



A 4-WEEK SERIES ON

LOVING OTHERS

FROM OUR ANNUAL *TEACHING STRATEGY*

BY HARMAN & CARMEN SHARDA



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CANCELED

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

You hear a lot about “cancel culture” these days. It's what happens when swarms of people on the internet band together to call out, shame, or even “cancel” someone. And while there are definitely times when people or systems need to be called out and held accountable, we can all be a little too quick to be cruel to each other — online and offline too. In this 4-week series, we'll get introduced to a few people from Scripture whose stories show us that humans have always struggled to choose love instead of hate. This problem isn't a new one, but through the stories of Jesus, a few outcasts, a king, and a shepherd, we'll see that God is challenging us to love people **who aren't like us**, love people **who are in need**, love the people **we envy**, and love the people **we want to hate**.

THIS SERIES AT A GLANCE

WEEK 1

This week, you'll share the history of the Jews and Samaritans to help students see why Jesus' love for the Samaritan woman at the well was so revolutionary.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Love people who aren't like you.
- **THE BIBLE:** John 4:1-26, 39-42; II Timothy 4:2-4; Galatians 3:28
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Discussion, Image, Story, Response

WEEK 2

This week, you'll share two stories from Jesus' ministry and explain His parable about sheep and goats to challenge students to care for the needs of others.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Love people who are in need.
- **THE BIBLE:** Mark 10:46-52; Luke 8:40-48; Matthew 25:31-46
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Images, Video, Question, Video, Object Lesson, Story, Discussion

WEEK 3

This week, you'll share the story of how envy toward David consumed King Saul, and how Jesus' Greatest Commandment shows us a better way.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Love the people you envy.
- **THE BIBLE:** Proverbs 27:4; I Samuel 18:6-10, 19:1-12; Matthew 22:36-39; Philippians 4:12
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Poll, Question, Story, Object Lesson, Reflection, Activity, Discussion

WEEK 4

This week, you'll show students how David's refusal to take revenge on King Saul aligns with Jesus' teachings on turning the other cheek.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Love the people you want to hate.
- **THE BIBLE:** I Samuel 24:1-7; Matthew 5:38-45; Romans 12:17-21
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Story, Object Lesson, Discussion

NOTE!

In Week 4 of this series, we've included some language to help you explain to students the difference between being hurt by others and being abused or victimized. Make sure you're approaching this topic aware that students in your ministry may need your help identifying or getting help with an abusive situation.

HOW TO PROGRAM FOR THIS SERIES

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

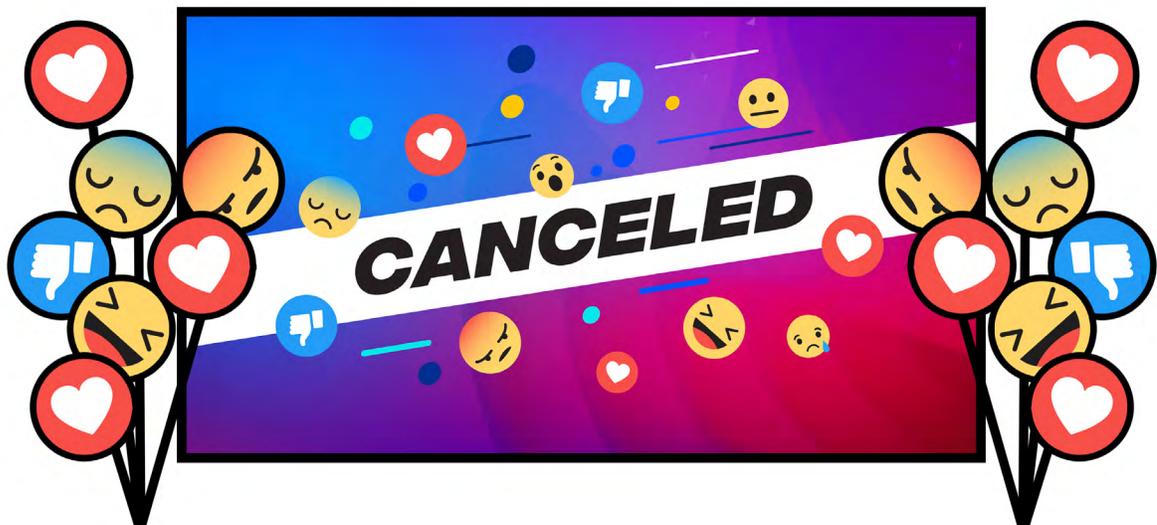
ROOM DESIGN

For this series, we recommend using emojis to decorate your space. To recreate the look below, you'll need a **backdrop with the series graphics, as well as emoji signs or balloons** that can be placed in front of the 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 that include refrigerator boxes, foam board, banners, and more. For this series, **we recommend printing the series graphic on a banner or a large paper poster** — your favorite local print shop can do this for you. Hang it on a wall or from a [banner stand](#), or mount it on insulation panels, a wooden board, or a large box.

When your backdrop is up, you can either inflate **emoji mylar balloons** and layer them in front of your backdrop, or create **emoji signs** out of cardboard or coroplast and hang them from your ceiling.

If you'd like to use balloons, we suggest mylar (rather than latex) because mylar balloons will hold helium longer than latex balloons. You'll want some emoji-shaped balloons [like these](#) as well as some heart-shaped balloons [like these](#). You'll also need balloon weights. Use clear fishing line, if possible.

If you'd like to skip the helium and hang signs from your ceiling instead, you'll need cardboard or [coroplast](#) cut into large circles. You can either paint the emojis by hand or use the graphics provided in your downloads to print the emojis on paper and then glue that paper to the cardboard or coroplast. Use [clear fishing line](#) to hang them from your ceiling so they appear to float.





GAMES by Jeremiah Herring & Tyler Grant

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

- [Canceled](#)
- [There's an App for That](#)
- [Guess It or Post It](#)
- [Influencer](#)

Since this series is using a social media theme to talk about "cancel culture," **all of our games for this series use a social media theme too!** To get the instructions and graphics for each game, click the links or visit the Games section of your Grow Students dashboard.



MUSIC by Libby Frees & Erica Mason

In addition to any music you might see woven throughout your teaching time, you'll probably want to have a time of worship with your students.

Here are a few worship songs that tie into this month's theme of **loving others** by focusing on God's love for us, our love for God, and how God has called us to love others . . .

- **"Good Grace"** (Hillsong United)
- **"Build My Life"** (Pat Barrett)
- **"Heart of God"** (Hillsong Young & Free)
- **"More Like Jesus"** (Passion)
- **"For the One"** (Bethel Music)
- **"For the Sake of the World"** (Bethel Music)
- **"Driven by Love"** (Lindy & The Circuit Riders)

For more worship song suggestions, check out our [Spotify worship playlist](#). It's updated regularly with our favorite current worship music!

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

- **"Bad Blood"** (Joy Oladokun)
- **"I Forgot That You Existed"** (Taylor Swift)
- **"Beautiful People"** (Khalid)
- **"Hollow"** (Edgar Sandoval Jr.)
- **"One of the Good Ones"** (Kayden)
- **"Happier"** (Marshmello & Bastille)
- **"Love with Your Life"** (Hollyn)

For more fun (and clean) song suggestions, check out our [Spotify background playlists](#). They're updated regularly with some of our favorites!

HOW TO PREP FOR THIS SERIES

WHAT TO GET

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

WEEK 1

- [Index cards](#)
- The image provided in your Week 1 folder
- The handout provided in your Week 1 folder
- Pens
- [Small gift boxes](#)
- The song "Build My Life," by Passion, or something similar

WEEK 2

- Screenshots of social media posts from an article [like this one](#)
- [This commercial](#) from Esurance
- [This video](#) from UNICEF
- Sheep and goat [headbands](#) or [masks](#)
- A [toy crown](#)
- Toy [haloes and wings](#)
- [This video](#) about a bullied boy

WEEK 3

- Green office or party supplies, like [crepe paper](#), [balloons](#), [construction paper](#), [face paint](#), [garland](#), tape, stickers, and scissors
- A prize (something green, if you can)
- A [glass container](#)
- [Green food coloring](#)
- The song "Nothing Else," by Cody Carnes, or something similar

WEEK 4

- Photos of famous people your students would recognize
- [The lyric video](#) of "For the One," by Brian and Jenn Johnson, or something similar

WHAT TO MAKE

WEEK 1

- Make a list of 5-10 cultural trends or experiences your students might want to cancel. For each item, write three hints on a note card that start generic and become increasingly specific.
- Print one handout for every 10 students and cut them apart.

WEEK 4

- Print photos or create slides for a handful of famous people your students would recognize.

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 parents 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.
- **PARENTS:** Before you begin teaching this series, send parents 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 parents online. You can also copy and paste the social media posts we've included in your [Parent Communication Guide](#).
- **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 [Volunteer Communication Guide](#).

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 Elle Campbell

- **PROVIDE OFFLINE EXAMPLES OF "CANCEL CULTURE."** Keep in mind that some of your middle schoolers will have had limited social media exposure, so they may not have experienced online "cancel culture" personally, so provide plenty of examples that middle schoolers can relate to. You might talk about how "canceling" someone could be when your friend group refuses to sit with someone or invite them to a party, or how "shaming" someone is teasing or embarrassing them, or how a "call-out" could be gossiping or talking badly about them.
- **WEEK 1: BE PREPARED FOR UNCOMFORTABLE CONFESSIONS AND INSENSITIVE COMMENTS.** In middle school, kids may have not yet become aware of many of the biases, prejudices, or ignorant opinions they hold. Often times, this is because they learned or absorbed those beliefs from the adults in their lives and have not yet reached an age where they can examine those beliefs critically. So when you're leading a discussion about the things that make us different, be prepared for middle schoolers to say things that are insensitive, rude, or even racist, simply because they don't know any better. If that happens, it's important for the adults in the room to not panic or shame that student, but to address the comment with grace, patience, and clarity. And keep in mind, if the insensitive comment is made publicly, it must be addressed publicly for the sake of the kids who heard or were hurt by it.
- **WEEK 2: MOVE THE VIDEO AFTER THE OBJECT LESSON.** With middle schoolers, always think about the flow of energy during your teaching time. If you're concerned your students will lose focus during the object lesson about sheep and goats, you may want to move the video from UNICEF (which is somber and reflective) after you've read the parable about sheep and goats. You could also have volunteers act out the parable, rather than students, to minimize chaos.
- **WEEK 3: WATCH OUT FOR BRAGGING OR GOSSIP.** When you're talking with middle schoolers about envy, keep in mind that students may want to talk about how someone at school is jealous of them, wants to be just like them, or copies them. This is a common theme in middle school because students often discover who they are by testing different personas and styles they observe from their peers — so imitation is normal! If you sense your students are taking advantage of this opportunity to brag or gossip, try redirecting the conversation by asking them about times they've imitated someone else's style, or why they think envy is so hard for everyone in middle school.
- **WEEK 4: GIVE PLENTY OF EXAMPLES.** Your middle schoolers may not feel like they hate anyone at the moment, so help them see that they don't need to have a sworn enemy in order to put Jesus' words into practice. They might struggle to love a sibling sometimes, or someone at school who teased them, or a friend who hurt their feelings.

HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS by David Magallanes

- **CONSIDER WHAT HIGH SCHOOLERS HAD "CANCELED" AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC.** It wasn't long ago that the world first began dealing with the effects of COVID-19. Your high schoolers in particular may have had a number of important events or experiences "canceled." Remember this may have had lasting effects on your high schoolers and could be worth acknowledging.
- **WEEK 1: PUSH THEM TO CONSIDER HOW THEIR FAITH HAS MADE THEM SEE OTHERS AS DIFFERENT OR INFERIOR.** High schoolers can be pushed a bit further than middle schoolers can to think abstractly and practice self awareness. As you talk about loving people who aren't like you, encourage your high schoolers to consider how they have viewed people with different beliefs not only as "different" from them but as inferior too. Help them see that, just because they are following Jesus or have accepted God's love, they are not better than "those people" who don't believe or haven't made that choice.
- **WEEK 2: BE PREPARED FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT HELL OR JUDGMENT.** While it's not the focus of this week, the parable you'll be reading could spark questions from high schoolers about what your church believes about hell and judgment. If you won't be discussing it during your main teaching time, be sure your volunteers are all on the same page in case questions come up.
- **WEEK 2: ENCOURAGE HIGH SCHOOLERS TO USE THEIR INDEPENDENCE FOR GOOD.** Since high schoolers are beginning to drive, getting jobs, and have more freedom than they had as middle schoolers, remind them to consider how they can use their new freedoms to help people who are in need. At this point in their lives, many high schoolers are focused on themselves and their desires, so encourage them to broaden their focus.
- **WEEK 4: CONSIDER MENTIONING OR ADDRESSING "REVENGE PORN."** It's a sensitive topic, so proceed with caution. As you talk about revenge and hatred, understand that you may have students in your ministry who have been the victims of revenge porn or who have perpetrated it. If you're comfortable speaking against it with your students, this would be the week to mention it.
- **WEEK 4: EXPLORE SYSTEMIC INJUSTICES.** What do you do when your "enemy" isn't a person, but a system that continually harm people? What if the people who are your "enemies" are products of those harmful systems? How should we think about love, hatred, revenge, and justice when the problem is bigger than just one person's offense? In your ministry, there will likely be students who have been hurt deeply by complex systemic injustices because of their skin color, gender, socioeconomic status, country of origin, and more. Your high schoolers will be more capable than your middle schoolers of understanding and exploring these complexities, so don't be afraid to initiate a deeper conversation by asking them for their feedback on some of these questions.

HACKS FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS by Sunny Brown & Sue Spiesz

- **BE SENSITIVE TO YOUR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.** As you talk about how we tend to avoid or dislike people who are different than us, or who are in need, keep in mind that some of your students with special needs likely have more stories than most students about how they were hated, rather than loved, because of their differences. Your students with special needs probably would not like you to draw attention to them specifically during your teaching time, but give them time to share about their experiences if they'd like to. Don't pressure them or put them on the spot, but don't be nervous about letting them share!
- **WEEK 1: PROVIDE A BUDDY DURING THE REFLECTION TIME.** If any of your students struggle with writing during your times of reflection, pair them with a buddy who can either talk with them, write for them, or provide an alternative activity. If any of your students struggle with writing during your times of reflection, pair them with a buddy who can talk with them or write for them. If you're concerned a student may feel singled out, have all of your students break into pairs or groups for the reflection times each week.
- **WEEK 2: ENABLE CLOSED CAPTIONING ON YOUR VIDEOS.** If any of your students are deaf or hearing impaired, be sure any videos you play have captions enabled.
- **WEEK 2: TEACH THAT EVERYONE CAN MEET OTHERS' NEEDS, EVEN WHEN WE HAVE NEEDS OF OUR OWN.** If we're not careful, we can end up talking about our students with special needs as if they're always the ones "in need." But the truth is, every student can help someone else who's in need! This week of curriculum is already written with this in mind, but it's worth restating it here. Empower your students with special needs to help and serve others. They can do it!
- **WEEK 3: CALL THEM OUT.** Make sure your students with special needs get "called out" during the activity. If you're concerned they won't receive enough positive affirmation from other students (maybe because few students know them well or because students might feel self-conscious), either prepare to say something yourself or ask a few students in advance to say something.
- **WEEK 4: EXPLORE ABLEISM.** "Ableism" is any form of discrimination that negatively impacts people with disabilities or favors able-bodied people. No matter what kinds of special needs you have represented in your ministry, this is a systemic injustice and attitude you can address with all of your students. Chances are, your students with special needs have felt hated because of their disabilities, whether because of an oversight (like a lack of a wheelchair ramp, a video without closed captioning, or a game your visually impaired students can't play) or a direct personal offense (like the use of a slur, not being invited to a party, or being ignored by people who are uncomfortable around them). You might even bring in a guest speaker to interview or lead a conversation about how people with disabilities are mistreated or hated, and how it's difficult to love people who seem to hate you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

HARMAN & CARMEN SHARDA

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Harman and Carmen are the Next Gen Pastors at a church in Edmonton, AB, Canada! They oversee the entire Next Gen department which includes a youth drop in centre for at risk teens, Friday night program, Sunday Jr High Church, as well as the Young Adult program, and all staff involved.

Harman was saved through his church's Drop In Program when he was 13, and they met at youth group when they were seniors in high school so youth ministry has a very close place to both their hearts.

Harman and Carmen started dating just after high school Grade and have been doing ministry together ever since. They've recently just had their first son Diem (No, they didn't want to give him a name that rhymes with theirs), born in July, and love that he is now apart of their journey in ministry as a family!

If you'd like to chat with Harman and Carmen about working with your spouse in ministry, how to build the right team around you, really anything youth ministry related reach out! They would love to connect with you!

SERIES DEVELOPMENT: Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, David Magallanes, Amber Stephens, April Wahl, Stephen Switzer, Amber Gaddis, Jeremiah Herring, Josh McLemore

HACKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS: Elle Campbell

HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS: David Magallanes

HACKS FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: Sunny Brown, Sue Spiesz

GAMES: Jeremiah Herring, Tyler Grant

MUSIC: Libby Frees, Erica Mason

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

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WEEK 1

SERMON GUIDE

CANCELED

THE BIG IDEA

Love people who aren't like you.

THE BIBLE

John 4:1-26, 39-42; II Timothy 4:2-4;
Galatians 3:28

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Culture Cancellations

- As we kick off a new series called Canceled, let's identify a few trends that some of us would like to see "canceled" forever.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need [index cards](#) and a list of 5-10 cultural trends or experiences your students might want to cancel, like pandemics, reusable straws, Kevin Durant, Crocs, or an overdone TikTok trend. For each item, write three hints on a note card that start generic and become increasingly specific, so the more hints a student hears the more likely they are to guess correctly. Your hints for "Crocs," might be: 1) These shoes can be found in a variety of colors and styles. 2) They have ventilation holes that some people fill with Jibbitz. 3) They are made of foam and named after a large reptile." To play, split the room into teams and bring one student from each team to the front of the room to compete. Put 30 seconds on the clock and read a hint, one at a time, every 10 seconds. Award 3 points to the player who guesses correctly after the first hint, 2 points after the second hint, and 1 point after the third hint. After each item is identified, have your students vote whether or not that trend should be canceled.*
- We may disagree on whether or not Crocs should be canceled, but sometimes "canceling" things can be much more controversial than footwear.

DISCUSSION | Define the Terms

- In the last few years, terms like "online shaming," "call-out culture," and "cancel culture" have become popular. But it's not always clear what these words mean. What does it mean to . . .

- Call out?
- Shame?
- Cancel?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to split into groups of 2-3 with the people sitting beside them, and to quickly come up with definitions and examples for these terms. Then ask a few students to share with the whole group.

IMAGE | Cancel Culture Diagram

- These terms can be confusing because they're sometimes used interchangeably.
 - Some people say "canceled" as a joke, like, "Gross, you like pineapple on your pizza? Canceled."
 - Some fuel celebrity drama with hashtags like #ChrisEvansIsOverParty. (Not that anyone would ever want to cancel Chris Evans.)
 - Some people use social media to embarrass or hurt each other, maybe for a laugh or revenge.
 - And other people "call out" or "cancel" others for legitimate reasons — especially public figures who said or did something very harmful.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As you teach, show the image on screen that is provided in your Week 1 folder.
- So how do we make sense of all of these ideas? Here's how I think about it.
 - **CALL OUT:** To publicly hold someone accountable for something harmful they said or did. We all need to be called out sometimes, but **is it possible to be too eager to point out other people's mistakes?**
 - **SHAME:** To mock, embarrass, or humiliate someone. This could be anything from posting a meme to doxing someone (posting their private information publicly). When we do something that hurts others, we should feel ashamed of our actions, but **do we have the right to hurt or be cruel to people we disagree or are angry with?**
 - **CANCEL:** To boycott someone someone you believe needs to be held accountable for something they said or did. Boycotts are an important tool for creating positive change in the world, but **how do we balance accountability with grace and forgiveness?**
- Calling out, shaming, and canceling are all a little different, but where they meet is what we call "cancel culture." It's the jumbled mess we get when legitimate concerns get lost in drama, pettiness, cruelty, and revenge.
- "Cancel culture" is usually about what happens online, but we struggle with these same issues in our off-line relationships too. With or without the Internet, we can all sometimes be critical, judgmental, impatient, uncaring, and cruel.
- For the next few weeks, we're going to talk about four kinds of people most of us would rather cancel than love, and what we can do about it — besides canceling everyone we don't like.

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

STORY | Talk about a time you avoided or were cruel to someone who was different than you.

- It's not easy to admit we're capable of treating people cruelly, so I'll go first. There are plenty of people I've "canceled," and I'm not proud of it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a personal story (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time you avoided or were cruel to someone who was different than you, using the list of examples below as inspiration. Draw specific attention to the ways you overlooked, excluded, or were cruel to that person because they were different than you.*
- **Have you ever avoided (or even hated) someone because they were different than you?** You might think, "No way!" But if you're honest with yourself, I think you'll realize there are people you've decided to overlook or "cancel" because they were different than you, like . . .
 - A celebrity or public figure who stood for things you don't like.
 - Your former friend, after you couldn't seem to agree on something important.
 - A family member or classmate with opinions or beliefs you disagreed with.
 - A neighbor or peer who seemed different, weird, or scary.
 - Someone whose culture, skin color, language, appearance, or disability made you feel uncomfortable.

SCRIPTURE | John 4:1-26, 39-42

- This isn't new! Social media might be a modern invention, but humans have always been quick to cancel people who are different.
 - In Jesus' time, people were often "canceled" by society when they sinned, got sick, were poor or disabled, or were from a different country or culture.
 - Maybe that sounds horrible, but how often do people today get angry, or even violent, toward people with a different skin color, political view, gender, or religious belief? The answer: often.
- During Jesus' time, there was a major rift between the Jews (Jesus' people) and the Samaritans (people from a neighboring city). Picture the kind of rivalry between Yankees and Red Sox fans – but worse. Way worse.
- There were major differences between the Jews and Samaritans that led to major disagreements. If social media had existed back then, the posts between Jews and Samaritans would have been intense.
 - **Their ethnic and cultural differences** made them distrust each other.
 - **Their political differences** made them angry at each other.
 - **Their religious differences** made them hate each other.
- For hundreds of years, you would never see a Jew and a Samaritan interact, let alone have a respectful conversation about the differences in their customs or beliefs. But then Jesus showed up.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize John 4:1-26, 39-42.*
- In this conversation, Jesus rose above the social and religious restrictions of the day. According to those customs, it would have been already controversial for a respectable man like Jesus to speak with an unmarried woman as if she were his equal. On top of that, Jesus was a Jew talking to a Samaritan!
- Despite their differences, Jesus and the Samaritan woman both did something remarkable.
 - **JESUS VALUED HER.** Although Jews were accustomed to dismissing and hating Samaritans, Jesus never dismissed or was cruel to her. Instead, He valued her enough to . . .
 - Start a conversation with her.
 - Treat her with respect.
 - Share with her the good news that would change her life.
 - **SHE VALUED JESUS.** Although Samaritans were accustomed to dismissing and hating Jews, this woman valued Jesus enough to . . .
 - Give him a drink of water.
 - Listen and learn from Him.
 - Tell others what she learned from Him.
- Imagine how things could change if we acted this way with the people we don't like or who we seriously disagree with.
- Everyone would have expected Jesus to either ignore or condemn this woman. But by choosing to love, embrace, and value her, Jesus challenged His followers to love people who are different instead of rushing to "cancel" them.
- Because both Jesus and the Samaritan woman valued each other instead of letting their differences separate them, many lives were changed.

SCRIPTURE | II Timothy 4:2-4

- Whether you follow Jesus or not, there's a passage in the book of II Timothy I think we can all learn from. One of the early Christian leaders was a man named Paul. The book of II Timothy is a letter Paul wrote to a young man he was mentoring. Here's one of the things he told him.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read II Timothy 4:2-4.*
- Paul warns Timothy that people tend to only believe or listen to things they want to hear. He's specifically talking about theology (what people believe about God), but that's true about a lot of things, isn't it? We prefer to hang around people who . . .
 - Like the things we like.
 - Think or talk like we do.
 - Behave like we behave.
 - Believe the things we believe.
- There's not necessarily anything wrong with that most of the time, but here's where it can go wrong: when we only spend time with people who are just like us . . .
 - **We forget to value people who are different than us.**
 - **We only learn from people who already agree with us** — which means we don't really learn anything new.

- The Jews and Samaritans both believed God was okay with them ignoring and hating each other. Because they surrounded themselves with people who believed that too, they continued to be comfortable with that belief. But when Jesus crossed dividing lines to have a conversation with a woman who was different than Him, He helped both sides see just how wrong they had all been.
 - Through their conversation, Jesus challenged both the Jews and the Samaritans to love the people who are sometimes the hardest to love: people who are different than us – our neighbors who may not share our culture, values, behaviors, skin color, language, or beliefs.
 - Through His example, Jesus challenges you to do the same – to **love people who aren't like you.**

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

IT'S OKAY TO HAVE DIFFERENCES

- The Jews and Samaritans had a lot of differences in their customs and culture. But did you notice that Jesus didn't seem interested in addressing all of those differences or expecting the Samaritan woman to become Jewish? Jesus didn't tell her she needed to change all of her customs in order to follow Him. He didn't tell her she needed to talk, or act, or dress a certain way, or sing a certain kind of worship song.
- Right now, all over the world, followers of Jesus are worshiping in different ways that are unique to their culture and context. Those differences aren't something to fear. They're beautiful.
 - There are Jesus-followers all of over the world of every culture and skin color, speaking more languages than you can name.
 - Even within the same country, city, or church, you'll find followers of Jesus who worship, think, pray, talk, vote, and act differently. That's more than okay. It's good.
- We're all united in Jesus, but being united doesn't mean we all need to be the same. It means we're loved the same. It means we all have the same access to God through Jesus.
 - Jesus' death and resurrection destroyed the argument that only certain people are welcome in God's family or Kingdom. Jesus died for everyone – including me, you, Samaritans, and the people you struggle to love.
 - In Jesus, we're all invited to become children of God, differences and all.

RESPONSE | Who do you struggle to love?

- You're probably not angry at any Samaritans right now, but I'm guessing there is a person, or maybe a group of people, who you struggle to love because of your differences. You may not hate them, but you might be . . .
 - Overlooking or avoiding them.
 - Uncomfortable around them.
 - Angry with or disgusted by them.
 - Afraid of them.
 - Mocking them.

- So who is that for you? Is it a person? Is it a group of people? This is a safe place where you can admit who you're struggling to love, because we all sometimes struggle to love people who aren't like us.
 - I know it's easier to cancel someone than love them. It's easier to ignore them than to start a conversation with them. It's easier to hate, mock, or avoid them than reach out to them. But that's not what Jesus challenges us to do.
 - Just like Jesus confronted the Jews with the reality that God loved Samaritans, the people you're thinking about are loved by God too. They may be different than you, but you're both made in the image of God, and that makes you valuable and worthy of love.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen and a [small gift box](#). Encourage students to write down the person, type, or group of people they struggle to love, and then place that slip of paper into the gift box as a reminder that people who aren't like them are valuable and worthy of love. While students respond, play or perform a song like "Build My Life," by Passion.*
- This won't always be easy. There will be people who are hard for you to understand, connect with, or care about because of your differences. But remember . . .
 - The people you struggle to love are made in the image of God, just like you are.
 - Our differences don't have to divide us.
 - We can love each other even when we don't agree.
- If you want to love like Jesus loves (and I hope you do), **love people who aren't like you** — don't be so quick to cancel them.

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

CANCELED

You hear a lot about “cancel culture” these days. It’s what happens when swarms of people on the internet band together to call out, shame, or even “cancel” someone. And while there are definitely times when people or systems need to be called out and held accountable, we can all be a little too quick to be cruel to each other — online and offline too. In this 4-week series, we’ll get introduced to a few people from Scripture whose stories show us that humans have always struggled to choose love instead of hate. This problem isn’t a new one, but through the stories of Jesus, a few outcasts, a king, and a shepherd, we’ll see that God is challenging us to love people **who aren’t like us**, love people **who are in need**, love the people **we envy**, and love the people **we want to hate**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Love people who aren’t like you.

THE BIBLE

John 4:1-26, 39-42; II Timothy 4:2-4;
Galatians 3:28

- What’s one pop culture trend you’d like to see get “canceled” forever?
- When do you think it’s right or justified for someone to get called out, shamed, or canceled? When do you think it’s wrong or harmful?
- Do you see “cancel culture” happening more often online, in person, both, or neither? Why do you think that is?
- What are some ways you’ve seen people avoid, or get angry with each other because of their differences?
- Have you ever felt uncomfortable, angry, or afraid of someone who was different than you? In what ways were you different from each other?
- Why do you think it was important for Jesus to show that He valued the Samaritan woman?
- What’s one way valuing people who are different than us lead to more people hearing the good news of Jesus?
- Read Galatians 3:28. What is one way we could practice being “one in Christ,” while celebrating the things that make us different?
- Think of someone who is different than you. How can you show value to that person like Jesus and the Samaritan woman did by: Starting a conversation? Treating them with respect? Serving them? Listening to them? Learning from them? Telling others what you learned from them?
- Who is someone you’re struggling to love because they’re different than you? What’s one way you’re going to value them this week?

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

for middle schoolers

CANCELED

You hear a lot about “cancel culture” these days. It’s what happens when swarms of people on the internet band together to call out, shame, or even “cancel” someone. And while there are definitely times when people or systems need to be called out and held accountable, we can all be a little too quick to be cruel to each other — online and offline too. In this 4-week series, we’ll get introduced to a few people from Scripture whose stories show us that humans have always struggled to choose love instead of hate. This problem isn’t a new one, but through the stories of Jesus, a few outcasts, a king, and a shepherd, we’ll see that God is challenging us to love people **who aren’t like us**, love people **who are in need**, love the people **we envy**, and love the people **we want to hate**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Love people who aren’t like you.

THE BIBLE

John 4:1-26, 39-42; II Timothy 4:2-4;
Galatians 3:28

- What’s one pop culture trend you’d like to see get “canceled” forever?
- When do you think it’s right or justified for someone to get called out, shamed, or canceled? When do you think it’s wrong or harmful?
- What are some ways you’ve seen people avoid, dislike, or get angry with each other because of their differences?
- Read Galatians 3:28. What is one way we could practice being “one in Christ,” while celebrating the things that make us different?
- Think of someone who is different than you. How can you show value to that person like Jesus and the Samaritan woman did by . . .
 - Starting a conversation?
 - Treating them with respect?
 - Serving them?
 - Listening to them?
 - Learning from them?
- Who is someone you’re struggling to love because they’re different than you? What’s one way you’re going to value them this week?



WEEK 1

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

CANCELED

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus can redeem what's gone wrong.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 1:31, 3:17-18; Colossians 1:13-20;
Psalm 13:1-2

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Culture Cancellations

- As we kick off a new series called Canceled, let's identify a few trends that some of us would like to see "canceled" forever.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this game, you'll need [index cards](#) and a list of 5-10 cultural trends or experiences your students might want to cancel, like pandemics, reusable straws, Kevin Durant, Crocs, or an overdone TikTok trend. For each item, write three hints on a note card that start generic and become increasingly specific, so the more hints a student hears the more likely they are to guess correctly. Your hints for "Crocs," might be: 1) These shoes can be found in a variety of colors and styles. 2) They have ventilation holes that some people fill with Jibbitz. 3) They are made of foam and named after a large reptile." To play, split the room into teams and bring one student from each team to the front of the room to compete. Put 30 seconds on the clock and read a hint, one at a time, every 10 seconds. Award 3 points to the player who guesses correctly after the first hint, 2 points after the second hint, and 1 point after the third hint. After each item is identified, have your students vote whether or not that trend should be canceled.
- We may disagree on whether or not Crocs should be canceled, but sometimes "canceling" things can be much more controversial than footwear.

DISCUSSION | Define the Terms

- In the last few years, terms like "online shaming," "call-out culture," and "cancel culture" have become popular. But it's not always clear what these words mean. What does it mean to . . .

- Call out?
- Shame?
- Cancel?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to split into groups of 2-3 with the people sitting beside them, and to quickly come up with definitions and examples for these terms. Then ask a few students to share with the whole group.

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 do you think it's right or justified for someone to get called out, shamed, or canceled? When do you think it's wrong or harmful?**
 - ✪ **Do you see "cancel culture" happening more often online, in person, both, or neither? Why do you think that is?**

IMAGE | Cancel Culture Diagram

- These terms can be confusing because they're sometimes used interchangeably.
 - Some people say "canceled" as a joke, like, "Gross, you like pineapple on your pizza? Canceled."
 - Some fuel celebrity drama with hashtags like #ChrisEvansIsOverParty. (Not that anyone would ever want to cancel Chris Evans.)
 - Some people use social media to embarrass or hurt each other, maybe for a laugh or revenge.
 - And other people "call out" or "cancel" others for legitimate reasons — especially public figures who said or did something very harmful.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As you teach, show the image on screen that is provided in your Week 1 folder.
- So how do we make sense of all of these ideas? Here's how I think about it.
 - **CALL OUT:** To publicly hold someone accountable for something harmful they said or did. We all need to be called out sometimes, but **is it possible to be too eager to point out other people's mistakes?**
 - **SHAME:** To mock, embarrass, or humiliate someone. This could be anything from posting a meme to doxing someone (posting their private information publicly). When we do something that hurts others, we should feel ashamed of our actions, but **do we have the right to hurt or be cruel to people we disagree or are angry with?**
 - **CANCEL:** To boycott someone someone you believe needs to be held accountable for something they said or did. Boycotts are an important tool for creating positive change in the world, but **how do we balance accountability with grace and forgiveness?**
- Calling out, shaming, and canceling are all a little different, but where they meet is what we call "cancel culture." It's the jumbled mess we get when legitimate concerns get lost in drama, pettiness, cruelty, and revenge.

- “Cancel culture” is usually about what happens online, but we struggle with these same issues in our off-line relationships too. With or without the Internet, we can all sometimes be critical, judgmental, impatient, uncaring, and cruel.
- For the next few weeks, we’re going to talk about four kinds of people most of us would rather cancel than love, and what we can do about it – besides canceling everyone we don’t like.

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

STORY | **Talk about a time you avoided or were cruel to someone who was different than you.**

- It’s not easy to admit we’re capable of treating people cruelly, so I’ll go first. There are plenty of people I’ve “canceled,” and I’m not proud of it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a personal story (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time you avoided or were cruel to someone who was different than you, using the list of examples below as inspiration. Draw specific attention to the ways you overlooked, excluded, or were cruel to that person because they were different than you.*
- **Have you ever avoided (or even hated) someone because they were different than you?** You might think, “No way!” But if you’re honest with yourself, I think you’ll realize there are people you’ve decided to overlook or “cancel” because they were different than you, like . . .
 - A celebrity or public figure who stood for things you don’t like.
 - Your former friend, after you couldn’t seem to agree on something important.
 - A family member or classmate with opinions or beliefs you disagreed with.
 - A neighbor or peer who seemed different, weird, or scary.
 - Someone whose culture, skin color, language, appearance, or disability made you feel uncomfortable.

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 you’ve seen people avoid, dislike, or get angry with each other because of their differences?**
 - ★ **Have you ever felt uncomfortable, angry, or afraid of someone who was different than you? In what ways were you different from each other?**

SCRIPTURE | **John 4:1-26, 39-42**

- This isn’t new! Social media might be a modern invention, but humans have always been quick to cancel people who are different.
 - In Jesus’ time, people were often “canceled” by society when they sinned, got sick, were poor or disabled, or were from a different country or culture.
 - Maybe that sounds horrible, but how often do people today get angry, or even violent, toward people with a different skin color, political view, gender, or religious belief?

The answer: often.

- During Jesus' time, there was a major rift between the Jews (Jesus' people) and the Samaritans (people from a neighboring city). Picture the kind of rivalry between Yankees and Red Sox fans – but worse. Way worse.
- There were major differences between the Jews and Samaritans that led to major disagreements. If social media had existed back then, the posts between Jews and Samaritans would have been intense.
 - **Their ethnic and cultural differences** made them distrust each other.
 - **Their political differences** made them angry at each other.
 - **Their religious differences** made them hate each other.
- For hundreds of years, you would never see a Jew and a Samaritan interact, let alone have a respectful conversation about the differences in their customs or beliefs. But then Jesus showed up.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize John 4:1-26, 39-42.*
- In this conversation, Jesus rose above the social and religious restrictions of the day. According to those customs, it would have been already controversial for a respectable man like Jesus to speak with an unmarried woman as if she were his equal. On top of that, Jesus was a Jew talking to a Samaritan!
- Despite their differences, Jesus and the Samaritan woman both did something remarkable.
 - **JESUS VALUED HER.** Although Jews were accustomed to dismissing and hating Samaritans, Jesus never dismissed or was cruel to her. Instead, He valued her enough to . . .
 - Start a conversation with her.
 - Treat her with respect.
 - Share with her the good news that would change her life.
 - **SHE VALUED JESUS.** Although Samaritans were accustomed to dismissing and hating Jews, this woman valued Jesus enough to . . .
 - Give him a drink of water.
 - Listen and learn from Him.
 - Tell others what she learned from Him.
- Imagine how things could change if we acted this way with the people we don't like or who we seriously disagree with.
- Everyone would have expected Jesus to either ignore or condemn this woman. But by choosing to love, embrace, and value her, Jesus challenged His followers to love people who are different instead of rushing to "cancel" them.
- Because both Jesus and the Samaritan woman valued each other instead of letting their differences separate them, many lives were changed.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*

- ✦ **Why do you think it was important for Jesus to show that He valued the Samaritan woman?**
- ✦ **What's one way valuing people who are different than us lead to more people hearing the good news of Jesus?**

SCRIPTURE | II Timothy 4:2-4

- Whether you follow Jesus or not, there's a passage in the book of II Timothy I think we can all learn from. One of the early Christian leaders was a man named Paul. The book of II Timothy is a letter Paul wrote to a young man he was mentoring. Here's one of the things he told him.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read II Timothy 4:2-4.*
- Paul warns Timothy that people tend to only believe or listen to things they want to hear. He's specifically talking about theology (what people believe about God), but that's true about a lot of things, isn't it? We prefer to hang around people who . . .
 - Like the things we like.
 - Think or talk like we do.
 - Behave like we behave.
 - Believe the things we believe.
- There's not necessarily anything wrong with that most of the time, but here's where it can go wrong: when we only spend time with people who are just like us . . .
 - **We forget to value people who are different than us.**
 - **We only learn from people who already agree with us** – which means we don't really learn anything new.
- The Jews and Samaritans both believed God was okay with them ignoring and hating each other. Because they surrounded themselves with people who believed that too, they continued to be comfortable with that belief. But when Jesus crossed dividing lines to have a conversation with a woman who was different than Him, He helped both sides see just how wrong they had all been.
 - Through their conversation, Jesus challenged both the Jews and the Samaritans to love the people who are sometimes the hardest to love: people who are different than us – our neighbors who may not share our culture, values, behaviors, skin color, language, or beliefs.
 - Through His example, Jesus challenges you to do the same – to **love people who aren't like you.**

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

IT'S OKAY TO HAVE DIFFERENCES

- The Jews and Samaritans had a lot of differences in their customs and culture. But did you notice that Jesus didn't seem interested in addressing all of those differences or expecting the Samaritan woman to become Jewish? Jesus didn't tell her she needed to change all of her customs in order to follow Him. He didn't tell her she needed to talk, or act, or dress a certain way, or sing a certain kind of worship song.

- Right now, all over the world, followers of Jesus are worshiping in different ways that are unique to their culture and context. Those differences aren't something to fear. They're beautiful.
 - There are Jesus-followers all of over the world of every culture and skin color, speaking more languages than you can name.
 - Even within the same country, city, or church, you'll find followers of Jesus who worship, think, pray, talk, vote, and act differently. That's more than okay. It's good.
- We're all united in Jesus, but being united doesn't mean we all need to be the same. It means we're loved the same. It means we all have the same access to God through Jesus.
 - Jesus' death and resurrection destroyed the argument that only certain people are welcome in God's family or Kingdom. Jesus died for everyone — including me, you, Samaritans, and the people you struggle to love.
 - In Jesus, we're all invited to become children of God, differences and all.

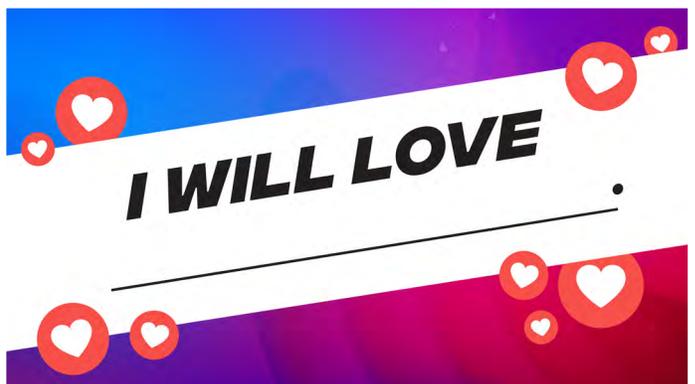
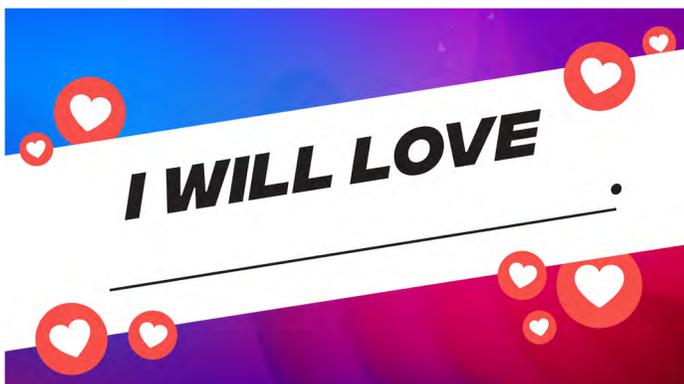
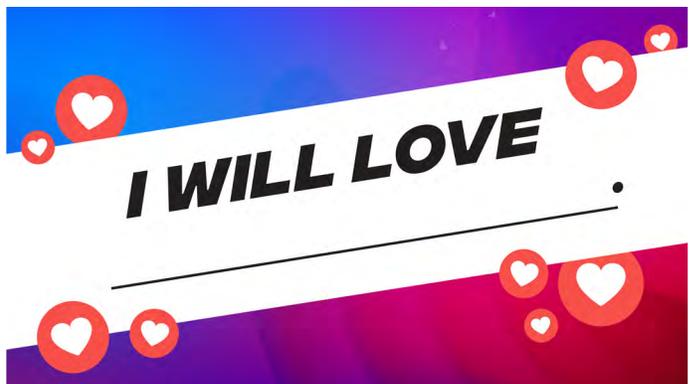
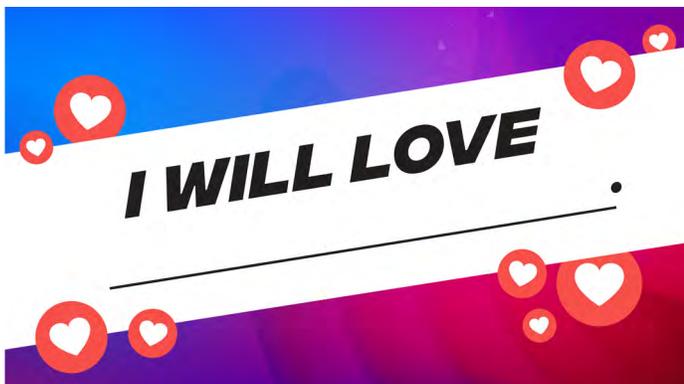
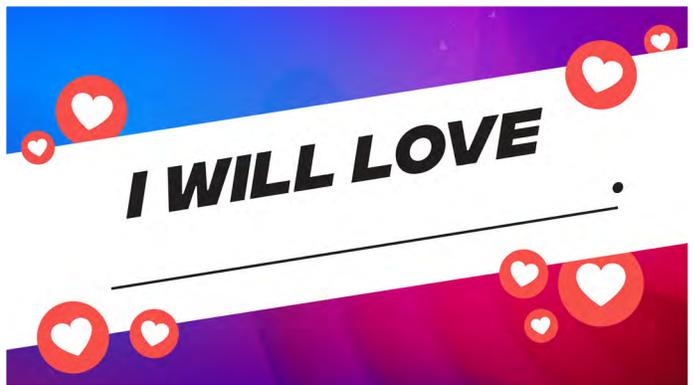
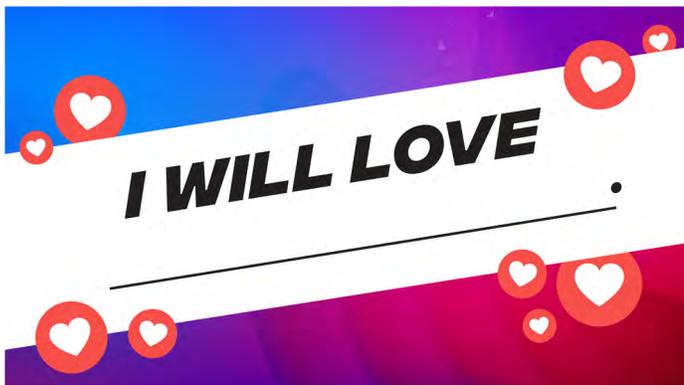
RESPONSE | Who do you struggle to love?

- You're probably not angry at any Samaritans right now, but I'm guessing there is a person, or maybe a group of people, who you struggle to love because of your differences. You may not hate them, but you might be . . .
 - Overlooking or avoiding them.
 - Uncomfortable around them.
 - Angry with or disgusted by them.
 - Afraid of them.
 - Mocking them.
- So who is that for you? Is it a person? Is it a group of people? This is a safe place where you can admit who you're struggling to love, because we all sometimes struggle to love people who aren't like us.
 - I know it's easier to cancel someone than love them. It's easier to ignore them than to start a conversation with them. It's easier to hate, mock, or avoid them than reach out to them. But that's not what Jesus challenges us to do.
 - Just like Jesus confronted the Jews with the reality that God loved Samaritans, the people you're thinking about are loved by God too. They may be different than you, but you're both made in the image of God, and that makes you valuable and worthy of love.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen and a [small gift box](#). Encourage students to write down the person, type, or group of people they struggle to love, and then place that slip of paper into the gift box as a reminder that people who aren't like them are valuable and worthy of love. While students respond, play or perform a song like "Build My Life," by Passion.*
- This won't always be easy. There will be people who are hard for you to understand, connect with, or care about because of your differences. But remember . . .
 - The people you struggle to love are made in the image of God, just like you are.
 - Our differences don't have to divide us.
 - We can love each other even when we don't agree.

- If you want to love like Jesus loves (and I hope you do), **love people who aren't like you** – don't be so quick to cancel them.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.*
 - **Read Galatians 3:28. What is one way we could practice being “one in Christ,” while celebrating the things that make us different?**
 - **Think of someone who is different than you. How can you show value to that person like Jesus and the Samaritan woman did by . . .**
 - Starting a conversation?
 - Treating them with respect?
 - Serving them?
 - Listening to them?
 - Learning from them?
 - Telling others what you learned from them?
 - **Who is someone you're struggling to love because they're different than you? What's one way you're going to value them this week?**





WEEK 2

SERMON TEACHING GUIDE

CANCELED

THE BIG IDEA

Love people who are in need.

THE BIBLE

Mark 10:46-52; Luke 8:40-48;
Matthew 25:31-46

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

IMAGES | Older People Learn Social Media

- Last week we kicked things off by talking a little bit about “cancel culture,” and how social media can sometimes be a pretty ugly and angry place. But social media can also be a pretty wholesome and entertaining place — especially when grandparents get involved.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show a few of your favorite screenshots featuring elderly people who are confused about social media. [Here's an article](#) with plenty of examples! You may want to have a volunteer or student join you at the front and read the posts out loud.

VIDEO | “That’s Not How Any of This Works”

- I love when my grandparents post weird stuff on the internet, but I wouldn’t mind spending a little less time being their own personal tech support. See if this reminds you of anyone in your family.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play [this commercial](#) from Esurance of grandmas who don’t understand social media. If you’d like, you can edit out the advertisement and only showing a portion of the clip (0:00–0:09 and 0:15–0:21).

QUESTION | Have you ever had to help someone in your family with technology?

- Does anyone have a family member who is a little confused about how the internet works? **Have you ever had to help them solve a technology problem?**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to share funny stories of helping family members figure out technology. Keep things fun and friendly, but ask questions like, “Were you frustrated? Do you ever get sick of answering their technology questions?”
- I’m sure you’re happy to help your grandparents, aunts, uncles, or parents figure out their technology questions – the first fifty questions, anyway. But after that, I’d understand if you started to lose your patience.
- It’s easy to get frustrated, especially with family, when someone needs help doing something that seems super easy and basic to us. I’m sure there are times you want to tell Aunt Edna to just “look it up on YouTube,” but then you might have to explain YouTube to her too.
- Every day, we face opportunities to help others in small ways, whether it’s showing your grandma how to use emojis, or helping a kid tie their shoe, or letting someone at your lunch table know they have cafeteria corn stuck in their teeth. (Gross.)
 - Depending on the person, the need, your mood, and how busy you are, maybe you help them! Or . . . maybe you don’t.
 - Everyone is helpful and generous *sometimes*, but what about the times we’d rather not be helpful – when we’re too busy, annoyed, tired, or sure someone else will help if we don’t?

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

VIDEO | Would you stop if you saw this little girl on the street?

- Every day, we’re surrounded by people who need help with things that are a lot more serious than figuring out how to post a picture on Facebook.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play [this video from UNICEF](#).
- I don’t know what you thought or felt when you watched that video. Maybe you thought about a time when you failed to help someone in need. Maybe you remembered a time when you needed help, but no one was there for you. Maybe you did both.
 - When we’re in need, we’re at our most vulnerable. But unfortunately, we don’t always respond with compassion, care, or concern when we see someone else in need. Instead, we respond with impatience, discomfort, disgust, or suspicion.
 - The reality is that sometimes we’ll be the ones who are able to help, and sometimes we’ll be the ones in need. Knowing that, wouldn’t you like to live in a world where we all cared for each other when we’re at our most vulnerable? I would.
- I believe that kind of world is possible and that Jesus is challenging us to go and create it.

SCRIPTURE | Mark 10:46-52

- In the Gospels (those are the first four books of the New Testament that tell us stories of Jesus’ life) we find examples of Jesus meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people.
- Jesus’ days were often interrupted by people’s cries for help, like the time a blind man named Bartimaeus shouted at Him while He walked down the road.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Mark 10:46-52.*
- Does this remind you of the video we just watched? Bartimaeus pleaded for help, but was told to be quiet. The crowds couldn't be bothered. To them, he was just another beggar, not worthy of their help or attention.
- But to Jesus, Bartimaeus was worthy of His time, His attention, and His help.

SCRIPTURE | **Luke 8:40-48**

- On another day, Jesus was busy again. He was on His way to save the life of a dying girl when He was interrupted by someone who needed His help.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Luke 8:40-48.*
- Because of her gender and illness, this woman would not have been seen as someone worthy of Jesus' time or attention. She most likely believed this too – that's why she didn't try to speak to Jesus, but simply reached out to touch the edge of his robe instead. After all, Jesus was an important man, and she wasn't.
- But to Jesus, she was worthy of His time, His attention, and His help. He spoke to her, called her "daughter," and met her needs with love.

OBJECT LESSON | **Sheep and Goats**

- But Jesus didn't just show us how to care for people in need. He talked about it too. Shortly before His death, Jesus used a parable to explain something important about God and the Kingdom of God. In this parable, He used two animals: sheep and goats.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask a handful of students to join you at the front for the next few minutes. Instruct at least three of them to be sheep, and the rest goats. If you'd like, dress your students up in sheep and goat [headbands](#) or [masks](#) to make things entertaining.*
- Before we read what Jesus had to say about sheep and goats, there's something you need to know about these animals.
 - Goats are pretty independent. Even when they're members of a herd, they often explore or head out alone. They tend to be more concerned about themselves than they are about their goat friends. (Hey, goats – go skip around and do your own thing.)
 - Sheep on the other hand, are all about their herd. They stick together at all times. (Hey, sheep – huddle up.)
- Keep this in mind as we read this parable from Jesus.

SCRIPTURE | **Matthew 25:31-46**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 25:31-46. As you do, you can either bring more students to the front to act out the parable (like a king and a few angels), or you can keep things simple with your sheep huddled together and goats wandering around. If you're going to have a king, give him a [toy crown](#) and a chair to be his throne. If you're going to have angels, give them [halos and wings](#) – and maybe make them sing an angelic chorus or two.*

- How does Jesus judge who are sheep and who are goats? He makes his decision according to how they treat people — specifically, people who are in need.
 - **GOATS:** The “unrighteous” goats were the ones who didn’t care for people in need — maybe because they were too busy thinking about themselves. In the video we watched earlier, this might have referred to the people who asked the little girl to be removed from the restaurant rather than giving her something to eat.
 - **SHEEP:** The “righteous” sheep were the ones who saw someone in need and ran to help — maybe because they saw themselves as part of a herd and were concerned about the other sheep nearby. According to Jesus, sheep are the kind of people who keep their eyes open for the needs of others and ask, “How can I help?”
- Who knew farm animals could teach us so much about caring for each other?
- Through His example and His teachings, Jesus consistently cared for people who had been canceled, forgotten, disrespected, and ignored because of their needs. And now He challenges you to do the same — to **love people who are in need.**

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

HOW TO MEET NEEDS — AND HOW NOT TO

- When we study the actions and the teachings of Jesus, here are a few things we can learn about how to meet the needs of others — and how not to.
 - **IT’S NOT ONLY ABOUT OUR ACTIONS — IT’S ABOUT OUR HEARTS.** Jesus doesn’t challenge us to only act concerned about others, or to put on a show of meeting people’s needs. In this parable, the sheep didn’t know anyone had noticed what they did for others, but they did it anyway. Jesus doesn’t only care about what we do. He cares about what’s happening inside our hearts and minds too.
 - **IT’S NOT ONLY ABOUT LOVING OTHERS — IT’S ABOUT LOVING GOD.** Jesus challenges us to love others well, yes. But He’s letting us in on a secret: when we love others by meeting their needs, we show our love for Jesus. Every time we care for someone who is vulnerable, it’s a gift of love and worship to God.
 - **IT’S NOT ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE — IT’S ABOUT WHAT WE CAN GIVE.** As we’ve talked about meeting the needs of others, maybe you’ve thought, “I can’t help anyone. My family doesn’t have a lot of money. I don’t have a lot to give.” But Jesus wasn’t talking to only wealthy or important people in these passages. He was talking to ordinary people like you and me! No matter what we have (time, compassion, money, friendship, skills), Jesus says we can use it for God’s purposes and Kingdom when we give sacrificially, passionately, and willingly.
 - **IT’S NOT ABOUT “THEM” — IT’S ABOUT “US.”** Sometimes when we talk about meeting others’ needs, we talk as though we’re the people with all the power, resources, or stuff to share, while “people in need” are a separate group of people. When we think this way, it’s easy to see someone as if they’re less valuable than we are, even while we’re serving them! But do you remember the way Jesus spoke to the blind man and the sick woman who needed His help? He treated them not just with

compassion, but with respect. He made the crowds pay attention to them. Instead of speaking for them, He asked them to speak for themselves. Jesus didn't just give people charity — He gave people respect. We can do that too, when we remember that it's not about "us" and "the people who need us." There is only "us." We're all equally loved, seen, and valued by God.

VIDEO | Class Help

- So how do we do this? How can we care for the people around us who are in need? Do we need to wait for a little girl to walk up to us in a restaurant? Do we need to ask God to help us heal the blind or sick? How do we practically meet the needs of people around us?
- There are so many opportunities all around us because there are so many needs all around us, if we're paying attention. Just like Jesus noticed the needs of Bartimaeus and the sick woman, what would it look like for you to notice a need and then respond in love? Here's one example . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the first 58 seconds of [this video](#), where students gave new clothes to a classmate they had been bullying.*
- Remember how we said that being in need makes someone vulnerable? And that, sometimes, people treat vulnerable people with cruelty? That's exactly what happened here. But then something else happened.
 - Some of the same students who had been ignoring and mocking this boy realized they had the ability to right their wrongs by meeting his needs.
 - Instead of spending money on themselves, they spent it on clothes for their classmate who was vulnerable and in need. But the clothes were only part of what they gave him. These boys also gave him respect, compassion, and kindness.
 - More than likely, they had to sacrifice something to meet those needs. Maybe it wasn't even money. Maybe it was popularity or a spot at a lunch table.
- These boys found a way use what they had to meet someone's need. How might you do the same? Could you . . .
 - Give a meal to someone who needs it?
 - Share a meal with someone who's lonely?
 - Stay after school to help someone study?
 - Help a friend perfect their free throw before basketball tryouts?
 - Check in on someone who's going through a hard time?

STORY | Talk about a time when someone loved you when you were in need.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Briefly talk about a time when someone met a small but important need for you. It could be a physical need, but it could also be an emotional need. The point is to remind students that needs exist all around them — they just need to look for them.*
- In Jesus' time, people in need were often "canceled" by society instead of helped. They were ignored, judged, or left to fend for themselves. And we still have that problem today, don't we?
- But if you want to love like Jesus loves (and I hope you do), **love people who are in need** — when you do, it's like you're doing it for Jesus Himself.

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

CANCELED

You hear a lot about “cancel culture” these days. It's what happens when swarms of people on the internet band together to call out, shame, or even “cancel” someone. And while there are definitely times when people or systems need to be called out and held accountable, we can all be a little too quick to be cruel to each other — online and offline too. In this 4-week series, we'll get introduced to a few people from Scripture whose stories show us that humans have always struggled to choose love instead of hate. This problem isn't a new one, but through the stories of Jesus, a few outcasts, a king, and a shepherd, we'll see that God is challenging us to love people **who aren't like us**, love people **who are in need**, love the people **we envy**, and love the people **we want to hate**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Love people who are in need.

THE BIBLE

Mark 10:46-52; Luke 8:40-48;
Matthew 25:31-46

- **Have you ever had to give or ask for help for something really obvious, easy, or funny? What was it?**
- **Have you ever lost your patience when you were trying to help someone? Tell us about it!**
- **Why do you think most people don't help each other more often?**
- **When you watched the video of the little girl who needed help, what did you notice, think, or feel?**
- **In that video, how did people respond to the little girl's needs? Do you think you've ever behaved that way when someone was in need?**
- **What do you wish the people in that video could have done differently?**
- **Reread Mark 10:46-52 or Luke 8:40-48. What did you notice about the way Jesus treated Bartimaeus and the ill woman?**
- **If Jesus lived in our community or went to your school, what kinds of needs do you think He would be meeting?**
- **Talk about a time someone loved you when you were in need.**
- **Who is someone whose needs you can meet this week? What will you do about it?**

ACTIVITY

Challenge your students to identify a specific need in your community, church, or group, and then create a plan together of how you'll help meet that need together. If any of your students shared a need that they or their families are currently experiencing, start there!

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

for middle schoolers

CANCELED

You hear a lot about “cancel culture” these days. It’s what happens when swarms of people on the internet band together to call out, shame, or even “cancel” someone. And while there are definitely times when people or systems need to be called out and held accountable, we can all be a little too quick to be cruel to each other — online and offline too. In this 4-week series, we’ll get introduced to a few people from Scripture whose stories show us that humans have always struggled to choose love instead of hate. This problem isn’t a new one, but through the stories of Jesus, a few outcasts, a king, and a shepherd, we’ll see that God is challenging us to love people **who aren’t like us**, love people **who are in need**, love the people **we envy**, and love the people **we want to hate**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Love people who are in need.

THE BIBLE

Mark 10:46-52; Luke 8:40-48;
Matthew 25:31-46

- **Have you ever had to give or ask for help for something really obvious, easy, or funny? What was it?**
- **Have you ever lost your patience when you were trying to help someone? Tell us about it!**
- **Why do you think most people don't help each other more often?**
- **When you watched the video of the little girl who needed help, what did you notice, think, or feel?**
- **If Jesus lived in our community or went to your school, what kinds of needs do you think He would be meeting?**
- **Who is someone whose needs you can meet this week? What will you do about it?**

ACTIVITY

Challenge your students to identify a specific need in your community, church, or group, and then create a plan together of how you'll help meet that need together. If any of your students shared a need that they or their families are currently experiencing, start there!



WEEK 2

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

CANCELED

THE BIG IDEA

Love people who are in need.

THE BIBLE

Mark 10:46-52; Luke 8:40-48;
Matthew 25:31-46

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

IMAGES | Older People Learn Social Media

- Last week we kicked things off by talking a little bit about “cancel culture,” and how social media can sometimes be a pretty ugly and angry place. But social media can also be a pretty wholesome and entertaining place — especially when grandparents get involved.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show a few of your favorite screenshots featuring elderly people who are confused about social media. [Here's an article](#) with plenty of examples! You may want to have a volunteer or student join you at the front and read the posts out loud.

VIDEO | “That’s Not How Any of This Works”

- I love when my grandparents post weird stuff on the internet, but I wouldn’t mind spending a little less time being their own personal tech support. See if this reminds you of anyone in your family.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play [this commercial](#) from Esurance of grandmas who don’t understand social media. If you’d like, you can edit out the advertisement and only showing a portion of the clip (0:00–0:09 and 0:15–0:21).

QUESTION | Have you ever had to help someone in your family with technology?

- Does anyone have a family member who is a little confused about how the internet works? **Have you ever had to help them solve a technology problem?**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to share funny stories of helping family members figure out technology. Keep things fun and friendly, but ask questions like, “Were you frustrated? Do you ever get sick of answering their technology questions?”
- I’m sure you’re happy to help your grandparents, aunts, uncles, or parents figure out their technology questions – the first fifty questions, anyway. But after that, I’d understand if you started to lose your patience.
- It’s easy to get frustrated, especially with family, when someone needs help doing something that seems super easy and basic to us. I’m sure there are times you want to tell Aunt Edna to just “look it up on YouTube,” but then you might have to explain YouTube to her too.
- Every day, we face opportunities to help others in small ways, whether it’s showing your grandma how to use emojis, or helping a kid tie their shoe, or letting someone at your lunch table know they have cafeteria corn stuck in their teeth. (Gross.)
 - Depending on the person, the need, your mood, and how busy you are, maybe you help them! Or . . . maybe you don’t.
 - Everyone is helpful and generous sometimes, but what about the times we’d rather not be helpful – when we’re too busy, annoyed, tired, or sure someone else will help if we don’t?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.
 - **Have you ever had to give or ask for help for something really obvious, easy, or funny? What was it?**
 - **Have you ever lost your patience when you were trying to help someone? Tell us about it!**
 - **Why do you think most people don’t help each other more often?**

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

VIDEO | Would you stop if you saw this little girl on the street?

- Every day, we’re surrounded by people who need help with things that are a lot more serious than figuring out how to post a picture on Facebook.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play [this video from UNICEF](#).
- I don’t know what you thought or felt when you watched that video. Maybe you thought about a time when you failed to help someone in need. Maybe you remembered a time when you needed help, but no one was there for you. Maybe you did both.
 - When we’re in need, we’re at our most vulnerable. But unfortunately, we don’t always respond with compassion, care, or concern when we see someone else in need. Instead, we respond with impatience, discomfort, disgust, or suspicion.
 - The reality is that sometimes we’ll be the ones who are able to help, and sometimes we’ll be the ones in need. Knowing that, wouldn’t you like to live in a world where we all cared for each other when we’re at our most vulnerable? I would.
- I believe that kind of world is possible and that Jesus is challenging us to go and create it.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - **When you watched the video of the little girl who needed help, what did you notice, think, or feel?**
 - ✪ **In that video, how did people respond to the little girl's needs? Do you think you've ever behaved that way when someone was in need?**
 - ✪ **What do you wish the people in that video could have done differently?**

SCRIPTURE | Mark 10:46-52

- In the Gospels (those are the first four books of the New Testament that tell us stories of Jesus' life) we find examples of Jesus meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people.
- Jesus' days were often interrupted by people's cries for help, like the time a blind man named Bartimaeus shouted at Him while He walked down the road.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read or summarize Mark 10:46-52.
- Does this remind you of the video we just watched? Bartimaeus pleaded for help, but was told to be quiet. The crowds couldn't be bothered. To them, he was just another beggar, not worthy of their help or attention.
- But to Jesus, Bartimaeus was worthy of His time, His attention, and His help.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 8:40-48

- On another day, Jesus was busy again. He was on His way to save the life of a dying girl when He was interrupted by someone who needed His help.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read or summarize Luke 8:40-48.
- Because of her gender and illness, this woman would not have been seen as someone worthy of Jesus' time or attention. She most likely believed this too – that's why she didn't try to speak to Jesus, but simply reached out to touch the edge of his robe instead. After all, Jesus was an important man, and she wasn't.
- But to Jesus, she was worthy of His time, His attention, and His help. He spoke to her, called her "daughter," and met her needs with love.

OBJECT LESSON | Sheep and Goats

- But Jesus didn't just show us how to care for people in need. He talked about it too. Shortly before His death, Jesus used a parable to explain something important about God and the Kingdom of God. In this parable, He used two animals: sheep and goats.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask a handful of students to join you at the front for the next few minutes. Instruct at least three of them to be sheep, and the rest goats. If you'd like, dress your students up in sheep and goat [headbands](#) or [masks](#) to make things entertaining.
- Before we read what Jesus had to say about sheep and goats, there's something you need to know about these animals.

- Goats are pretty independent. Even when they're members of a herd, they often explore or head out alone. They tend to be more concerned about themselves than they are about their goat friends. (Hey, goats — go skip around and do your own thing.)
- Sheep on the other hand, are all about their herd. They stick together at all times. (Hey, sheep — huddle up.)
- Keep this in mind as we read this parable from Jesus.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 25:31-46

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 25:31-46. As you do, you can either bring more students to the front to act out the parable (like a king and a few angels), or you can keep things simple with your sheep huddled together and goats wandering around. If you're going to have a king, give him a [toy crown](#) and a chair to be his throne. If you're going to have angels, give them [halos and wings](#) — and maybe make them sing an angelic chorus or two.
- How does Jesus judge who are sheep and who are goats? He makes his decision according to how they treat people — specifically, people who are in need.
 - **GOATS:** The “unrighteous” goats were the ones who didn’t care for people in need — maybe because they were too busy thinking about themselves. In the video we watched earlier, this might have referred to the people who asked the little girl to be removed from the restaurant rather than giving her something to eat.
 - **SHEEP:** The “righteous” sheep were the ones who saw someone in need and ran to help — maybe because they saw themselves as part of a herd and were concerned about the other sheep nearby. According to Jesus, sheep are the kind of people who keep their eyes open for the needs of others and ask, “How can I help?”
- Who knew farm animals could teach us so much about caring for each other?
- Through His example and His teachings, Jesus consistently cared for people who had been canceled, forgotten, disrespected, and ignored because of their needs. And now He challenges you to do the same — to **love people who are in need.**

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

HOW TO MEET NEEDS — AND HOW NOT TO

- When we study the actions and the teachings of Jesus, here are a few things we can learn about how to meet the needs of others — and how not to.
 - **IT'S NOT ONLY ABOUT OUR ACTIONS — IT'S ABOUT OUR HEARTS.** Jesus doesn't challenge us to only act concerned about others, or to put on a show of meeting people's needs. In this parable, the sheep didn't know anyone had noticed what they did for others, but they did it anyway. Jesus doesn't only care about what we do. He cares about what's happening inside our hearts and minds too.
 - **IT'S NOT ONLY ABOUT LOVING OTHERS — IT'S ABOUT LOVING GOD.** Jesus challenges us to love others well, yes. But He's letting us in on a secret: when we love others by meeting their needs, we show our love for Jesus. Every time we care for someone who is vulnerable, it's a gift of love and worship to God.

- **IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE – IT'S ABOUT WHAT WE CAN GIVE.** As we've talked about meeting the needs of others, maybe you've thought, "I can't help anyone. My family doesn't have a lot of money. I don't have a lot to give." But Jesus wasn't talking to only wealthy or important people in these passages. He was talking to ordinary people like you and me! No matter what we have (time, compassion, money, friendship, skills), Jesus says we can use it for God's purposes and Kingdom when we give sacrificially, passionately, and willingly.
- **IT'S NOT ABOUT "THEM" – IT'S ABOUT "US."** Sometimes when we talk about meeting others' needs, we talk as though we're the people with all the power, resources, or stuff to share, while "people in need" are a separate group of people. When we think this way, it's easy to see someone as if they're less valuable than we are, even while we're serving them! But do you remember the way Jesus spoke to the blind man and the sick woman who needed His help? He treated them not just with compassion, but with respect. He made the crowds pay attention to them. Instead of speaking for them, He asked them to speak for themselves. Jesus didn't just give people charity – He gave people respect. We can do that too, when we remember that it's not about "us" and "the people who need us." There is only "us." We're all equally loved, seen, and valued by God.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - ★ **Reread Mark 10:46-52 or Luke 8:40-48. What did you notice about the way Jesus treated Bartimaeus and the ill woman?**
 - **If Jesus lived in our community or went to your school, what kinds of needs do you think He would be meeting?**

VIDEO | Class Help

- So how do we do this? How can we care for the people around us who are in need? Do we need to wait for a little girl to walk up to us in a restaurant? Do we need to ask God to help us heal the blind or sick? How to we practically meet the needs of people around us?
- There are so many opportunities all around us because there are so many needs all around us, if we're paying attention. Just like Jesus noticed the needs of Bartimaeus and the sick woman, what would it look like for you to notice a need and then respond in love? Here's one example . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play the first 58 seconds of [this video](#), where students gave new clothes to a classmate they had been bullying.
- Remember how we said that being in need makes someone vulnerable? And that, sometimes, people treat vulnerable people with cruelty? That's exactly what happened here. But then something else happened.
 - Some of the same students who had been ignoring and mocking this boy realized

they had the ability to right their wrongs by meeting his needs.

- Instead of spending money on themselves, they spent it on clothes for their classmate who was vulnerable and in need. But the clothes were only part of what they gave him. These boys also gave him respect, compassion, and kindness.
- More than likely, they had to sacrifice something to meet those needs. Maybe it wasn't even money. Maybe it was popularity or a spot at a lunch table.
- These boys found a way use what they had to meet someone's need. How might you do the same? Could you . . .
 - Give a meal to someone who needs it?
 - Share a meal with someone who's lonely?
 - Stay after school to help someone study?
 - Help a friend perfect their free throw before basketball tryouts?
 - Check in on someone who's going through a hard time?

STORY | **Talk about a time when someone loved you when you were in need.**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Briefly talk about a time when someone met a small but important need for you. It could be a physical need, but it could also be an emotional need. The point is to remind students that needs exist all around them — they just need to look for them.*
- In Jesus' time, people in need were often "canceled" by society instead of helped. They were ignored, judged, or left to fend for themselves. And we still have that problem today, don't we?
- But if you want to love like Jesus loves (and I hope you do), **love people who are in need** — when you do, it's like you're doing it for Jesus Himself.

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.*
 - ★ **Talk about a time someone loved you when you were in need.**
 - **Who is someone whose needs you can meet this week? What will you do about it?**



WEEK 3 SERMON GUIDE

CANCELED

THE BIG IDEA

Love the people you envy.

THE BIBLE

Proverbs 27:4; I Samuel 18:6-10, 19:1-12;
Matthew 22:36-39; Philippians 4:12

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Green-Eyed Monsters

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Collect green office or party supplies, like [crepe paper](#), [balloons](#), [construction paper](#), [face paint](#), [garland](#), tape, stickers, and scissors. To play, have two students come to the front – they'll be your monsters. Then choose a few students to be in charge of transforming those students into green monsters in under three minutes. Let them know they're playing for a prize (like green candies, green gift cards, or even a small stack of dollar bills, if your currency is green). When the time is up, have all of your students vote on their favorite monster and declare a winner. If you'd like, you can even have your monsters finish the game by reciting this quote from Shakespeare's *Othello* together in monster voices: "O beware, my lord, of jealousy; it is the **green-eyed monster** which doth mock the meat it feeds on."*

POLL | Raise your hand if you've ever been envious.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask students to raise their hands in response to each question.*
- As you may have guessed, I want to talk about jealousy and envy today. **Have you ever felt envious of . . .**
 - **A friend?**
 - **A sibling?**
 - **Someone on social media?**
 - **Someone famous?**
- Or maybe you're envious right now because you *really* wanted one of those prizes I just gave away.

QUESTION | What have you been envious about?

- Now that we know we can all relate, **name someone or something you've envied.**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond, encouraging them to give examples that are silly or surface-level — you'll have plenty of time to get vulnerable later.
- To get us started, let's get clear about what we mean when we say "envy."
 - Today, we're *not* defining "envy" as looking at someone's cool new shoes and thinking, "Those are cool shoes. It would be nice to have a pair."
 - When we talk about "envy" today we'll be talking about what happens when you stop simply wanting or wishing for something, and you let it turn into something ugly — like frustration, anger, self-pity, or hatred.
- We've all had a moment (or maybe a few) when we've been a little envious of someone. But today I'm going to ask you to get a little uncomfortable, because I want us to get honest about the times when we've allowed a "little" bit of envy prevent us from loving others.

STORY | Talk about a time envy kept you from loving someone.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you were so envious of a person, or a group of people, that you began to avoid them or see them as your enemy. Dig deep with this story and model vulnerability. Were you envious of a certain group of people because you weren't part of their friend group, or of someone who was given an opportunity you really wanted, or of someone who was skilled in an area where you felt insecure? After you share who you were envious of, explain how envy prevented you from loving that person. Did you see them as a threat? Did you avoid them, mock them, talk poorly about them, or dislike them?
- It's easy to make excuses for our envy. We might think . . .
 - "I'm not jealous — they're just a jerk!"
 - "I'm not being judgmental — they really aren't that talented!"
 - "I deserve what they have more than they do!"
- Whether we wish we had someone's position on a team, their TikTok views, their relationships, their shoes, their "perfect" family, or their full-ride scholarship, it's easy for envy to creep in, take over, and "cancel" our joy, contentment, and self-worth.
- It might start small, but envy can grow into a monster.

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

OBJECT LESSON | Greener and Greener

- Let me give you an example of how envy can grow over time if we don't address it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Get a [clear container](#) of water and [green food coloring](#). As you give each of the following scenarios, follow the instructions for what to do with the food coloring. And don't forget you can use your own scenario if you don't like our example!
 - Let's say you're trying out for a position on the basketball team. There's only one other person trying out for your position. He's given the starting position, while you become his backup. **[OPEN THE FOOD COLORING.]** Sure, that probably stings a

little bit, but you're fine! You can't always be the best at everything, right?

- When your friends ask about it, you tell them what happened and say it's fine **[ADD ONE DROP OF FOOD COLORING]**, but you can't help but sneak in a comment about how that guy is just so entitled, or full of himself, or just lucky because your game was a little off that day.
- At practice a few weeks later, your coach gives you a high five, but spends a full minute telling that guy what a great job he's doing. **[ADD ANOTHER DROP OR TWO.]** "What a suck up," you think. "He's not that good — he's just popular and his parents are rich, so he gets whatever he wants."
- Then, in your first game, he makes an amazing play and the whole team celebrates. He's yelling and cheering and fist-bumping your teammates when you tell the person next to you **[TAKE OFF THE LID AND ADD THE ENTIRE BOTTLE]**, "He's so full of himself, it's disgusting. And did you know his parents basically bought him his spot on the team? This whole school is so messed up."
- Whoa. That escalated quickly. But this is what envy does! Something small can quickly become something big. It stops being about the *thing* you envied — it becomes about the person you envy.

SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 27:4

- Here's how Scripture talks about envy. In the book of Proverbs (which is a book filled with wise sayings), it says . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Proverbs 27:4 together.*
- Think back to the last time you were absolutely furious at someone.
 - Do you remember how you felt in the moment?
 - Do you still feel that way right now? Maybe not!
- Anger is a big emotion, but it comes and goes. Jealousy, on the other hand, keeps growing and growing. As it grows, it begins to harm us and our relationships with others.

SCRIPTURE | I Samuel 18:6-10

- In the Bible, we find a story about a time when envy slowly destroyed a man named King Saul.
- Saul was the king of Israel, but he had a problem. Because Saul had been disobedient to God, God rejected Saul and chose a young shepherd boy named David to be the next king of Israel. Saul knew a new king was coming, but he didn't know who.
 - When Saul first encountered David, he was impressed! David played music for him and even defeated a terrifying enemy for Saul's army.
 - Maybe you've heard the story of David and Goliath. Goliath was a Philistine warrior who David defeated with a simple slingshot and God's help, when no one else in Saul's army was willing to risk it.
 - David became best friends with King Saul's son Jonathan.
 - David even led tons of missions for Saul's army, and always did them well.
- But then Saul let envy creep in. He saw strength and potential in David and didn't like that other people saw it too. While David was being recognized and celebrated, Saul's envy began to grow.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read *I Samuel 18:6-10*. If you'd like, you can repurpose the Greener and Greener object lesson here to visualize Saul's growing jealousy.
- Whoa, that took a turn at the end there, huh? Saul wasn't interested in celebrating David or recognizing his achievements. He wanted him gone. Saul's jealousy was so great that he decided to "cancel" David, once and for all — with a spear.

SCRIPTURE | *I Samuel 19:1-12*

- Saul's first attempt to kill David may have failed, but he was eager to try again.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read or summarize *I Samuel 19:1-12*.
- After David escaped, he ran as far away from Saul as he could, with Saul in pursuit. He hunted David from city to city, his envy so great that Saul was ready to do anything in order to see David dead. But some surprising things happened during that pursuit.
 - David had a chance to kill Saul — but he didn't take it.
 - David had a second chance to kill Saul — but he didn't take that change either.
 - David and Saul finally call a truce and promise never to harm each other.
 - They finally part ways and never see each other again.
- I wish I could tell you Saul totally turned his life around and chose to love David instead of jealously hating him, but I can't. Saul stopped trying to kill David, so I guess that was a win, but it doesn't appear that Saul ever stopped hating him.
- Not every story in the Bible has a happy ending or comes with a clear lesson or practical takeaway. But here's what we can do with stories like Saul's:
 - Reflect on his life and choices.
 - Consider how his actions line up with what we know about God.
 - Look to the words of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE | *Matthew 22:36-39*

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read *Matthew 22:36-39*.
- When you're not sure what to do, come back to these words from Jesus. Whether we're feeling the first hints of envy, or we're so jealous we're ready to throw a spear at someone, Jesus words can always guide us. **Love the people you envy.**

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

REFLECTION | **Who Are You?**

- So who in this story do you relate to?
 - **Are you like David?** Do you feel like someone (or a group of people) are always out to get you because they're jealous of you? Do you feel alone, confused, or like you've been "canceled"?
 - **Are you like Saul?** You've probably never thrown a spear at someone, but is there someone you thought about while hearing Saul's story? Someone you really dislike

because (if you're honest) you're a little bit jealous of them?

- **Are you like both?** Chances are, you have things in common with both Saul and David. I know I do.
- No matter how you relate to David and Saul, I think we can all agree that envy destroys our relationships because you can't love and let envy grow at the same time.
- **But how do we stop being envious?** It starts by finding contentment, fulfillment, and peace in the God who made us.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play or perform the song "Nothing Else," by Cody Carnes, or something similar. You may want to have adult volunteers available for any students who need someone to talk to or pray with. As students reflect, ask them these questions . . .*
 - **Do you ever find yourself wanting, obsessing over, or comparing what someone else has to what you have?**
 - **Are you envious of someone?**
 - **What do they have that you envy?**
 - **Is Jesus your source of contentment? If not, ask Him to change your heart.**
- If we want to replace envy with love, this is where we have to start. When our contentment is found in Jesus, it becomes so much easier to love others — including those who have things we wish we had.

ACTIVITY | Call-Out

- But getting our hearts right is only the first step in replacing envy with love. If we really want to love the people we envy, we have to do something more.
 - Instead of envying people who have something we want, what if we decided to **celebrate them?**
 - Instead of imitating the "call-out culture" of the world around us, what if we chose to **call-out others' greatness?**
 - And here's one more idea. When we are the people who are being envied, instead of keeping all of our good things to ourselves, what if we decided to share what we have?
- Let's start practicing this right now. Let's start changing our culture for the better by celebrating each other, calling out the greatness we see in others, and thinking of ways we can **share what we have.**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Depending on the size and dynamics of your group, you'll need to decide just how vulnerable you want to challenge students to get during this moment. Model this activity at the front first, and then (if you'd like) have students participate in groups of friends.*
 - **AT THE FRONT:** *Before your program, ask a handful of students and volunteers if they'd like to join you for this exercise. Have them stand with you in a circle and take turns celebrating or calling each other out for the good things they have, are, or have done. Talk about what you'll share beforehand to make sure you're giving students helpful examples to follow. If possible, try to incorporate at least one person who **confesses their envy** for someone in the group ("I wish I could sing like you," or "Your*

family seems perfect – I wish mine was more like yours.”) and someone who **offers to share what they have** (“You’re a great singer! Let’s sing together sometime,” or “My family’s not perfect, but you can come to my house and hang out with us if you want!”).

- **IN GROUPS:** Have students split into groups and repeat the exercise for five minutes. Be sure to group students with people they know, and don’t pressure everyone to speak – especially new students who don’t know many people.
- So how did that go?
 - If this activity was easy for you, that’s great! Keep doing it outside these four walls.
 - If you decided not to share anything because you’re just not ready yet, that’s okay. I’m glad you’re being real and not faking it.
 - If you decided to say something even though you weren’t sure you meant it, that’s okay too. I’m proud of you for loving others with your actions.
- What I’m challenging you to do isn’t easy. Loving people we envy isn’t natural. But with God’s help, and Jesus’ example, I think we can learn how to do it well. If you want to love like Jesus loves (and I hope you do), **love the people you envy.**

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

CANCELED

You hear a lot about “cancel culture” these days. It’s what happens when swarms of people on the internet band together to call out, shame, or even “cancel” someone. And while there are definitely times when people or systems need to be called out and held accountable, we can all be a little too quick to be cruel to each other — online and offline too. In this 4-week series, we’ll get introduced to a few people from Scripture whose stories show us that humans have always struggled to choose love instead of hate. This problem isn’t a new one, but through the stories of Jesus, a few outcasts, a king, and a shepherd, we’ll see that God is challenging us to love people **who aren’t like us**, love people **who are in need**, love the people **we envy**, and love the people **we want to hate**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Love the people you envy.

THE BIBLE

Proverbs 27:4; I Samuel 18:6-10, 19:1-12;
Matthew 22:36-39; Philippians 4:12

- If you could have something you really wanted for free, what one thing would you choose?
- How would you define “envy”? What do you think most people your age get envious about?
- Do you think anyone has ever been envious of you? How did that impact your relationship with them?
- Have you ever seen envy destroy a relationship? What do you think could be done to save a relationship being destroyed by jealousy?
- Have you ever experienced a negative emotion that grew bigger over time? What was it and how did you deal with it?
- How do you usually deal with jealousy when you experience it? How do you think you could deal with it better?
- In the passage of Scripture we read today, could you relate more to David, Saul, or both? Why?
- Read Philippians 4:12. What do you think it means to find contentment in Jesus?
- Don’t name names, but do you envy anyone right now? What do they have that you want?
- What’s something you can do this week to love someone you envy?

ACTIVITY

MAKE A BATTLE PLAN: Work together to find more passages of Scripture that can help us choose love instead of envy. When you’ve found a few passages, write them on note cards, take screenshots of them, or post them somewhere together as a reminder.

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

for middle schoolers

CANCELED

You hear a lot about “cancel culture” these days. It’s what happens when swarms of people on the internet band together to call out, shame, or even “cancel” someone. And while there are definitely times when people or systems need to be called out and held accountable, we can all be a little too quick to be cruel to each other — online and offline too. In this 4-week series, we’ll get introduced to a few people from Scripture whose stories show us that humans have always struggled to choose love instead of hate. This problem isn’t a new one, but through the stories of Jesus, a few outcasts, a king, and a shepherd, we’ll see that God is challenging us to love people **who aren’t like us**, love people **who are in need**, love the people **we envy**, and love the people **we want to hate**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Love the people you envy.

THE BIBLE

Proverbs 27:4; I Samuel 18:6-10, 19:1-12;
Matthew 22:36-39; Philippians 4:12

- If you could have something you really wanted for free, what one thing would you choose?
- How would you define “envy”? What do you think most people your age get envious about?
- How do you usually deal with jealousy when you experience it? How do you think you could deal with it better?
- Read Philippians 4:12. What do you think it means to find contentment in Jesus?
- Don’t name names, but do you envy anyone right now? What do they have that you want?
- What’s something you can do this week to love someone you envy?

ACTIVITY

MAKE A BATTLE PLAN: Work together to find more passages of Scripture that can help us choose love instead of envy. When you’ve found a few passages, write them on note cards, take screenshots of them, or post them somewhere together as a reminder.



WEEK 3

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

CANCELED

THE BIG IDEA

Love the people you envy.

THE BIBLE

Proverbs 27:4; I Samuel 18:6-10, 19:1-12;
Matthew 22:36-39; Philippians 4:12

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Green-Eyed Monsters

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Collect green office or party supplies, like [crepe paper](#), [balloons](#), [construction paper](#), [face paint](#), [garland](#), tape, stickers, and scissors. To play, have two students come to the front – they'll be your monsters. Then choose a few students to be in charge of transforming those students into green monsters in under three minutes. Let them know they're playing for a prize (like green candies, green gift cards, or even a small stack of dollar bills, if your currency is green). When the time is up, have all of your students vote on their favorite monster and declare a winner. If you'd like, you can even have your monsters finish the game by reciting this quote from Shakespeare's *Othello* together in monster voices: "O beware, my lord, of jealousy; it is the **green-eyed monster** which doth mock the meat it feeds on."*

POLL | Raise your hand if you've ever been envious.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask students to raise their hands in response to each question.*
- As you may have guessed, I want to talk about jealousy and envy today. **Have you ever felt envious of . . .**
 - **A friend?**
 - **A sibling?**
 - **Someone on social media?**
 - **Someone famous?**
- Or maybe you're envious right now because you *really* wanted one of those prizes I just gave away.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.
 - **If you could have something you really wanted for free, what one thing would you choose?**
 - **How would you define “envy”? What do you think most people your age get envious about?**

QUESTION | What have you been envious about?

- Now that we know we can all relate, **name someone or something you’ve envied.**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond, encouraging them to give examples that are silly or surface-level – you’ll have plenty of time to get vulnerable later.
- To get us started, let’s get clear about what we mean when we say “envy.”
 - Today, we’re *not* defining “envy” as looking at someone’s cool new shoes and thinking, “Those are cool shoes. It would be nice to have a pair.”
 - When we talk about “envy” today we’ll be talking about what happens when you stop simply wanting or wishing for something, and you let it turn into something ugly – like frustration, anger, self-pity, or hatred.
- We’ve all had a moment (or maybe a few) when we’ve been a little envious of someone. But today I’m going to ask you to get a little uncomfortable, because I want us to get honest about the times when we’ve allowed a “little” bit of envy prevent us from loving others.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you’re working only with middle schoolers.
 - ☆ **Do you think anyone has ever been envious of you? How did that impact your relationship with them?**
 - ☆ **Have you ever seen envy destroy a relationship? What do you think could be done to save a relationship being destroyed by jealousy?**

STORY | Talk about a time envy kept you from loving someone.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you were so envious of a person, or a group of people, that you began to avoid them or see them as your enemy. Dig deep with this story and model vulnerability. Were you envious of a certain group of people because you weren’t part of their friend group, or of someone who was given an opportunity you really wanted, or of someone who was skilled in an area where you felt insecure? After you share who you were envious of, explain how envy prevented you from loving that person. Did you see them as a threat? Did you avoid them, mock them, talk poorly about them, or dislike them?
- It’s easy to make excuses for our envy. We might think . . .
 - “I’m not jealous – they’re just a jerk!”
 - “I’m not being judgmental – they really aren’t that talented!”

- “I deserve what they have more than they do!”
- Whether we wish we had someone’s position on a team, their TikTok views, their relationships, their shoes, their “perfect” family, or their full-ride scholarship, it’s easy for envy to creep in, take over, and “cancel” our joy, contentment, and self-worth.
- It might start small, but envy can grow into a monster.

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

OBJECT LESSON | Greener and Greener

- Let me give you an example of how envy can grow over time if we don’t address it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Get a [clear container](#) of water and [green food coloring](#). As you give each of the following scenarios, follow the instructions for what to do with the food coloring. And don’t forget you can use your own scenario if you don’t like our example!
 - Let’s say you’re trying out for a position on the basketball team. There’s only one other person trying out for your position. He’s given the starting position, while you become his backup. **[OPEN THE FOOD COLORING.]** Sure, that probably stings a little bit, but you’re fine! You can’t always be the best at everything, right?
 - When your friends ask about it, you tell them what happened and say it’s fine **[ADD ONE DROP OF FOOD COLORING]**, but you can’t help but sneak in a comment about how that guy is just so entitled, or full of himself, or just lucky because your game was a little off that day.
 - At practice a few weeks later, your coach gives you a high five, but spends a full minute telling that guy what a great job he’s doing. **[ADD ANOTHER DROP OR TWO.]** “What a suck up,” you think. “He’s not that good — he’s just popular and his parents are rich, so he gets whatever he wants.”
 - Then, in your first game, he makes an amazing play and the whole team celebrates. He’s yelling and cheering and fist-bumping your teammates when you tell the person next to you **[TAKE OFF THE LID AND ADD THE ENTIRE BOTTLE]**, “He’s so full of himself, it’s disgusting. And did you know his parents basically bought him his spot on the team? This whole school is so messed up.”
- Whoa. That escalated quickly. But this is what envy does! Something small can quickly become something big. It stops being about the thing you envied — it becomes about the person you envy.

SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 27:4

- Here’s how Scripture talks about envy. In the book of Proverbs (which is a book filled with wise sayings), it says . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Proverbs 27:4 together.
- Think back to the last time you were absolutely furious at someone.
 - Do you remember how you felt in the moment?
 - Do you still feel that way right now? Maybe not!
- Anger is a big emotion, but it comes and goes. Jealousy, on the other hand, keeps growing and growing. As it grows, it begins to harm us and our relationships with others.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
 - ★ **Have you ever experienced a negative emotion that grew bigger over time? What was it and how did you deal with it?**
 - **How do you usually deal with jealousy when you experience it? How do you think you could deal with it better?**

SCRIPTURE | I Samuel 18:6-10

- In the Bible, we find a story about a time when envy slowly destroyed a man named King Saul.
- Saul was the king of Israel, but he had a problem. Because Saul had been disobedient to God, God rejected Saul and chose a young shepherd boy named David to be the next king of Israel. Saul knew a new king was coming, but he didn't know who.
 - When Saul first encountered David, he was impressed! David played music for him and even defeated a terrifying enemy for Saul's army.
 - Maybe you've heard the story of David and Goliath. Goliath was a Philistine warrior who David defeated with a simple slingshot and God's help, when no one else in Saul's army was willing to risk it.
 - David became best friends with King Saul's son Jonathan.
 - David even led tons of missions for Saul's army, and always did them well.
- But then Saul let envy creep in. He saw strength and potential in David and didn't like that other people saw it too. While David was being recognized and celebrated, Saul's envy began to grow.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read I Samuel 18:6-10. If you'd like, you can repurpose the Greener and Greener object lesson here to visualize Saul's growing jealousy.
- Whoa, that took a turn at the end there, huh? Saul wasn't interested in celebrating David or recognizing his achievements. He wanted him gone. Saul's jealousy was so great that he decided to "cancel" David, once and for all — with a spear.

SCRIPTURE | I Samuel 19:1-12

- Saul's first attempt to kill David may have failed, but he was eager to try again.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read or summarize I Samuel 19:1-12.
- After David escaped, he ran as far away from Saul as he could, with Saul in pursuit. He hunted David from city to city, his envy so great that Saul was ready to do anything in order to see David dead. But some surprising things happened during that pursuit.
 - David had a chance to kill Saul — but he didn't take it.
 - David had a second chance to kill Saul — but he didn't take that change either.
 - David and Saul finally call a truce and promise never to harm each other.
 - They finally part ways and never see each other again.
- I wish I could tell you Saul totally turned his life around and chose to love David instead of jealously hating him, but I can't. Saul stopped trying to kill David, so I guess that was a win, but it doesn't appear that Saul ever stopped hating him.

- Not every story in the Bible has a happy ending or comes with a clear lesson or practical takeaway. But here's what we can do with stories like Saul's:
 - Reflect on his life and choices.
 - Consider how his actions line up with what we know about God.
 - Look to the words of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 22:36-39

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 22:36-39.*
- When you're not sure what to do, come back to these words from Jesus. Whether we're feeling the first hints of envy, or we're so jealous we're ready to throw a spear at someone, Jesus words can always guide us. **Love the people you envy.**

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

REFLECTION | Who Are You?

- So who in this story do you relate to?
 - **Are you like David?** Do you feel like someone (or a group of people) are always out to get you because they're jealous of you? Do you feel alone, confused, or like you've been "canceled"?
 - **Are you like Saul?** You've probably never thrown a spear at someone, but is there someone you thought about while hearing Saul's story? Someone you really dislike because (if you're honest) you're a little bit jealous of them?
 - **Are you like both?** Chances are, you have things in common with both Saul and David. I know I do.
- No matter how you relate to David and Saul, I think we can all agree that envy destroys our relationships because you can't love and let envy grow at the same time.
- **But how do we stop being envious?** It starts by finding contentment, fulfillment, and peace in the God who made us.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play or perform the song "Nothing Else," by Cody Carnes, or something similar. You may want to have adult volunteers available for any students who need someone to talk to or pray with. As students reflect, ask them these questions . . .*
 - **Do you ever find yourself wanting, obsessing over, or comparing what someone else has to what you have?**
 - **Are you envious of someone?**
 - **What do they have that you envy?**
 - **Is Jesus your source of contentment? If not, ask Him to change your heart.**
- If we want to replace envy with love, this is where we have to start. When our contentment is found in Jesus, it becomes so much easier to love others — including those who have things we wish we had.

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 passage of Scripture we read today, could you relate more to David, Saul, or both? Why?**
 - **Read Philippians 4:12. What do you think it means to find contentment in Jesus?**

ACTIVITY | Call-Out

- But getting our hearts right is only the first step in replacing envy with love. If we really want to love the people we envy, we have to do something more.
 - Instead of envying people who have something we want, what if we decided to **celebrate them?**
 - Instead of imitating the "call-out culture" of the world around us, what if we chose to **call-out others' greatness?**
 - And here's one more idea. When we are the people who are being envied, instead of keeping all of our good things to ourselves, what if we decided to share what we have?
- Let's start practicing this right now. Let's start changing our culture for the better by celebrating each other, calling out the greatness we see in others, and thinking of ways we can **share what we have.**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Depending on the size and dynamics of your group, you'll need to decide just how vulnerable you want to challenge students to get during this moment. Model this activity at the front first, and then (if you'd like) have students participate in groups of friends.
 - **AT THE FRONT:** Before your program, ask a handful of students and volunteers if they'd like to join you for this exercise. Have them stand with you in a circle and take turns celebrating or calling each other out for the good things they have, are, or have done. Talk about what you'll share beforehand to make sure you're giving students helpful examples to follow. If possible, try to incorporate at least one person who **confesses their envy** for someone in the group ("I wish I could sing like you," or "Your family seems perfect – I wish mine was more like yours.") and someone who **offers to share what they have** ("You're a great singer! Let's sing together sometime," or "My family's not perfect, but you can come to my house and hang out with us if you want!").
 - **IN GROUPS:** Have students split into groups and repeat the exercise for five minutes. Be sure to group students with people they know, and don't pressure everyone to speak – especially new students who don't know many people.
- So how did that go?
 - If this activity was easy for you, that's great! Keep doing it outside these four walls.
 - If you decided not to share anything because you're just not ready yet, that's okay. I'm glad you're being real and not faking it.

- If you decided to say something even though you weren't sure you meant it, that's okay too. I'm proud of you for loving others with your actions.
- What I'm challenging you to do isn't easy. Loving people we envy isn't natural. But with God's help, and Jesus' example, I think we can learn how to do it well. If you want to love like Jesus loves (and I hope you do), **love the people you envy.**

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.*
 - **Don't name names, but do you envy anyone right now? What do they have that you want?**
 - **What's something you can do this week to love someone you envy?**



WEEK 4 SERMON GUIDE

CANCELED

THE BIG IDEA

Love the people you want to hate.

THE BIBLE

I Samuel 24:1-7; Matthew 5:38-45;
Romans 12:17-21

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

QUESTION | Which famous people do you follow?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond to the following questions.
- Throughout this series, we've talked a little bit about social media, so I'm curious . . .
 - **Do you follow any famous people online? Who?**
 - **Are there any famous people you "hate-follow"?** You know — someone you follow because they always make you cringe?

ACTIVITY | The Celebrity Youth Group Draft

- It seems like we've got strong opinions about celebrities, so let's try something. If we could "draft" a few famous people into our youth group, who would we pick?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, find a few photos of famous people (real people or fictional characters) your students would recognize. Choose a mixture of people your students might love and people they might hate, and either print photos of them or display their photos on your screen. For each celebrity, have students vote whether or not they'd want them in your youth group. **(TIP: Stay away from political figures and be aware of the genders, ethnicities, and cultures represented — be sure your examples include a diversity of people, and be especially sure your "hatable" examples aren't dominated by any particular type of person. Stick with examples that are silly and that your students won't take personally.)**
- In case you need more proof that people tend to have strong opinions about celebrities, all you need to do is check the comment section of any famous person's social media posts. Alongside comments from their fans, you'll nearly always see jokes, name-calling, arguments, and hate.

STORY | Talk about the current “villain of the week.”

- Every week, it seems like there’s a new “villain of the week” trending online — yet another famous person, politician, or organization everyone loves to hate, either for something silly or because they said something hurtful or offensive.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Investigate the latest social media feud, celebrity drama, or controversy involving a public figure or organization, and share that story. Choose a story where one person was offended or hurt, leading to a feud. The tone here is up to you. If you’d like to keep things lighter, tell a silly story about a reality television show or a petty celebrity fight. But if your group is ready to handle something more weighty, don’t be afraid to explore a more serious and nuanced subject. Either way, be sure to identify two things in your story: who was hurt and how, and how the hurt person responded to the person who hurt them. If you are exploring a more serious subject, be sure to talk about it with care and get other people’s perspectives on what you plan to share.*
- Like we talked about in the first week of this series, social media has led to a phenomenon called “cancel culture” — a big jumble of online behaviors (some helpful and justified, and some not) like calling out, shaming, boycotting, and holding people accountable for their actions. It happens when . . .
 - People troll and start online feuds for fun.
 - People fuel celebrity drama with hashtags like #_____IsOverParty.
 - Some people use social media to embarrass or hurt each other for a laugh or for revenge.
 - And other people “call out” or “cancel” others for legitimate reasons — especially public figures who said or did something very harmful.
- But today I don’t want to talk about internet trolls or celebrity drama. I want to talk about what happens when we have legitimate reasons to “cancel” someone.

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

STORY | Talk about a time you wanted revenge on someone who hurt you.

- Whether it’s online, in our families, or in our circles of friends, there’s never a shortage of people we love to hate — especially when we feel there’s good reason for that hatred.
- When someone hurts us, it’s tempting to “cancel” them by . . .
 - Loving to hate them.
 - Talking poorly about them.
 - Dehumanizing them.
 - Taking revenge on them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story (or have a volunteer or student tell a story) about a time when someone hurt you and you wanted revenge. Share how they hurt you, how you responded, and what you learned or observed about that exchange. Did the conflict escalate? Did you take revenge? Did they? What do you wish you had done differently? **(NOTE: To avoid confusion, do not tell a story that portrays any kind of abuse, bullying, or violence. We must help teenagers differentiate between situations where their feelings get hurt and situations where they are in danger.)***

- This is complicated, isn't it? When we're hurt, of course we want to stick up for ourselves and hold people accountable for their actions. But God also calls us to forgive and show grace rather than seeking revenge.
 - So how do we balance accountability with grace and forgiveness?
 - Does forgiving someone mean pretending like the hurt never happened?
 - When do we need to seek justice and when do we need to just let something go?

SCRIPTURE | I Samuel 24:1-7

- Last week, we heard the story of David and King Saul, focusing mostly on Saul. This week, we're going to look at that same story but focus on David. In case you need a recap . . .
 - Saul was the king of Israel, but David had been chosen by God to be the next king.
 - Saul liked David at first, but he eventually became incredibly envious of David.
 - Because of his envy, Saul tried to kill David. Repeatedly. He even rallied his army of soldiers to help him hunt and kill David.
- Can we all agree David had a valid reason to hate Saul? It would have been totally reasonable for David to want revenge, but here's what happened instead.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize I Samuel 24:1-7.*
- Two things:
 - First, yes, the bathroom thing is funny.
 - Second, what?! Not only did David not kill Saul, he didn't even hurt him! He cut off a piece of Saul's robe as evidence (but felt remorseful about it) and let Saul leave in peace.
- When David had the opportunity to take revenge and let hate guide him, he chose to let Saul go instead.
 - In this moment, David chose to love Saul in spite of his actions.
 - That doesn't mean David suddenly *liked* Saul or wanted to be his best friend. But David showed love instead of hate by showing mercy to Saul instead of revenge.
 - Like we mentioned last week, David and Saul didn't exactly reconcile. The best they could do was promise to stay away from each other, and they did. For the rest of their lives, they never saw each other again.

AN IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

- Keep in mind, the story we're reading is from a different time and culture. It's about two powerful men, and not people like you and me, who definitely don't rule nations or command armies. This is also the story of two adults – not teenagers. So before we go any further, let me make a few things clear. The moral of this story is *not* . . .
 - To be nice to someone who is abusive or dangerous.
 - To not ask for help when you're in danger.
 - To not seek justice when someone has harmed you.
- If you are in a position now, or you have been in the past, where someone (especially an adult) is harming you or harming someone else, please tell one of the adults in this room that you trust.
- God doesn't tell us to put ourselves in harm's way or to endure abuse or violence. It doesn't honor God when you allow yourself to be hurt or mistreated.

- God loves you, sees you, and has put the adults in this room in your life to help protect you. Please tell us and we will help. **Got it?** Good. We love you.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 5:38-45

- So if that's not the lesson we should take from this story, what is? Like we said last week, it's helpful when reading Old Testament stories to look ahead to the words of Jesus and see what He had to say.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 5:38-45.*
- As He often did, Jesus flipped the script on the world's wisdom about love and hate. Instead of telling his audience to love those who love them and hate those who hate them, Jesus challenged them (and us) to try something new: to love our enemies.
- Although David lived many years before Jesus spoke these words, David understood God wouldn't want him to return Saul's hatred with more hatred. His decision to show Saul love instead of vengeance points to Jesus challenges us to do: **love the people we want to hate.**

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

OBJECT LESSON | Turn the Other Cheek

- Let's talk about this phrase "turn the other cheek," because it's often misunderstood. When Jesus said this, He didn't mean, "Never stand up for yourself or others. Let people walk all over you!"
 - Jesus had no problem verbally defending Himself.
 - Jesus often got angry at people who were cruel and hurtful.
 - But Jesus never sought revenge, or was cruel to others, or escalated a conflict because His pride was wounded.
- Here's what I think Jesus did mean when He said "turn the other cheek." When someone attacks, hurts, or lashes out at you . . .
 - Don't be overcome by anger.
 - Don't plot your revenge.
 - Don't escalate the situation.
 - Don't react without thinking – respond wisely instead.
- Now I'll let you in on a secret about Jesus. Many people think of Jesus only as a kind, gentle, peace-loving man, but Jesus was also a revolutionary.
 - Jesus upset both religious and political leaders of his day. They all wanted Him dead!
 - Jesus' enemies would often try to provoke or trap Him so they could have an excuse to arrest Him, but Jesus knew better.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask two volunteers to join you at the front of the room and act out what you're about to describe.*
 - Imagine for a moment that you're angry with someone. You punch them in the face, looking for a fight.
 - But then something strange happens. They don't hit back.
 - Instead, they take a breath, raise their hands, look you straight in the eyes, and turn their head, giving you the perfect shot to punch them again.

- Here's what I hope you would do in that moment:
 - Stop and consider what you've just done.
 - Realize you can't hit them again because you'd clearly become the bad guy.
 - Calm down.
 - Feel ashamed.
 - Walk away.
- That's the power of love over hate, and of self-control instead of revenge. When we react in anger or seek revenge, we escalate conflicts, which makes it much more difficult for the person who has hurt us to come to terms with what they did. After all, if you punch them back, they'll have a reason to hit you again, and might even think their first punch was justified.
- When Jesus said to "turn the other cheek," He wasn't telling us to just "get over it." He was telling us to **strategically choose love instead of hatred, because love changes things.**

PRAYER | Praying for Our Enemies

- So who are your "enemies"?
 - **Who are you tempted to hate** because of the way they've hurt or treated you?
 - **Who have you hurt** out of a desire for revenge, and how can you make it right?
 - **How can you stop the back-and-forth** exchange of hatred and retaliation?
 - **How can you strategically choose to love** someone you want to hate?
- When someone hurts us, it's natural to want to "cancel" them and make them pay. But it's possible to hold someone accountable for their actions without adding to the hatred in the world.
- The world needs us to model a new way forward — the way of love, not hate. It will be challenging, but most important things are. This change can start with us when we decide to . . .
 - **FORGIVE:** Forgiveness isn't something we do for the person who hurt us. It's something we do for ourselves and God. Whether they've asked for our forgiveness or not, we can choose to let go of bitterness toward the people who have hurt us. You may not be ready to fully forgive that person today, and that's okay. Forgiveness is often a journey.
 - **NOTICE:** We all need people to model for us what compassion and love look like, but the good news is that these examples are everywhere! We just have to pay attention.
 - **DEFEND:** We've talked a lot about what to do when we've been hurt, but don't forget that other people are being hurt all the time. You might notice someone being bullied at school, or you might begin to explore deep and systemic problems like injustice, racism, and inequality. If you were David, being hunted by the king, you would've wanted someone to defend you, right? We can do that for others.
 - **PRAY:** The things we've talked about today are difficult. If we want to choose love instead of hate, we're going to need a lot of help. We have to learn to pray for those who've hurt us or who are hurting others, just like Jesus said.
- It's hard to hate someone you're consistently praying for. As we close, I want to challenge you to pray for the person you're most tempted to hate right now. Ask God to help you choose love instead of revenge.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play or perform the song “For the One,” by Brian and Jenn Johnson. You can find the lyric video [here](#).
- If we choose to hate our enemies, hate will only grow. But if we choose to love our enemies with God’s help, that love will grow, spread, and even change our culture. It’s not going to be easy. But it’s worth it.
- Like Jesus said (and like David did), God’s challenging you to **love the people you want to hate**, and see how it changes you, changes them, and changes the world.

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

CANCELED

You hear a lot about “cancel culture” these days. It's what happens when swarms of people on the internet band together to call out, shame, or even “cancel” someone. And while there are definitely times when people or systems need to be called out and held accountable, we can all be a little too quick to be cruel to each other — online and offline too. In this 4-week series, we'll get introduced to a few people from Scripture whose stories show us that humans have always struggled to choose love instead of hate. This problem isn't a new one, but through the stories of Jesus, a few outcasts, a king, and a shepherd, we'll see that God is challenging us to love people **who aren't like us**, love people **who are in need**, love the people **we envy**, and love the people **we want to hate**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Love the people you want to hate.

THE BIBLE

I Samuel 24:1-7; Matthew 5:38-45;
Romans 12:17-21

- Who's one famous person you love to hate? Why don't you like them?
- Why do you think people sometimes love to hate each other?
- Do you think there is ever a legitimate reason to hate someone? Why or why not?
- Think about a fight you got into recently. What caused it? What did you do or say to keep the fight going instead of resolving it?
- None of us are currently being chased by a jealous king, but who might some of our "enemies" be?
- David and Saul eventually decided to never see each other again. When do you think that's the wise thing to do with our "enemies" and when is it not?
- When someone hurts you, do you think it's possible to forgive them and hold them accountable for their actions at the same time? Give an example.
- Before today, what did you think the phrase "turn the other cheek" meant? How would you define it now?
- Think about someone you're tempted to hate while we read Romans 12:17-21. What stands out to you in this passage and why?
- Have you thought of someone you're tempted to hate? This week, what's one way you can show them love instead of hate or revenge?

NOTE!

As a result of this conversation, students may have questions or experiences related to abuse that they want to share. To let students know you are safe and available, ask a question like, "**What would you do if someone (especially an adult) was harming someone you know? What if they were harming you?**" Direct students to share any dangerous or abusive situations with you (or another adult they trust), and then immediately report this information give to you to your church leadership and follow any mandated reporter laws in your area.

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

for middle schoolers

CANCELED

You hear a lot about “cancel culture” these days. It’s what happens when swarms of people on the internet band together to call out, shame, or even “cancel” someone. And while there are definitely times when people or systems need to be called out and held accountable, we can all be a little too quick to be cruel to each other — online and offline too. In this 4-week series, we’ll get introduced to a few people from Scripture whose stories show us that humans have always struggled to choose love instead of hate. This problem isn’t a new one, but through the stories of Jesus, a few outcasts, a king, and a shepherd, we’ll see that God is challenging us to love people **who aren’t like us**, love people **who are in need**, love the people **we envy**, and love the people **we want to hate**.

THIS WEEK

THE BIG IDEA

Love the people you want to hate.

THE BIBLE

I Samuel 24:1-7; Matthew 5:38-45;
Romans 12:17-21

- **Who’s one famous person you love to hate? Why don’t you like them?**
- **Why do you think people sometimes love to hate each other?**
- **Think about a fight you got into recently. What caused it? What did you do or say to keep the fight going instead of resolving it?**
- **None of us are currently being chased by a jealous king, but who might some of our “enemies” be?**
- **Think about someone you’re tempted to hate while we read Romans 12:17-21. What stands out to you in this passage and why?**
- **Have you thought of someone you’re tempted to hate? This week, what’s one way you can show them love instead of hate or revenge?**

NOTE!

As a result of this conversation, students may have questions or experiences related to abuse that they want to share. To let students know you are safe and available, ask a question like, **“What would you do if someone (especially an adult) was harming someone you know? What if they were harming you?”** Direct students to share any dangerous or abusive situations with you (or another adult they trust), and then immediately report this information give to you to your church leadership and follow any mandated reporter laws in your area.



WEEK 4

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

CANCELED

THE BIG IDEA

Love the people you want to hate.

THE BIBLE

I Samuel 24:1-7; Matthew 5:38-45;
Romans 12:17-21

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

QUESTION | Which famous people do you follow?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond to the following questions.
- Throughout this series, we've talked a little bit about social media, so I'm curious . . .
 - **Do you follow any famous people online? Who?**
 - **Are there any famous people you "hate-follow"?** You know — someone you follow because they always make you cringe?

ACTIVITY | The Celebrity Youth Group Draft

- It seems like we've got strong opinions about celebrities, so let's try something. If we could "draft" a few famous people into our youth group, who would we pick?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, find a few photos of famous people (real people or fictional characters) your students would recognize. Choose a mixture of people your students might love and people they might hate, and either print photos of them or display their photos on your screen. For each celebrity, have students vote whether or not they'd want them in your youth group. **(TIP: Stay away from political figures and be aware of the genders, ethnicities, and cultures represented — be sure your examples include a diversity of people, and be especially sure your "hatable" examples aren't dominated by any particular type of person. Stick with examples that are silly and that your students won't take personally.)**
- In case you need more proof that people tend to have strong opinions about celebrities, all you need to do is check the comment section of any famous person's social media posts. Alongside comments from their fans, you'll nearly always see jokes, name-calling, arguments, and hate.

STORY | Talk about the current “villain of the week.”

- Every week, it seems like there’s a new “villain of the week” trending online — yet another famous person, politician, or organization everyone loves to hate, either for something silly or because they said something hurtful or offensive.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Investigate the latest social media feud, celebrity drama, or controversy involving a public figure or organization, and share that story. Choose a story where one person was offended or hurt, leading to a feud. The tone here is up to you. If you’d like to keep things lighter, tell a silly story about a reality television show or a petty celebrity fight. But if your group is ready to handle something more weighty, don’t be afraid to explore a more serious and nuanced subject. Either way, be sure to identify two things in your story: who was hurt and how, and how the hurt person responded to the person who hurt them. If you are exploring a more serious subject, be sure to talk about it with care and get other people’s perspectives on what you plan to share.*
- Like we talked about in the first week of this series, social media has led to a phenomenon called “cancel culture” — a big jumble of online behaviors (some helpful and justified, and some not) like calling out, shaming, boycotting, and holding people accountable for their actions. It happens when . . .
 - People troll and start online feuds for fun.
 - People fuel celebrity drama with hashtags like #_____IsOverParty.
 - Some people use social media to embarrass or hurt each other for a laugh or for revenge.
 - And other people “call out” or “cancel” others for legitimate reasons — especially public figures who said or did something very harmful.
- But today I don’t want to talk about internet trolls or celebrity drama. I want to talk about what happens when we have legitimate reasons to “cancel” someone.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.*
 - **Who’s one famous person you love to hate? Why don’t you like them?**
 - **Why do you think people sometimes love to hate each other?**

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

STORY | Talk about a time you wanted revenge on someone who hurt you.

- Whether it’s online, in our families, or in our circles of friends, there’s never a shortage of people we love to hate — especially when we feel there’s good reason for that hatred.
- When someone hurts us, it’s tempting to “cancel” them by . . .
 - Loving to hate them.
 - Talking poorly about them.
 - Dehumanizing them.
 - Taking revenge on them.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story (or have a volunteer or student tell a story) about a time when someone hurt you and you wanted revenge. Share how they hurt you, how you responded, and what you learned or observed about that exchange. Did the conflict escalate? Did you take revenge? Did they? What do you wish you had done differently? (NOTE: To avoid confusion, do not tell a story that portrays any kind of abuse, bullying, or violence. We must help teenagers differentiate between situations where their feelings get hurt and situations where they are in danger.)*
- This is complicated, isn't it? When we're hurt, of course we want to stick up for ourselves and hold people accountable for their actions. But God also calls us to forgive and show grace rather than seeking revenge.
 - So how do we balance accountability with grace and forgiveness?
 - Does forgiving someone mean pretending like the hurt never happened?
 - When do we need to seek justice and when do we need to just let something go?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - ✳ **Do you think there is ever a legitimate reason to hate someone? Why or why not?**
 - **Think about a fight you got into recently. What caused it? What did you do or say to keep the fight going instead of resolving it?**

SCRIPTURE | I Samuel 24:1-7

- Last week, we heard the story of David and King Saul, focusing mostly on Saul. This week, we're going to look at that same story but focus on David. In case you need a recap . . .
 - Saul was the king of Israel, but David had been chosen by God to be the next king.
 - Saul liked David at first, but he eventually became incredibly envious of David.
 - Because of his envy, Saul tried to kill David. Repeatedly. He even rallied his army of soldiers to help him hunt and kill David.
- Can we all agree David had a valid reason to hate Saul? It would have been totally reasonable for David to want revenge, but here's what happened instead.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize I Samuel 24:1-7.*
- Two things:
 - First, yes, the bathroom thing is funny.
 - Second, what?! Not only did David not kill Saul, he didn't even hurt him! He cut off a piece of Saul's robe as evidence (but felt remorseful about it) and let Saul leave in peace.
- When David had the opportunity to take revenge and let hate guide him, he chose to let Saul go instead.
 - In this moment, David chose to love Saul in spite of his actions.
 - That doesn't mean David suddenly *liked* Saul or wanted to be his best friend. But David showed love instead of hate by showing mercy to Saul instead of revenge.

- Like we mentioned last week, David and Saul didn't exactly reconcile. The best they could do was promise to stay away from each other, and they did. For the rest of their lives, they never saw each other again.

AN IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

- Keep in mind, the story we're reading is from a different time and culture. It's about two powerful men, and not people like you and me, who definitely don't rule nations or command armies. This is also the story of two adults – not teenagers. So before we go any further, let me make a few things clear. The moral of this story is *not* . . .
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SCRIPTURE | Matthew 5:38-45

- So if that's not the lesson we should take from this story, what is? Like we said last week, it's helpful when reading Old Testament stories to look ahead to the words of Jesus and see what He had to say.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 5:38-45.*
- As He often did, Jesus flipped the script on the world's wisdom about love and hate. Instead of telling his audience to love those who love them and hate those who hate them, Jesus challenged them (and us) to try something new: to love our enemies.
- Although David lived many years before Jesus spoke these words, David understood God wouldn't want him to return Saul's hatred with more hatred. His decision to show Saul love instead of vengeance points to Jesus challenges us to do: **love the people we want to hate.**

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.*
 - **None of us are currently being chased by a jealous king, but who might some of our "enemies" be?**
 - ★ **David and Saul eventually decided to never see each other again. When do you think that's the wise thing to do with our "enemies" and when is it not?**

- ✦ **When someone hurts you, do you think it's possible to forgive them and hold them accountable for their actions at the same time? Give an example.**

OBJECT LESSON | Turn the Other Cheek

- Let's talk about this phrase "turn the other cheek," because it's often misunderstood. When Jesus said this, He didn't mean, "Never stand up for yourself or others. Let people walk all over you!"
 - Jesus had no problem verbally defending Himself.
 - Jesus often got angry at people who were cruel and hurtful.
 - But Jesus never sought revenge, or was cruel to others, or escalated a conflict because His pride was wounded.
- Here's what I think Jesus did mean when He said "turn the other cheek." When someone attacks, hurts, or lashes out at you . . .
 - Don't be overcome by anger.
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 - Don't escalate the situation.
 - Don't react without thinking — respond wisely instead.
- Now I'll let you in on a secret about Jesus. Many people think of Jesus only as a kind, gentle, peace-loving man, but Jesus was also a revolutionary.
 - Jesus upset both religious and political leaders of his day. They all wanted Him dead!
 - Jesus' enemies would often try to provoke or trap Him so they could have an excuse to arrest Him, but Jesus knew better.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask two volunteers to join you at the front of the room and act out what you're about to describe.
 - Imagine for a moment that you're angry with someone. You punch them in the face, looking for a fight.
 - But then something strange happens. They don't hit back.
 - Instead, they take a breath, raise their hands, look you straight in the eyes, and turn their head, giving you the perfect shot to punch them again.
- Here's what I hope you would do in that moment:
 - Stop and consider what you've just done.
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 - Calm down.
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- That's the power of love over hate, and of self-control instead of revenge. When we react in anger or seek revenge, we escalate conflicts, which makes it much more difficult for the person who has hurt us to come to terms with what they did. After all, if you punch them back, they'll have a reason to hit you again, and might even think their first punch was justified.
- When Jesus said to "turn the other cheek," He wasn't telling us to just "get over it." He was telling us to **strategically choose love instead of hatred, because love changes things.**

PRAYER | Praying for Our Enemies

- So who are your “enemies”?
 - **Who are you tempted to hate** because of the way they’ve hurt or treated you?
 - **Who have you hurt** out of a desire for revenge, and how can you make it right?
 - **How can you stop the back-and-forth** exchange of hatred and retaliation?
 - **How can you strategically choose to love** someone you want to hate?
- When someone hurts us, it’s natural to want to “cancel” them and make them pay. But it’s possible to hold someone accountable for their actions without adding to the hatred in the world.
- The world needs us to model a new way forward — the way of love, not hate. It will be challenging, but most important things are. This change can start with us when we decide to . . .
 - **FORGIVE:** Forgiveness isn’t something we do for the person who hurt us. It’s something we do for ourselves and God. Whether they’ve asked for our forgiveness or not, we can choose to let go of bitterness toward the people who have hurt us. You may not be ready to fully forgive that person today, and that’s okay. Forgiveness is often a journey.
 - **NOTICE:** We all need people to model for us what compassion and love look like, but the good news is that these examples are everywhere! We just have to pay attention.
 - **DEFEND:** We’ve talked a lot about what to do when we’ve been hurt, but don’t forget that other people are being hurt all the time. You might notice someone being bullied at school, or you might begin to explore deep and systemic problems like injustice, racism, and inequality. If you were David, being hunted by the king, you would’ve wanted someone to defend you, right? We can do that for others.
 - **PRAY:** The things we’ve talked about today are difficult. If we want to choose love instead of hate, we’re going to need a lot of help. We have to learn to pray for those who’ve hurt us or who are hurting others, just like Jesus said.
- It’s hard to hate someone you’re consistently praying for. As we close, I want to challenge you to pray for the person you’re most tempted to hate right now. Ask God to help you choose love instead of revenge.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play or perform the song “For the One,” by Brian and Jenn Johnson. You can find the lyric video [here](#).*
- If we choose to hate our enemies, hate will only grow. But if we choose to love our enemies with God’s help, that love will grow, spread, and even change our culture. It’s not going to be easy. But it’s worth it.
- Like Jesus said (and like David did), God’s challenging you to **love the people you want to hate**, and see how it changes you, changes them, and changes the world.

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.*
 - ✪ **Before today, what did you think the phrase “turn the other cheek” meant? How would you define it now?**

- **Think about someone you're tempted to hate while we read Romans 12:17-21. What stands out to you in this passage and why?**
- **Have you thought of someone you're tempted to hate? This week, what's one way you can show them love instead of hate or revenge?**



STUDENT COMMUNICATION GUIDE

CANCELED

INSTRUCTIONS

TEXTING

While your parents and volunteers should be receiving regular emails from you, students aren't exactly reliable emailers. Instead, we suggest communicating with students through texting, using a safe mass messaging service like [Remind](#). You can use mass texting to share . . .

- Upcoming news and announcements.
- A look at what you're teaching.
- One-Minute Sermon videos.
- Encouragement and devotionals.
- A survey or feedback question.

SOCIAL MEDIA

For students, we recommend **using your Facebook page and Instagram account** to communicate directly with students, but make sure whatever platforms you choose are the platforms your students are already using.

Use our [Social Media Plan spreadsheet](#) to plan what to post, where to post it, and when to post it. Use the Big Ideas, graphics, videos, and teaching content we provide to fill up the teaching-related portions of your social media plan each week.

Copy and paste these weekly posts into either your Social Media Plan spreadsheet, a post scheduling service like [Buffer](#), or directly onto your favorite social media platform.

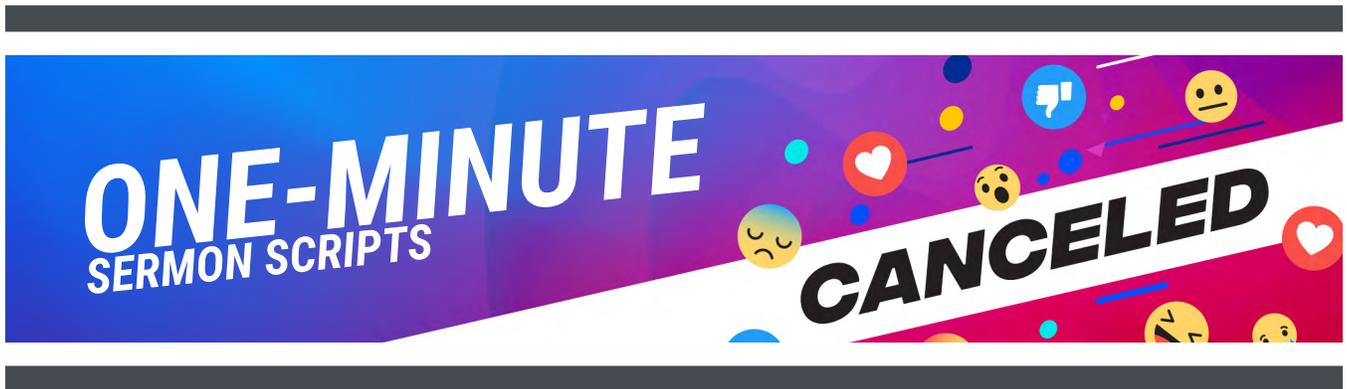
Hey everyone! We're starting a new series on loving others this week called Canceled. See you there!

Week 1 of Canceled is in the books! We talked about a conversation Jesus once had with a Samaritan woman and how Jesus invites us to love people who aren't like us.

This week in our series Canceled we talked about sheep, goats, and how Jesus always paid attention to people who needed His help. Here's the recap: love people who are in need.

In Week 3 of Canceled, we talked about King Saul, David, and Jesus' greatest commandment: to love God and love others like we love ourselves. Here was our big idea: love the people you envy.

It's our final week of Canceled! It's been a great conversation. We closed with a conversation about David, Saul, and the challenge to love the people you want to hate.



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

You hear a lot about “cancel culture” these days. You know, when people (usually online) attack or totally dismiss people they disagree with. Don't get me wrong — “canceling” someone or something is a good thing when it's done to challenge or boycott things that are unjust or harmful. But sometimes we can be a little too quick to “cancel” and be cruel. Not just on social media — we do it in our offline relationships too. In Jesus' time, people were often “canceled” by society because they sinned, got sick, were poor or disabled, or because they were from a different country or culture. (Sounds a little bit like the world today, doesn't it?) But Jesus challenged our tendency to ignore, exclude, or despise people who are different from us by often making outcasts the center of His miracles, parables, and teachings. Here was Jesus' point: **love people who aren't like you** — don't be so quick to cancel each other.

WEEK 2

Has anyone needed your help recently? Maybe your grandma needed help logging into facebook? Or a little kid needed help tying their shoe? Or someone at your lunch table didn't know they had cafeteria pizza stuck in their teeth? Gross. Depending on the person, and your mood, maybe you helped them! Or . . . maybe you didn't. Everyone is helpful and generous sometimes, but what about the times we'd rather not be helpful? When we're too busy, or annoyed, or tired, or sure someone else will help if we don't? In Jesus' time, people in need were often “canceled” by society instead of helped. They were ignored, judged, or left to fend for themselves. And we still kind of have that problem today, don't we? But Jesus challenged our tendency to ignore people who need help by constantly teaching and practicing this simple but powerful idea: that we can **love people who are in need** — when you do, it's like you're doing it for Jesus Himself.

WEEK 3

Envy! It's a nasty little feeling none of us like to admit we experience. Envy is not looking at someone's cool new shoes and thinking, "Those are cool shoes. It would be nice to have a pair." Envy is what happens when you let that thought fester until it turns into something much uglier, like frustration, anger, self-pity, or hatred. There's a guy in Scripture named Saul who did just that. He was the King of Israel, but when he found out God wanted a new king (a kid named David), Saul didn't take it well. He was so jealous of David that he tried to kill him. Saul's story is pretty extreme, but it's a reminder of just how destructive jealousy can be. It won't be easy, but instead of letting ourselves be consumed by self-pity or hatred, God invites us to **love the people we envy**, and see how it changes our hearts.

WEEK 4

If you've ever been hurt by someone, you know this is true: sometimes it's kind of fun to have an enemy. There's something in all of us that loves to hate, and when someone hurts us, it's a great excuse to make that person the object of our hatred. In the Bible, a guy named David had this exact opportunity. Because David had been chosen by God to be the next king of Israel, he was being hunted by the current (and very jealous) king, Saul. David had every reason to hate Saul. I mean, the guy was trying to kill him. But because David knew God, David knew there was a better way. Instead of returning Saul's hatred with more hatred, David chose to show Saul mercy and patience instead. Although David wasn't perfect, his choices here remind us of what God invites us all to do: **love the people we want to hate**.



PARENT COMMUNICATION GUIDE

CANCELED

INSTRUCTIONS

EMAIL

Edit and send your [Parent Email](#) for this series. It includes . . .

- Upcoming news and announcements.
- A look at what you're teaching.
- A helpful video, article, or resource.
- A survey or feedback question.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Once you have your monthly email written, you can **repurpose the content in that email on your social media platforms.** For parents, we recommend using your Facebook *page* to broadcast information to everyone and a Facebook *group* to start conversations just for parents.

Use our [Social Media Plan spreadsheet](#) to plan what to post, where to post it, and when to post it. Use the Big Ideas, graphics, videos, and teaching content we provide to fill up the teaching-related portions of your social media plan each week. In the next column, we've written weekly posts to parents about each week of this series that you can use if you'd like.

Copy and paste these weekly posts into either your Social Media Plan spreadsheet, a post scheduling service like [Buffer](#), or directly onto your favorite social media platform.

Hey parents! We're starting a new series on loving others this week called Canceled. Check your email for all the details!

Week 1 of Canceled is in the books! We talked about a conversation Jesus once had with a Samaritan woman and how Jesus invites us to love people who aren't like us.

This week in our series Canceled we talked about sheep, goats, and how Jesus always paid attention to people who needed His help. Here's the recap: love people who are in need.

In Week 3 of Canceled, we talked about King Saul, David, and Jesus' greatest commandment: to love God and love others like we love ourselves. Here was our big idea: love the people you envy.

It's our final week of Canceled! It's been a great conversation with your teenagers. We closed with a conversation about David, Saul, and the challenge to love the people you want to hate.

And don't forget to use the [#growcurriculum](#) hashtag when you post!



VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATION GUIDE

CANCELED

INSTRUCTIONS

EMAIL

Edit and send your weekly [Volunteer Emails](#) for this series. They include . . .

- Upcoming news and announcements.
- A look at what you're teaching.
- A helpful video, article, or resource.
- A practical tip or quote.
- A survey or feedback question.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Once you have your monthly email written, you can **repurpose the content in that email on your social media platforms**. For volunteers, we recommend using your Facebook *page* to broadcast information to everyone and a Facebook *group* to start conversations just for volunteers.

Use our [Social Media Plan spreadsheet](#) to plan what to post, where to post it, and when to post it. Use the Big Ideas, graphics, videos, and teaching content we provide to fill up the teaching-related portions of your social media plan each week.

Copy and paste these weekly posts for volunteers into either your Social Media Plan spreadsheet, a post scheduling service like [Buffer](#), or directly onto your favorite social media platform.

Hey team! We're starting a new series on loving others this week called Canceled. Check your email for all the details!

Week 1 of Canceled is coming up! We're talking about a conversation Jesus once had with a Samaritan woman and how Jesus invites us to love people who aren't like us.

This week in our series Canceled we'll talk about sheep, goats, and how Jesus always paid attention to people who needed His help. Here's the recap: love people who are in need.

In Week 3 of Canceled, we'll talk about King Saul, David, and Jesus' greatest commandment: to love God and love others like we love ourselves. Here's our big idea: love the people you envy.

It's our final week of Canceled! It's been a great conversation so far. We'll close with a conversation about David, Saul, and the challenge to love the people you want to hate.

And don't forget to use the [#growcurriculum](#) hashtag when you post!