED SOMEONE.** Whether you're helping someone find hope or you're searching for hope for yourself, you weren't meant to do it alone. When we're feeling hopeless, disappointed, or lost, we need each other.
 - **WE NEED A LIGHT.** When you're walking through a dark room at night, there's one thing you need to help you not bump into anymore furniture: light! In the same way, when someone is feeling lost in hopelessness, they need someone to turn on a light and help them find their way.
- It's normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes — but when someone we love gets stuck in a dark or hopeless place, they might need some extra help finding their way back to the light again.

SCRIPTURE | I Samuel 1:1-16

- There's a story in the Bible about a woman named Hannah, who knows what it's like to feel hopeless. As we read this story, keep in mind this takes place in a very different time and culture, where women and marriage were not viewed the same way they are today.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize I Samuel 1:1-16.*
- We don't exactly know which Jewish holiday Hannah's family was celebrating when this encounter at the temple took place, but we know it would have been a time of singing, dancing praise, worship, and feasting. It would have been a celebration — that is, for everyone except Hannah.
- Hannah had a lot of reasons to feel hopeless.
 - Hannah desperately wanted to have children, but couldn't. Although her husband loved her, having children was seen as a very important function for women. If a woman couldn't have children, she wasn't seen as valuable.
 - Hannah and her husband's other wife were rivals, which doesn't sound like a very easy or peaceful way to live. Because Peninnah was jealous of their husband's love for Hannah, she was cruel and bullied her.
 - After years and years, Hannah couldn't take it anymore. She wept. She couldn't eat. She felt desperate, anxious, grieved, and worthless.
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- Now watch what happened when the prophet Eli realized his mistake.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Samuel 1:17-18.*

- Eli saw Hannah needed hope and gave her the hope she desperately needed. Eli joined Hannah and made her prayer his prayer too.
 - Shortly afterward, God did answer that prayer. After years of hoping for a child, being mercilessly mocked, and dealing with unending frustration, disappointment, and hopelessness, *bam!* Hannah became pregnant.
 - If we keep reading, we see Hannah's hopelessness turn into hope as she praises God for answering her prayers.
 - When her baby was born, Hannah didn't forget the hope God gave her during a very dark time. Remembering how she once poured out her heart to God, she named her son Samuel — a name that means "heard by God."
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 - When Paul wrote this letter, the followers of Jesus were being persecuted by the Roman empire. They were thrown in prison, thrown out of the country in exile, and sometimes even killed.
 - With so many reasons for Jesus-followers to feel hopeless, take a look at one of Paul's prayers for them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Romans 15:13.*
- The Christians in Rome were having a difficult time, but Paul knew there was still a reason to hope. With God, there always is. So Paul went to God on their behalf (like Eli did for Hannah) in order to give them hope.
 - Sometimes you'll be like Hannah, feeling desperate and alone.
 - Sometimes you'll feel like the believers in Rome — not alone, but still up against a seemingly hopeless situation.
 - Sometimes when you're feeling lost in the dark, you'll need someone to hold up a light to point you back toward hope.
 - And sometimes, like Eli and Paul, you'll have the privilege of holding up a light for others.
- This is the beauty of God's community. Sometimes we give and sometimes we receive, but we always have the privilege of **being with people when they need hope.**

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.
 - ☆ **Is having hope the same as believing God will say "yes" to your prayers? Why or why not?**
 - ☆ **When a friend is really hoping for something specific, what should we say? What should we pray for?**

HOW TO BE WITH PEOPLE IN HOPELESSNESS

- Although this story of a woman getting exactly what she wanted is in the Bible, sometimes it's hard to believe. After all, not every prayer gets answered the way we want it to, and we all have plenty of . . .
 - Things we hope for, but haven't received.
 - Situations we hope will happen, but have yet to see.
 - Problems we hope will be solved, but are still waiting to see resolved.
- So when a friend is feeling hopeless, how do we give them hope? Do we promise God's going to make all their dreams come true? Uh, no. But here's what we can do. If you think a friend might be feeling hopeless . . .
 - **PAY ATTENTION:** Is your friend acting differently than they usually do? Are they quieter or more distant? Are they hanging out with friends or returning your messages less than usual? Do they seem angrier or even meaner than usual? Sometimes these can be signs that a friend isn't doing well.
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 - **PRAY FOR THEM:** Pray with your friend so they're not alone, and pray for them even when they're not around.
 - **GET HELP WHEN THEY NEED IT:** Sometimes hopelessness is more than just passing feelings of disappointment or frustration. If you're worried your friend is dealing with anxiety, depression, or another mental health crisis, talk to an adult you trust right away.

- **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:** Share with a trusted adult how it feels to care for your friend. Just like your friend needs hope, you need people to help you stay hopeful too.
- You'll never be able to fix everyone's problems for them, and there are some times when a friend will need help you're not qualified to give them. But here's one thing you can always do: when you think someone might be feeling hopeless, you can let the hope you've found in Jesus overflow from you to them.

PRAYER | "With You" Prayers

- Just like Eli did for Hannah, you have the ability to help others find hope when they're feeling hopeless through your presence and your prayers.
 - Through your presence, your friend will be reminded that hope can still exist, even when they can't see it. By being with them in their hopelessness, you can hold onto hope when they're unable to.
 - Through your prayers, you have the privilege of helping your friend hold the weight of their hopelessness. You get to ask God to hear their prayer and give them hope again.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Spend a few moments in prayer. Invite students to pray for anyone they worry might be losing hope, and provide at least one adult leader who is willing to pray for anyone who needs hope.*
- There are a lot of reasons to think the world is dark or scary, but we have the opportunity to be light in the darkness.
 - Because of our hope in Jesus, we can shine for others when they've lost their way.
 - And when our lights go a little dim, we can look to each other so our collective lights can continue shining bright.
- In big ways and small ways, there are a lot of hurting people around us all the time. But don't let that be a reason for you to lose hope. Instead, let it be an invitation to show people how much God loves them by showing them how much you love them. You can be a light in the darkness when you choose to **be with people . . .**
 - **When they're grieving.**
 - **When they're lonely.**
 - **When they're in need.**
 - **And when they need hope.**

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 someone feels hopeless, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?**
 - **Read Matthew 5:14-16. How can Jesus-followers be a light for people who are feeling hopeless?**
 - **When and how should you get help for a friend who is feeling hopeless?**
 - **Who do you know who might need some hope right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?**



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

Being a good friend is so easy! All you have to do is hang out, talk a little, remember their birthday, and answer their texts, and that's all there is to it . . . right? Well, friendship might feel easy when life is easy, but it gets more complicated when a friend is having a hard time. When that happens, what should you do? What should you say? What should you *not* say? There's a story in the Bible about a guy named Job who had everything he could ever ask for. But then one day it was all gone. Everything. When Job's friends tried to comfort him, I'll be honest — they got a lot of things wrong. But there's one thing they did right. They were *there*. Because if we want someone to know God is with them, we need to be with them too. So whether it's a friend or someone who needs a friend, God's calling us to **be with people when they're grieving**.

WEEK 2

It's kind of nice to be alone sometimes, you know? You can get some peace and quiet, go at your own pace, hear yourself think, and not have to worry about anyone else. Sometimes, being alone is refreshing! But being alone isn't the same as feeling alone. It's ironic how, even though we're more connected than ever through our devices, many of us are still feeling lonelier than ever. In the Bible, there's a book about two women named Ruth and Naomi who knew some things about loneliness. When Naomi lost her entire family, Ruth courageously chose to be *with* her during the loneliest time of her life. And through Ruth's relationship with Naomi, God did some pretty amazing things. So the next time you meet a "Naomi" (someone who is feeling alone, left out, or excluded), be a "Ruth." Because if we want someone to know God is with them, we can start by **being with people when they're lonely**.

WEEK 3

If I told you there are people in the world who are "in need," what do you think I mean? Which needs do you think I'm talking about? Whether you're thinking about people in other parts of the world or people close to home, the truth is there are people everywhere who need greater access to essential things like clean water, shelter, food, or education. This was also true in Jesus' time. Back then, some people believed God wanted certain people to suffer. They thought maybe those people deserved it. But when Jesus showed up, He showed us a different way. He cared deeply about people. He sought out people who had needs, and helped meet those needs, but He also spent time with them. Jesus saw people's humanity first — not just their needs. And He calls us to do the same. Because whether it's someone across the ocean or across the street, we're called to **be with people when they're in need.**

WEEK 4

Has a friend ever come to you for encouragement or help, but you found yourself at a total loss for words? It's sometimes hard to know how to give our friends guidance, but it's even more challenging when we know our friends are in a really dark place. It's normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes — but when someone we love gets stuck in a dark or hopeless place, they might need some extra help finding their way back to the light again. You'll never be able to fix everyone's problems for them, and there are some times when a friend will need help you're not qualified to give them. But here's one thing you can always do: when you think someone might be feeling hopeless, you can let the hope you've found in Jesus overflow from you to them, like the apostle Paul describes. But that can only happen when we take the time to **be with people when they need hope.**



MARKETING CHECKLIST

WITH YOU

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: New series, who dis? We are starting a new series called With You! This one will help us figure out how to support our friends during tough times.

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 With You was all about learning how to be with people when they are grieving. Here's a recap!
	Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 1 on social media and/or send with this caption: Remember, when someone is grieving, your presence might be the best thing you can give them.
	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 With You was all about learning how to be with someone when they're lonely. Here's a recap!</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 2 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, it won't always be obvious when someone is feeling lonely, so keep your eyes open for people who need a friend.</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 With You was all about learning how to be with people when they're in need. Here's a recap!</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 3 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, you have the ability to help meet the needs of others — people who live across the ocean and people who live across the street too.</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 With You was all about being with people when they need hope. Here's a recap!</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 4 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, if a friend is feeling hopeless, be a consistent presence in their life so they know they have a solid support system.</p>
	<p>Get ready for the next series!</p>

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS & CAPTIONS

WITH YOU

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

New series, who dis? We are starting a new series called With You! This one will help us figure out how to support our friends during tough times.

AFTER WEEK 1



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 1)

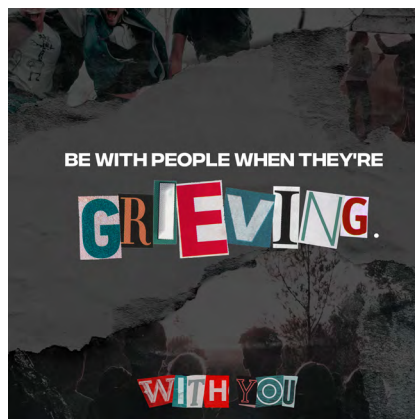
In case you missed it, Week 1 of With You was all about learning how to be with people when they are grieving. Here's a recap!

AFTER WEEK 2



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 2)

In case you missed it, Week 2 of With You was all about learning how to be with someone when they're lonely. Here's a recap!



BIG IDEA (WEEK 1)

Remember, when someone is grieving, your presence might be the best thing you can give them.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 2)

Remember, it won't always be obvious when someone is feeling lonely, so keep your eyes open for people who need a friend.

AFTER WEEK 3



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 3)

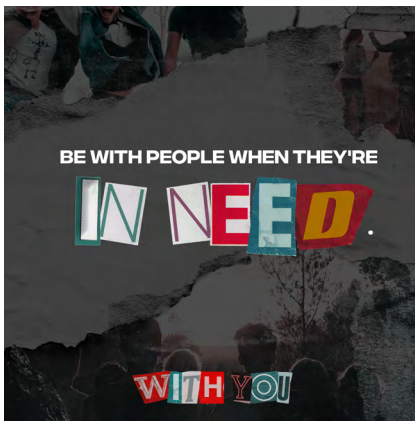
In case you missed it, Week 3 of With You was all about learning how to be with people when they're in need. Here's a recap!

AFTER WEEK 4



1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 4)

In case you missed it, Week 4 of With You was all about being with people when they need hope. Here's a recap!



BIG IDEA (WEEK 3)

Remember, you have the ability to help meet the needs of others – people who live across the ocean and people who live across the street too.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 4)

Remember, if a friend is feeling hopeless, be a consistent presence in their life so they know they have a solid support system.



ADD YOUR LOGO HERE



ADD YOUR LOGO HERE



ADD YOUR LOGO HERE



ADD YOUR LOGO HERE