

RAD

WEEK 4 (HYBRID)

BIG IDEA

James 3:16-18, 4:1-3; Matthew 5:9; Hebrews 12:14a

Bible

James 3:16-18, 4:1-3; Matthew 5:9; Hebrews 12:14a

WHAT?

ACTIVITY | Buzzer Pager Codebreaker

- Welcome back to *Rad*, where we're flashing back to the 90s — an era when everything was pretty "rad," except the cell phones. Until cell phones became popular in the late 90s, most people used pagers.
- Pagers were kind of like texting, except you could only send a handful of characters at a time, which meant you had to get pretty creative. Plus, a lot of pagers could only send numbers — no letters!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need a white board or screen and two [buzzers](#). Split your students into two teams or bring two contestants to the front. On the white board or screen, list the numeric codes below, or invent your own. To play, say a phrase from the list below and ask which pager code students think would communicate that phrase. For each question, have players hit their buzzers when they think they know the answer and then explain why they chose that code. Award points for correct answers and creative ones too.*
End with the phrase, "We need to talk (121)."
 - **143 = I LOVE YOU:** *Because of the number of letters in each word.*
 - **1543 = I STILL LOVE YOU:** *Because of the number-of-letters thing again.*
 - **14 = HI:** *It spells "hi" when you hold it upside down.*
 - **07734 = HELLO:** *It spells "hello" when you hold it upside down.*
 - **607 = I MISS YOU:** *No idea why, but maybe because the zero is separating the 6 and 7?*
 - **477 = BEST FRIENDS FOREVER:** *It's the number-of-letters thing again.*
 - **007 = I HAVE A SECRET:** *Because James Bond had secrets?*
 - **823 = THINKING OF YOU:** *It's the number-of-letters thing again.*
 - **121 = WE NEED TO TALK:** *Because you need a "one-to-one conversation."*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **What's the weirdest reason you've ever gotten into a fight?**
 - * **What are some of the most common reasons you think people fight with each other?**
 - **Do you think all fights are bad, or could some fights be good? Why do you think so?**

POLL | What About You?

- Maybe you've never been in a fight with your friend in the hallway over a crush (or maybe you have), but we all know what it's like to fight with others.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have students reply to the following questions by raising their hands.*
- So what about you?
 - **Have you been in a fight recently?**
 - **Are you fighting with someone now?**
 - **In the middle of a fight, have you ever done something you regret?**
 - **Have you ever wished someone would just tell you how to resolve a fight peacefully?**
- We all know what it's like to fight, but we don't always know how to make peace.

SO WHAT?

QUESTION | What is peace?

- **What is peace?** How would you define it?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*
- To you, maybe "peace" means "quiet," or "calm," or "not fighting." Maybe you've experienced peace . . .
 - When you were somewhere quiet by yourself.
 - When everyone in your home was getting along.
 - When you and your friend finally made up after a big fight.
- Peace is a great thing! But we often don't appreciate it until it's missing.

STORY | Talk about a time things weren't peaceful.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student tell a story) about a time when a relationship wasn't peaceful. Don't spend all your time rehashing the fight, though. Instead, share how it felt to not be at peace or know how to resolve the fight. Share whether or not you even wanted to resolve things. You'll come back to this story later, so end it with a cliffhanger.*

THAT'S RAD

- Today, we're going to talk about having fights and making peace because, as we'll see, God has something to say about this — and it's pretty radical.
- But like we mentioned last week, there were a lot of people who thought Jesus was too "radical."
 - In the 90s, "rad" meant "cool." But its real meaning has to do with being different, revolutionary, and counter-cultural.
 - What Jesus said about loving God and others was radical, and what He teaches us about peace is pretty radical too.

SCRIPTURE | James 3:16, 4:1-3

- Throughout this series, we're looking to the Bible for practical advice on how to change the world with God's radical love, and that search has led us to the book of James.
 - Remember, this "book" is a letter written by a guy named James, Jesus' brother.
 - Because he knew Jesus so well, the letter James wrote is packed with summaries of Jesus' teachings, retold in James' own words.
- James is known for his straightforward instructions on how to follow Jesus. These teachings might seem simple, but they have the power to create radical change. Let's see what James says about peace — and about fighting.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read James 3:16, 4:1-3.*
- Ouch! James get straight to the point here. Why do we fight with each other? Because we're selfish. And he's right, right? We fight because . . .
 - **Sometimes we're greedy.** We want what we want, and when we don't get it we try to take it from others or punish them for not giving us what we want.
 - **Sometimes we're self-centered.** Maybe we didn't mean to be selfish, but we didn't really think about how what we said or did might impact someone else. We were busy thinking about ourselves.
 - **Sometimes we're just defensive.** When we're hurt, stressed, insecure, or feeling like things are out of control, we often resort to selfishness to try to protect ourselves. Like a wounded animal, we lash out at others when we feel threatened. We may not intend to be hurtful, but when we're hurting, we often hurt others.
- For all humans, selfishness is a reflex. But it doesn't usually accomplish what we think it's going to. Selfishness doesn't keep us safe, or get us what we really need, or make our lives better. Instead, selfishness leads to fighting and damaged relationships — with others and with 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.*
 - * **Has fighting for your own self-interest ever cost you something? What happened?**

SCRIPTURE | James 3:16-18

- But what's the alternative to selfishness and conflict? Let's see what James says.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read James 3:16-18.*
- James calls us to be "peacemakers." That's an interesting word, if you think about it.
 - It tells us peace isn't something that happens accidentally. It needs to be made.
 - It implies it's normal to see fighting and conflict, because you can't be a peacemaker when things are already peaceful.
 - But it doesn't imply all conflict is bad or should be avoided. James didn't tell us to be "peacekeepers" who silence or avoid anything disruptive or uncomfortable. Making peace isn't the same as keeping the peace.
- James also helps us see how we might become peacemakers — with wisdom that comes from heaven. Huh? Does that mean God is going to drop little peacemaking instruction manuals from the sky? Uh, no. It means God can teach us how to be peacemakers. How?
 - Through the Holy Spirit who guides and empowers us.
 - Through the words and example of Jesus, who is God in the flesh.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 5:9

- When Jesus was on earth, He said a lot of radical things, but one of the most radical was what we call The Sermon on the Mount — literally a sermon He preached while standing on a Mountain.
 - In this sermon, Jesus took the world's understanding of who God was pleased with and completely flipped it upside down.
 - Jesus often said things like, "You've heard ___, but I say ___." This flipping of conventional wisdom gave people a new and better way to understand loving God and loving others.
- Think back to Zack and A.C. Slater, or that last fight you had at home, or the fight you're in right now with a friend. You might think winning that fight is the mark of success. You might think compromise is admitting defeat. But listen to what Jesus says.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 5:9.*
- Jesus is telling us to be people who fight for peace, instead of fighting for our own self interest. And when we do, He says we'll be blessed and called God's children.
 - This is the opposite of our human nature. We usually want what's best for us. We don't want to compromise!
 - It's the opposite of the world's understanding too. We often celebrate strength, dominance, and winning at all costs.
 - But Jesus, God Himself, shows us a different way. He didn't just talk about it. He lived it. When Jesus came to earth, His goal was to make peace between us and God. He didn't do it by fighting with us. He did it by laying down His life on our behalf.
- Can you imagine how your family, friends, school, or the world, could be different if we decided to fight for peace with each other instead of fighting against each other? If we loved others more like Jesus loves us, the change would be radical.
- So do you want to see that radical change? Are you not sure what you think about Jesus yes, but you know you want to see more good and less hate in the world? Then James tells us how: **radical people fight for peace.**

NOW WHAT?

STORY | Finish your story about when things weren't peaceful.

- It's not always easy to find your way out of a fight. But peace is possible — even when it doesn't seem likely.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Finish the story you began earlier by sharing how the situation resolved. If you made peace with each other, share what you did and how it went. If you weren't able to make peace with each other, share what you wish you had done differently in order to make peace.*

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 peacefully resolved a fight with someone? How did you do it?**
 - **Read Hebrews 12:14a. If someone doesn't want to make peace with you, what do you think Jesus would want you to do?**

HOW TO BE A PEACEMAKER

- In a conflict, you can never totally control the outcome, but you can always contribute to making peace in some small way. Here are three ideas to help you get started.
 - **STOP THE DRAMA (DON'T START IT).** We all start drama more than we care to admit. Our words, looks, actions, or inaction are all capable of hurting others and creating conflict. What small thing can you do this week to be drama-stopper instead of a drama-starter?
 - **BUILD A BRIDGE (DON'T BURN IT).** When we're hurt or angry, we often want to hit back, take revenge, or end a relationship. When a relationship is unhealthy or abusive, walking away is probably the best thing you can do. But most of the time, the more radical (and Jesus-like) response is to reach out instead of push people away. Do you have any damaged relationships that could be repaired by rebuilding a bridge you once burned?
 - **FIGHT FOR OTHERS (NOT JUST YOURSELF).** Being a peacemaker isn't always about righting wrongs in your relationships. Sometimes it's about righting wrongs in the world. We can be peacemakers by fighting for others who need help, or support, or a friend, or an advocate. Who's someone (or something bigger than yourself) you could fight for?
 - **MAKE PEACE WITH GOD (NOT JUST OTHERS).** For the last few weeks, we've spent a lot of time talking about how Jesus teaches us to love others, but don't forget about Jesus' most important goal — to make a way for us to have peace with God.
 - Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, you and I have the opportunity to be close to God, even after our sin separated us. If you don't yet have peace with God, you can find that peace through Jesus.

- If you do have peace with God, then making peace with others is one of the ways you can join Jesus on His mission of bringing heaven to earth.
- It's easy to fight for ourselves. It's much more radical to do the difficult thing and **fight for peace**. But this week, I hope you do.

RESPONSE | Peace Be With You

- For centuries, followers of Jesus all over the world have practiced a simple but very meaningful gesture I want to teach you. It's sometimes called "Passing the Peace."
 - We reach out our hands to each other, just like Jesus reaches out to us.
 - We shake hands or hug to show each other that, despite our differences, we're still united.
 - We say, "Peace be with you," just like Jesus said to His followers, as a promise to each other that we'll fight for peace with each other, instead of fighting against each other.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have your students turn to each other and take turns saying, "God's peace be with you," and, "Also with you."*
- As we wrap up this series, I want to leave you with one last challenge. When you leave here today, will you decide to do something radical? Will you decide to love God and others better this week by ...
 - Listening more?
 - Not playing favorites?
 - Watching your words?
 - Fighting for peace?
- Two thousand years ago, the world was changed forever when Jesus showed us how to love like this. Now God's inviting us to continue changing the world by loving others with the radical love of Jesus. So, will you?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - * **What's the difference between making peace and keeping the peace? What's an example of a situation where keeping the peace would prevent someone from making peace?**
 - * **What are some ways we can learn to be better peacemakers?**
 - **Are you involved in a conflict right now that's unresolved? What's keeping you from resolving it?**
 - **This week, what's one way you're going to fight for peace instead of your own self interest?**