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***WEEK 4
TEACHING GUIDE***

BIBLE

Genesis 2:7; John 20:19-22;

Luke 4:16-21; Romans 5:3-4

BIG IDEA

When you’re ready to give up,

look for God in unexpected places.

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY **| Intergalactic Dodgeball**

* Welcome back to *Reasonable Doubt* and to outer space! This is your intergalactic dodgeball league and you've got one more chance to practice ducking, diving, and dodging your way out of uncertainty.
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Use a room that can be completely dark to set up an intergalactic dodgeball universe. Buy or borrow* [*black lights*](https://growcurriculum.org/growstudents-reasonabledoubt-amazon/) *that can be used around the perimeter or above the playing area. Buy or borrow* [*neon soft foam dodgeballs*](https://growcurriculum.org/growstudents-reasonabledoubt-amazon/)*. Make a playing area with* [*neon blacklight reactive tape*](https://growcurriculum.org/growstudents-reasonabledoubt-amazon/)*. Use whatever dodgeball rules you want and have fun! We suggest playing a* [*dramatic song*](https://growcurriculum.org/ELOTimePrologueHDVinylRecording) *like "Time: Prologue" (ELO) or another like it to introduce your teams or team captains. For this final week, give the winning team an awesome space prize like this* [*astronaut figurine*](https://growcurriculum.org/growstudents-reasonabledoubt-amazon/)*.*
* Whether your team won or lost, you are all incredibly and unexpectedly great at playing at space games. It's a real honor to be living on earth with you. **Were any of you surprised about your victory? Were any of you tempted to give up? Why?**

DISCUSSION

* + **What's one weird thing you love that you will definitely, absolutely, never give up on?**
	+ **What's one thing you did give up on and why? Do you ever regret it?**

QUESTION **| What's something you've given up on?**

* A couple of weeks ago, we swapped stories about doubting whether or not something was "worth it." This week, let's swap stories about some times we decided something definitely wasn't worth it, so we gave up! **What's something you've given up on?**
* **INSTRUCTIONS:***Give a few students a chance to respond.*
* Whether it's a sport or instrument you weren't into, a math problem you couldn't figure out, or a show you just didn't think was very good, we all give up on things all the time.
	+ It's not always a bad thing to give up on things that aren't working anymore or on things that we've lost interest in. Sometimes we outgrow things or we realize that maybe we're not cut out for certain things.
	+ But sometimes we really want to stick with something, but aren't sure if we have what it takes to stick it out. When that happens, we usually regret giving up too soon.

DISCUSSION

* 1. **When you're ready to give up, what helps you keep going? Give us an example!**
	2. **\* What are some reasons why someone might feel hopeless? Can you relate to any of those reasons?**

VIDEO **| Felix Baumgartner's Space Dive**

* **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video* [*like this one*](https://growcurriculum.org/JumpingFromSpaceRedBullSpaceDiveBBC) *(0:00-1:00) of Felix Baumgartner's space dive.*
* Felix Baumgartner is a skydiver and base jumper who is remembered for jumping to Earth from a helium balloon in the stratosphere.
	+ His historic jump in 2012 was assisted by a man named Joe Kittinger who made a similar jump in 1960. Joe's original terrifying free-fall lasted for a total of four minutes and 36 seconds.
	+ In the 1960's jump, Joe's glove malfunctioned, he went into a spin, passed out, and barely gained consciousness to be able to pull his parachute chord and land safely.
	+ Fast forward to 2012. If there's anyone who would understand what Felix was going to go through, it was Joe. So as Felix was falling, Joe was there communicating with Felix as he fell to help him hang on through the roughest part of the jump.
* There are a million reasons why Felix could have been panicking and wanting to give up during that jump. Most of those reasons would have been totally reasonable. But he didn't. Thanks to people like Joe, Felix had the help and support he needed to hang on when everything inside of him should have been telling him to give up.

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

OBJECT LESSON **| Hopeless Things (Part 1)**

* All of that might sound nice, but there are things in life that just seem hopeless, right? Some of you are convinced you'll never pass that test or never get to date that person you like. You're pretty sure your parents will never change — or that you'll never be able to change either. **What are some things that might seem hopeless?**
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this object lesson, you'll need a helium tank,* [*one large balloon*](https://growcurriculum.org/growstudents-reasonabledoubt-amazon/)*, permanent markers, and ribbon. Before your teaching time, inflate the balloon just enough to write the word "hopeless" on the balloon with permanent marker. As students respond, inflate the balloon with helium. You'll need to deflate the balloon later, so rather than tying the balloon off, tie ribbon around the end that can be removed later. Tie the other end of the ribbon somewhere it won't float away. The balloon should be hovering over your head.*
* You've mentioned things that feel hopeless at home, at school, with friends, and you've noticed devastating world problems. Some of you have even talked about the things that feel hopeless about following Jesus.
	+ These things seem incredibly big and complex. Sometimes the hopelessness hangs over our heads and makes us wonder if it makes more sense to just give up and stop caring.
	+ It's might seem easier to throw our hands up and say, "Well, there's just no hope here." Sometimes it feels easier to give up than it does to believe something can change.
* But what if hope is possible, no mater what your situation is?

SCRIPTURE **| Genesis 2:7**

* If anyone can relate to wanting to give up, it could have been Adam and Eve, the first people mentioned in the Bible — and the first people to experience the effects of sin.
	+ We can't ask them if they felt hopeless the day they chose themselves over a relationship with God. But the things that followed their decision make it seem like they probably did.
	+ After that moment, they felt shame for the first time. They felt fear. They realized something had broken that could not be fixed. They endured tragedy, relationships fell apart, they lost the security of their first home, and they had to figure out a whole new world full of pain.
* God never wanted them to feel hopeless though. Genesis says they were (like we are) living beings that God created and filled with something very important.
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 2:7.*
* Life. God filled humans with life, not hopelessness or despair.
	+ When sin entered the story through the actions of the first humans, things looked pretty dark. But God began a rescue mission that would one day restore everything.
	+ Sin may have given us a reason to lose hope, but God has always been inventing ways to give us life. Through Jesus, we can have life not just here on planet Earth, but eternally too.

SCRIPTURE **| John 20:19-22**

* God's rescue mission, of course, involved Jesus coming to Earth to live, die, and live again — all so we could have life after sin.
* Jesus' life, death, and resurrection gave us hope in our hopelessness. But when those events were still unfolding and the ending was still unclear, Jesus' disciples were still living with a whole lot of hopelessness.
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 20:19-22.*
* Let's be clear about what happened here.
	+ The disciples were in a room, with the doors locked, because they were absolutely terrified they would be killed like Jesus had been killed.
	+ They had heard from another disciple, Mary Magdalene, that Jesus was back — but they didn't know for sure.
	+ What a scary in-between place! Locking up the room and staying put is exactly the kind of thing we do when we're so afraid. They didn't know what what to do, who to follow, or if their lives would be threatened next.
	+ Suddenly, Jesus unexpectedly appears right there in the room with them.
* In the middle of their hopelessness, Jesus visited with them a message of peace, hope, and purpose.
	+ It wasn't time to give up. It wasn't time to stay hidden behind locked doors. Right when they were beginning to lose hope, Jesus showed up.
	+ It's often in the unexpected places what God shows up and shows us what our purpose is. But Jesus probably isn't going to suddenly teleport into this room to help us find hope. So what does it look like for God to show up in unexpected places for us today?

SCRIPTURE **| Luke 4:16-21**

* To answer that question, let's look to Jesus' own words. Back when Jesus was first beginning his ministry here on Earth, here's how he described his purpose . . .
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 4:16-21.*
* To describe his purpose on Earth, Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah. His message was clear to everyone listening: "I'm the Savior this passage of Scripture was predicting would one day appear."
	+ That announcement would have been unexpected to everyone in the room because — well, it's not every day someone tells you they're the Savior of the world, right?
	+ But think about the people Jesus said he came for: the poor, enslaved, sick, injured, and oppressed, for starters.
	+ People in each of those categories are probably people who know what it's like to feel a little hopeless. They may have grown tired of waiting, given up completely, or wondered if rescue and restoration were actually possible.
* Jesus was letting us know he had finally come to bring into hopeless situations — to appear right when everyone was wondering if it was time to give up.
* So, whatever you're dealing with right now, whether it's doubt, fear, hopelessness, or worry you don't have what it takes to follow Jesus, don't give up just yet. It could be . . .
	+ What you need is actually something you have.
	+ Good news is already on the way.
	+ Jesus might show up when you least expect it.
* **When you’re ready to give up, look for God in unexpected places.**

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

STORY **| Talk about a time God showed up for you unexpectedly.**

* Maybe you're thinking, "This sounds great, but I don't think you actually understand just how hopeless my situation is. I've tried, I've prayed, and I've waited, but God isn't showing up for me." If that's you, I really do understand.
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time God showed up for you when you wanted to give up. Maybe you wanted to give up on following Jesus or give up hope in a difficult situation. Maybe God showed up by unexpectedly sending you help when you needed it, speaking to you in an unexpected way, or delivering a message you didn't expect that helped you keep going.*
* Just like Jesus appearing unexpectedly to his disciples in a locked room, sometimes God brings us hope when it seems impossible — sometimes when we weren't even looking for it.

DISCUSSION

* + **\* Has God ever helped you find hope right when you really needed it? What happened?**
	+ **\* Has God ever spoken to you in an unexpected way or with a surprising message? What happened?**
	+ **\* What are some obstacles that could prevent you from noticing when God is speaking to you?**

OBJECT LESSON **| Hopeful Things (Part 2)**

* So what do you think? **When hopelessness is hanging over our heads, where are some places we can look for God?**
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Remove the ribbon from the end of your "hopeless" balloon and hold it tight. As students respond, slowly let the helium out of the balloon. As you teach, let any remaining helium out of the balloon until it's completely empty.*
* We might not always understand when or how God chooses to show up when we're feeling hopeless. But we can always be on the lookout for the unexpected places where God's love, support, and help might be. It could happen . . .
	+ Through a well-timed message at church.
	+ Through our last-ditch attempt at reading the Bible.
	+ Through the words of a friend or family member.
	+ Through the Holy Spirit unexpectedly giving us a moment of clarity.
	+ Through a song that speaks to us in a unique way.
	+ Or even when we're watching a movie, looking at a piece of art, or reading a novel that seems unrelated to God at all. Really! There's no limit to the creative ways God might choose to communicate with us when we need help.

DISCUSSION

* + **How do you need God to give hope to you or someone you love right now?**
	+ **Read Romans 5:3-4. Have you ever seen this to be true in your life, or in the life of someone you know? Why or why not?**

**﻿**REFLECTION **| Gravity Prayers**

* Doubts can make us feel like we're untethered. Whether we're doubting God's existence, God's ability to come through for us, or our ability to follow Jesus, our doubts can make us feel unsafe.
	+ But when we feel like our doubts have left us floating in outer space, far from the safety of anything that feels like home, prayer can act as "gravity."
	+ When you're ready to give up, prayer can reconnect you to hope. It can keep you grounded in the truth that God loves to show up in unexpected places.
* As this song plays, here are a few ways to make prayer your gravity right now . . .
	+ Say thank you for the ways God has shown up for you in the past. How has Jesus helped you find hope in hopeless places?
	+ Tell God why you're tempted to give up. Why is hopelessness is hanging over you or making you feel untethered? How do you need help finding hope again? Ask God to show up for you in a surprising way this week.
	+ Ask God to show up for others here today, or in your life, who are tempted to give up right now. How can you ask God to show up for them? Is it possible you could be one of the ways God wants to show up for them unexpectedly?
* **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Invite students to pray on their own or with a friend.*
* I don't know how Jesus appeared to his disciples in that locked room that day, but he did. When he appeared, he surprised them with an unexpected message: "peace." And what Jesus said to his disciples he's still saying to us today: that peace can exist in the middle of our hopelessness. So **when you’re ready to give up,** hang on. **Look for God in unexpected places.**

DISCUSSION**This week, what's your next step, and what will you do about it:**

* + - **Ask God to help you find hope?**
		- **Thank God for the hope you've found?**
		- **Help someone else find hope to keep going?**