

## WEEK 4

### TEACHING GUIDE

Not • Yet

### BIG IDEA

Your next step is to get closer to God.

### BIBLE

Psalms 27:1-8; Galatians 5:16-17;  
Proverbs 3:5-6

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

### ACTIVITY | Step By Step By Step

- Welcome back to *Not Yet*, where we've talking about something that has the potential to excite us, terrify us, or a little bit of both: our futures!
- As you're trying to figure out your futures, you're going to spend a lot of time wondering, "Uh, what do I do next?" Whether it's because you're figuring out how to drive, open a bank account, or make a decision about your future, figuring out your next steps is pretty important.

### DISCUSSION

- INSTRUCTIONS:
  - What's something so easy to do it doesn't require instructions? (But if you had to write an instruction book, what would it say?)
  - What's something you wish came with an instruction book, but doesn't?

### OBJECT LESSON | A Giant Die

- INSTRUCTIONS: *Create a giant die out of a cardboard box and paint or duct tape. To make the die, seal the box shut and paint it white or cover it completely with white duct tape. Use black tape or paint to create dots on each side. As you teach, roll the die a few times.*
- Life can often feel like that game we just played, right? Just when we think we've got our next step figured out and life seems to be going smoothly, what feels like a random roll of the dice can throw everything into chaos.
  - Our plans fall apart.
  - A new crisis distracts us.
  - Someone tells us we've got it all wrong.
  - We change our minds.

- Our next step no longer seems very clear.

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

### DISCUSSION

- INSTRUCTIONS:
  - When you're not sure what to do next, who are some people you trust to give you guidance? Why do you trust them?
  - \* What's one situation you're facing right now making you wonder, "What do I do next?"
  - \* When you think about your future, what's one thing making you wonder, "What do I do next?"

### STORY | Talk about a time you weren't sure what to do next.

- INSTRUCTIONS: *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you weren't sure what to do next. Maybe you were struggling to choose a school, profession, someone to date, or a subject to study or get trained in. Choose an example where there wasn't a "right" or "wrong" answer, but where you could potentially have taken a step in a number of directions and been happy either way! Share what made that decision so difficult.*
- At some point, you're going to face decisions that don't have clear "right" or "wrong" answers. You could feel overwhelmed by your options. You might wish someone would just tell you which step to take next.
- I get it! I've spent a lot of time wondering what to do next too, but here's what I eventually learned. When things feel uncertain or unclear, and it's not easy to know which direction you should go, there's always one step that's certain to point you in the right direction.

### SCRIPTURE | Psalm 27:1-8

- The book of Psalms is an interesting book in Scripture. Unlike many other books in the Bible, it doesn't include stories, history, or teaching. Instead, it's a book of songs and poetry about God.
- As we read Psalm 27, wonder about these two things:
  - Why is the author, King David, so distressed about his future?
  - When his future was uncertain, what step did he take?
- INSTRUCTIONS: *Read Psalm 27:1-8.*
- In the middle of a scary present and uncertain future, David needed help.
  - He was in danger.
  - His people were being attacked.
  - His future, and the future of his people, wasn't guaranteed.
- But David wasn't just a songwriter. He was king! So whatever decision he made next was really important. It wasn't just his wellbeing at stake — it was the safety of a whole nation!
- From political strategies to military tactics, I'm guessing David had some pretty specific questions about what to do next. But in the middle of his trouble, here's are the next steps David took: he . . .
  - Reminded himself God could be trusted.
  - Told God he trusted he'd be taken care of.
  - Asked God to keep him safe.
  - Asked God to hear his prayers.
  - Promised to keep seeking God's "face" — in other words, God's presence.
- When he was confused and uncertain, David's next step was simple: he got as close to God as possible. He chose to talk to God, trust God, and spend time in God's presence.

- But why? When David was in such a difficult situation, with so many specific questions about his future, why was this the next step he chose?

### SCRIPTURE | Galatians 5:16-17

- To help answer those questions, let's skip to the New Testament, where the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Jesus-followers in a city called Galatia.
- From the time of David to the time of Paul, something major had changed in the world: Jesus.
  - In David's time, seeking God's "face" (or presence) was sometimes challenging. Before Jesus came, the way humans interacted with God was more complicated. Back then, there were priests, sacrifices, and religious laws and customs that helped people get closer to God and deal with their sins.
  - But after Jesus, everything changed! Through him, the way people got close to God became so much simpler. Through Jesus, anyone could . . .
    - Get close to God — no religious laws or leaders needed!
    - Be forgiven of their sins and made brand new.
    - Experience God's presence through the gift of God's Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit, God's presence here on earth, is who Paul is talking about in this passage.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Galatians 5:16-17.*
- To "walk by" God's Spirit means to listen to God's voice and follow God's lead. When we do that, Paul says we'll be able to avoid making choices God wouldn't want us to make.
  - A lot of the time, the next steps we want to take in life aren't the steps God would want us to take. Without God's Spirit leading us, it's not easy to know the difference.
  - But as we get closer to God, the leading and direction of God's Spirit becomes clearer and clearer — and so do our next steps.
- Does that mean . . .
  - Jesus has an opinion on every single decision we ever make? Even which colleges to apply for, or who to be friends with, or which TikTok we should watch next? (Uhhh, not really.)
  - We can't make a single decision without getting clear direction from the Holy Spirit? (Nope.)
  - When we're close to God, we'll automatically know every next step we need to take in life? (Definitely not.)
- Perfect closeness with God isn't something you're ever going to achieve in this life. You will always have room to get closer, keep growing, and learn to better understand God's voice. But as you get closer to God, it becomes easier to . . .
  - Hear God's voice.
  - Trust God's plans.
  - Follow God's lead.
  - Know when you need to change directions because you've gone a little off-track.
- It won't always be easy to know which step to take next, but there's one step that will always take you in the right direction. When things are confusing and you're not sure what to do, remember, **your next step is to get closer to God.**

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

### STORY | Talk about a time closeness with God gave you clarity about your future.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time getting closer to God gave you clarity about a big decision, complication situation, or change you needed to make. Share how you got closer to God and how that closeness helped you discern your next steps.
- We sometimes make closeness with God more complicated than it needs to be, but closeness with God is a lot like closeness with any other person. It requires:
  - **INTRODUCTIONS:** If you've never met Jesus before, or you're not sure you've ever felt close to him before, today's a great day to begin that relationship.
  - **CONVERSATIONS:** Sure, talking with God is a little different from talking to another human, but it's also pretty similar. You can talk to God in prayer just like you'd talk to anyone you're close with. God doesn't need special words or fancy formulas to have a conversation with you.
  - **TIME:** Just like anyone you're close with, getting close to God takes time. As you grow in your relationship, you'll get more and more familiar with God's voice, God's character, and how God sees you. But that requires time spent together regularly.

### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:**
  - \* Has God's Spirit ever helped you make a difficult decision or change your direction? If so, how?
  - Read Proverbs 3:5-6. What are some next "steps" you're hoping God makes clear to you soon?
  - When life is confusing or difficult, what are the benefits of getting closer to God?

### REFLECTION | Not Yet Notes

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Your closeness with God, as well as your clarity about your future, will grow over time. But there are moments when we need to do something "now," rather than "not yet." This week, take fifteen minutes every day to think about your next steps as you answer these three questions:
  - **WHEN HAVE I FELT CLOSE TO GOD IN THE PAST?** If you've ever felt close to God before, think about a specific day, moment, or period of time, and notice what were you doing at the time to help your relationship grow. What spiritual habits were you practicing? Did you have people in your life who were encouraging you? What helped you get close?
  - **HOW CAN I GET CLOSER TO GOD TODAY?** Each day, choose one small step you can take toward God. Can you pray for just a few more minutes? Read the Bible? Talk to a friend or mentor? Watch or listen to something that helps your faith grow? Pick just one thing.
  - **HOW DO I NEED GOD TO GUIDE ME RIGHT NOW?** Each day, write down one area where you need God's guidance. Maybe it has to do with your future, or maybe it's a tricky situation right now.

### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:**
  - \* What questions or hesitations do you still have about God's ability to guide you? How would you encourage those who have shared?
  - While you wait for direction, what's one step you're going to take to get closer to God this week?