

## WEEK 2

### LESSON GUIDE

**NOT OKAY**

### **BIG IDEA**

When people reject you, Jesus never will.

### **BIBLE**

Mark 6:1–13; Psalm 91:1–2; 1 Peter 5:6–10

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

#### **POLL** | Puzzling Process

- Welcome back to our two week series of *Not Okay*, where we are trying to tackle the puzzle of what to do with anxiety and stress. We've got some great stuff planned that will begin to make sense by playing this game.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Poll your students' responses to the following questions by having them hold ten fingers in the air. Choose a few prompts that will work for you and your group. To poll students, read a statement, and if it is true, students must put a finger down. The first one to put all fingers down wins. Here are some ideas to get you started:*
  - Put a finger down if you have given up on a puzzle.
  - Put a finger down if you have been left on read.
  - Put a finger down if you have asked someone out and they said no.
  - Put a finger down if you have gotten an "F" on a paper or test.
  - Put a finger down if you tried out for a team or club and didn't make it.
  - Put a finger down if you haven't been invited to a party or event you want to go to.
  - Put a finger down if you have been ghosted.
  - Put a finger down if someone has told you they don't like you.
  - Put a finger down if someone has said they don't want to be friends with you.
  - Put a finger down if you have ever applied for a job and were rejected.

#### **ACTIVITY** | Mind Reader

- Okay, that was good practice, but let's shift this idea slightly. It will tell us a lot about our community and add healthy stress for a few people.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, select two students to participate and have them stand with their backs to the audience. Choose seven to ten either/or statements that are appropriate for your group. To play, read a prompt, and everyone in the crowd will hold a thumbs up or down. The game leader surveys the crowd to get a consensus and then holds their thumb up or down. Invite both participants to attempt to "read the minds" of the audience members and determine how the audience chose to answer the prompt. The one who reads the minds of the crowd the most frequently wins. Here are a few prompts to get you started:*
  - Thumbs up if you would rather be cut from a sports team.
  - Thumbs down if you would rather be on the team but never play a single minute.

- Thumbs up if you would rather date someone for six months and then be broken up with.  
Thumbs down if you would rather them say no when you ask them out in the first place.
- Thumbs up if you would rather fail a test you studied all night for.  
Thumbs down if you would rather fail a test you didn't study for.
- Thumbs up if you would rather be left on read.  
Thumbs down if you would rather them never open the chat.
- Thumbs up if you would rather trip and fall in front of your crush.  
Thumbs down if you would rather accidentally run into your crush and drop your lunch.
- Thumbs up if you would rather only have one perfect friend.  
Thumbs down if you would rather have ten unreliable friends being there for you or responding in crisis.
- Trying to figure out what's going on in the minds of so many people is one of the most challenging puzzles to solve, and it's made worse by having to figure it out in front of a whole group.
- Standing in front of a group is a common fear for people. One main reason is we fear rejection if we fail. Rejection is a pretty powerful motivator.
- No one likes to go through life feeling rejected. No one likes being let down or having their hopes dashed. However, we can't let this fear of a "no" keep us from living. But just because rejection is a normal part of life doesn't mean we should not think about it. Rejection hurts. How can we learn to deal with it?

#### DISCUSSION

- Would you rather be rejected because you have spaghetti for hair or sweat mayonnaise?
- How would you describe rejection to someone else?
- \*If you feel comfortable, has there been a time you felt rejected? How did it impact you? What did you learn?

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

#### SCRIPTURE | Mark 6:7–12

- There is a story in Mark 6 where the disciples experienced rejection on a pretty intense level.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Mark 6:7–12.
- Jesus sends his twelve disciples on a mission to pray for healing for others and invite people to the good news that Jesus is telling everyone about. He gave them specific instructions about what to get and where to stay once they reached their destination.
- Jesus expects that when we tell people about the good news he is bringing into the world, people will reject that truth. When this happens, he tells the disciples to "shake the dust off their feet" and use it as a testimony.
- This is a little strange, so let me explain.
  - In this culture and time in history, hospitality was significant. It was expected that people would take care of strangers and travelers because every life is valuable, and when people ignore a stranger or visitor in their town, it leaves them exposed and endangered.
  - When a town rejected the disciples, it meant they didn't want to take care of people. So, if the disciples were rejected, Jesus commanded them to shake the dust off their feet, acknowledging that this town wasn't welcoming. By not being welcoming, they were choosing to show they were hostile to the good news of Jesus. Culturally, shaking the dust meant that the people within this city were responsible for whatever God did next.

- Let's be clear, though. This isn't a call to hate people or to write them off. This action has a specific purpose, and the disciples, like all followers of Jesus, are called to love others.
- When we share the good news of who Jesus is, some people will reject us. Even though all rejection hurts, the disciples show us that when we have a secure base and anchor of belonging, we can face rejection.
- When we sense the unconditional love of Jesus, who sends us on our mission, we can let go of that rejection that life will inevitably throw our way because we belong to the one who matters most.

### OBJECT LESSON | Building Walls

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this object lesson, you will need cardboard boxes, shoe boxes, or any other stackable objects that you may have. Before your program, write different defense mechanisms that you think students might have on each box big enough that they can be read by your students. Things like humor, sarcasm, good grades, partying, dating, or anything else you think students in your group might use to protect themselves from feeling rejected. Using a few of your stackables, begin to assemble your wall of defense.*
- To experience Jesus as our place of safety, we need to acknowledge that in the normal ups and downs of life, we build walls to protect us from rejection.
- Fearing rejection can feel like a tiger is chasing us, and it can activate our fight or flight response. This leads to strategies of protection over strategies of connection.
  - All this means is that when we experience emotions like shame, guilt, and anxiety, they keep us from being able to address our emotional needs because we are stuck in survival mode. So, we begin to "hide" who we are from others to self-protect.
  - This hiding is like putting up a barricade or defenses to avoid pain. Physically, our nervous system's number one job is to protect us from danger, so if we have been hurt, betrayed, or rejected by a friend, our system works hard to prevent this from happening again. That starts to build up a wall.
- These walls are meant to keep us from feeling more pain, but they do so by putting a barrier between us and other people.
  - Unfortunately, if someone were to offer us a compliment or is generally kind to us, our walls can block that out. So yes, the wall is protecting us, but it can also keep us from experiencing love, connection, and the gifts of being in a relationship with other people.
  - We can't just tell ourselves not to build walls. Our brains and bodies want us to be safe, and sometimes they create these walls without us even thinking about it.
- We can't just live behind our defense mechanisms. A defense mechanism or coping strategy delays our progress and might even keep us from experiencing the connection we long for. We need to break down these walls and replace them with something that will help for the long haul.
- In the story of the disciples, they were sent out, which means they returned to Jesus as their home base. In a similar instance of this story, we see the disciples talk about moments of rejection and failure with Jesus in private.
  - This is core to learning how to undo and combat our defense mechanisms. We need to know how to process what has happened or is happening to us with people who are safe and won't reject us.
  - We need to reflect when we sense that walls of rejection are creeping up, trying to both protect us and isolate us.

### DISCUSSION

- **\*What questions do you have about the story of the disciples being rejected?**
- **What do you think about being rejected like the disciples for being a follower of Jesus?**

## SCRIPTURE | Psalm 91:1–2

- There was a prayer that both Jesus and the disciples would have been very familiar with. Jesus quotes this to them in the book of Luke when he is about to send them on a similar mission to the one we read about earlier.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 91:1–2*
- When you feel rejected and start building walls around you to keep you safe, take a moment and say a prayer like this. This can help release rejection and the need to build up walls because God is the only fortress you need.
- Inevitably we will experience rejection at some point in our lives. This psalm helps us see that we can always turn to God as a safe refuge from rejection. God will never reject or leave us, even when others do. God will always embrace us and accept us as we are.
  - We see in the story of the disciples, and this Psalm, that God is our security. For the disciples, Jesus was a secure base from where they could be sent out to the world to share the good news of what he was doing. He was their foundation where they could return to receive love, encouragement, and protection after dusting off their rejection.
  - Imagine Jesus as our secure base and refuge. His love helps us go out and take risks, process the rejections we face, and then return to be restored and renewed.
- We can go out and return as we need because we know that Jesus holds us and keeps us safe, despite our feelings and experiences of rejection. He never rejects us because **when people reject you, Jesus never will.**

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

## STORY | When I Was Rejected

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story about when you decided to take a significant risk but were rejected. Keep this story light and fun. Allow it to be about something that felt more embarrassing than hurtful. Make sure you highlight the takeaway points as ways that you were able to work through your embarrassment and rejection. You can also invite a volunteer to share.*
- So there are a few simple things you can start to do this week that can help you break down your walls and know that Jesus never rejects you.
  - **REST IN JESUS:** The next time you are worried or stressed, intentionally think about Jesus and trust that he is a place to rest from the rejection we often experience.
  - **RUN TO JESUS:** When you sense that you are retreating behind your walls, consider responding to how Jesus called the disciples to respond. Take a moment and return to him as a refuge to be restored and renewed for the journey ahead.
  - **SET GOOD BOUNDARIES:** If you find yourself in relationships where you are frequently rejected, it is okay to set a boundary around that relationship. Jesus asked the disciples to do something similar when he said to shake the dust off their feet. While we are allowing Jesus to break down the defense mechanisms that come with rejection, that doesn't mean we should ignore the source of rejection. If you have relationships where you are regularly rejected, it is healthy to set a boundary.

## DISCUSSION

- **\*In your opinion, what does Psalm 91:1–2 tell us about who God is and what God wants to be for us?**
- **\*What are some ways you build walls to stop being rejected? What is one way that you can start pulling those walls down?**
- **Is it easier to rest in Jesus or run to Jesus when facing rejection? Why is that?**

**PRAYER** | 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 . . .

- One of the most important things we can do when facing rejection is to take a moment and process what we are experiencing with Jesus, so let's practice how you can do that.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Lead the students in a prayer exercise that will help them practice a method for regulating their bodies when they feel not rejected based on Psalm 91. Ask students to remember a moment when they felt rejected this week. Ask them to remember how it felt in their body. And what emotions it triggered in them. And after a few moments, ask students to think about these things. After each number, say: "Jesus, you are my refuge."*
  - Five things they can hear . . . Say: Jesus, you are my refuge.
  - Four things they can see . . . Say: Jesus, you are my refuge.
  - Three things they can touch . . . Say: Jesus, You are my refuge.
  - Two things they can smell . . . Say: Jesus. You are my refuge.
  - One thing they can taste . . . Say: Jesus. You are my refuge.
- When you feel like you've been rejected or you're not okay, this is a straightforward way to keep yourself from building up those walls, and remember that Jesus is calling you to rest and find safety in him.

**DISCUSSION**

- Read 1 Peter 5:6–10. What is one thing in this passage you can bring to Jesus when you feel rejected?
- If you were going to encourage a friend experiencing rejection to talk to Jesus about it, what steps would you suggest they take?

**REFLECTION** | Your Belonging Crew

- We all have experienced rejection. It can be painful and feel so lonely. So, in addition to going to God in the moments of rejection, it is crucial to have a community of people around you to help you process the pain you experience.
- Isolation is disastrous to our mental health, and God knows it. He sent the disciples out in pairs of two. In Psalm 91, the poet calls God a fortress. When was the last time you saw a fortress built around you? It may be a bit of a puzzle to put together, but God longs for you to have a crew of people who offer you the belonging Jesus desires you to have.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you will need to print out the [handout included](#) in week two included in the series materials and pens. Invite students to fill out the handout, asking them to think about their community of people who they can go to, where they know they belong.*
- If you feel you *don't* have anyone, I pray for God to give you the courage to share that with one of the volunteers or someone else today.
- Jesus longs for you to have a crew of friends and trusted adults who show you that you are loved and belong. God longs for you, and you deserve to experience this reality fully— **When people reject you, Jesus never will.**