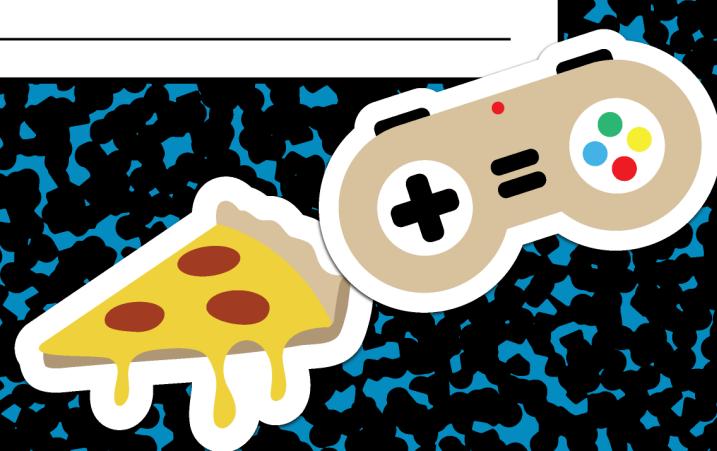




GUYS LEADER GUIDE

NAME: _____



CONTENTS

Purpose	3
Preparing	5
Overview	6
Troubleshooting	7
LESSON 1: GOD - OUR CREATOR	9
The Truth → Lie v. Truth	
God - Our Creator	
LESSON 2: GOD MADE YOU, YOU!	13
Review	
God Made You, You!	
Optional Activity	
LESSON 3: MAKING YOURSELF THE RULER	17
The Fall	
Making Yourself the Ruler	
LESSON 4: BECAUSE OF CHRIST	23
I Am A New Person	
Because Jesus Did . . . I Can . . .	
LESSON 5: PUT IT INTO PRACTICE	29
Takeaways	
Scenarios	
SCRIPTURE TRUTHS	32
SO WHAT NOW?	33

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guide is to equip you to lead confidently. You will learn how to navigate the study, handle group dynamics, and use the resources available to you.

WE ARE HERE TO PRESENT THESE QUESTIONS:

- *Where do we find the truth?*
- *How do you know who you are supposed to be?*
- *Where does your identity come from?*

We will help guys learn what it means to be made in the image of God, how we are valued and loved by our Creator, how to identify our strengths and limitations, and who we are in Christ.

PREPARING

- Pray for the students in your group and consider how you can intentionally engage them as they go through this study.
- Know the material. Remember you are leading the students through this material.
- Know your own story—where the Lord has redeemed and changed you through your own study of the material—and be prepared to share appropriately. Plan to be vulnerable and transparent as you work through the study to encourage and model transparency to others. Consider how much you will share and what is appropriate.
- Keep in mind that the goal is not to fix anyone or any problem, but to come alongside the students as they work through the material and begin learning. Our goal is for them to know they are valued and loved by God and know who they are in him.
- Approach the study and the students you are leading with a humble and eager spirit, ready to learn and grow.
- Prepare your own heart for the work God will do in your life!

OVERVIEW

- Forty-five minutes total: 20 minutes teaching and 25 minutes question/discussion
- Five sessions and two additional resources

Sessions

- God Our Creator
- God Made You, You!
- Making Yourself the Ruler
- Because of Christ
- Putting it into Practice

Resources

- Scripture Truths
- So What Now?
- For each lesson, there will be directions throughout the teaching.
 - 💡 Pencil: stop to have students underline or highlight keywords in Scripture
 - 🔴 Stop Sign: this notifies you, the leader, to stop here. There are pictures to show, an activity, or a reminder that follows the Stop Sign.
 - ❓ Question mark: indicates there are discussion questions.
 - ingroup Group: indicates prayer time.
 - 📖 Book: indicates Bible verses. *Italicized text* are verses from the Bible (NLT).
 - Green Underlined Text: indicates students have blanks to be filled in.
 - 🏃 Runner Guy: Indicates an activity for your group
- This leader guide is meant to help assist you as you lead.

TROUBLESHOOTING

There are some common problems that leaders frequently face when facilitating discussion. Here are some suggestions as to how you might handle these challenges.

Prepare yourself in advance and have some tools ready for a sticky situation. If your first attempt doesn't go well, don't beat yourself up. Acknowledge the struggle if needed and try something different next time. See yourself as a facilitator, steering the conversation out of freedom, not fear. Here are some common issues that leaders face:

- Someone who never talks:
 - » Ask them a direct, simple question that you are sure they would know. Your goal is to get them to speak, so ask them a question with no wrong answer.
- No one is talking:
 - » Call someone by name and start with a simple or personal question. (Same as above.)
- Someone who dominates the conversation:
 - » If you can, ask them to present the question to the group instead of answering. So maybe you say something like this: "Mark, can you read this question to the group and see what they have to say?"
- Someone who shares unbiblical thinking:
 - » Instead of saying their answer is incorrect, you can ask, "What does someone else think of what _____ said?" Or you can say, "Have you ever thought about it in this way?" Or, if there is a portion of their answer that is true, then you can say, "You are correct, Eve did disobey God," and then expand on correcting the part that they said incorrectly.
- You don't know the answer:
 - » Admit that you don't know but will find out for next time. Follow through.
 - » Ask if someone else in the group has insight.
 - » Take time to work through how to find the answer.
 - Read Scripture (encouraging our students to search Scripture rather than accepting everything for face value).
 - Talk to another leader/pastor.
- Getting back on track after a rabbit trail:
 - » Praise the group for sharing, but say "Let's go on to the next question."

- Someone who is difficult or argumentative:
 - » If someone is being difficult because they do not think you are hearing them, then assure them you listen to them by repeating back what they said.
 - » If they are being difficult because they do not want to participate, tell them they do not need to share, but ask them to participate by listening and being respectful of others in the group.

How to handle participants confessions/problems that are beyond the scope of the group:

- Pray for wisdom.
- Acknowledge the problem and show compassion.
- If you feel led, stop and pray about the situation right away.
- Thank him for being transparent and sharing. Tell him that you want to discuss the situation further outside of the group.
- Ask him if he has shared this information with others. Has he shared it with his parents? Friends? Leaders?
- If you feel like the student is at risk, immediately talk to your student director and/or campus pastor for next steps.

LESSON 1: GOD - OUR CREATOR

BEFORE YOU LEAD

This week, we will be covering the ideas “Where do we find the truth?” and “What is truth?” The goal of this week’s lesson is for the guys to understand that the Bible is the truth and it is where we need to go to find the truth about ourselves. Please read **2 Timothy 3:14-17**. In these verses, we learn that Scripture is God’s Word breathed out and written down for us. It is used to help us realize the sin in our lives and teach us to do what is right. We will also learn that God created us in his image, and that there is a God and we are not him.

WELCOME

Welcome to Distinct for Guys!

The definition of distinct is to be recognizably different in nature from something else of a similar type. God created us as males to live a distinct and powerful life for him where we are set apart from the culture around us.

As we work through this study together, we hope and pray that you will begin or continue to grow in your understanding of these four truths.

We are here to learn that:

- **We are made in the image of God.**
- **We are broken sinners in need of Christ.**
- **We are valued and loved by our Creator.**
- **We are given a specific purpose by God to take responsibility for ourselves and the people and situations around us.**

This week, we are going to start with the question “What is truth?”

LIE V. TRUTH

❓ Can someone tell me something that is true?

- » I have on a ____ color shirt.
- » My name is ____.
- » The sky is blue.
- » Grass is green.

That is right! All of those things you guys listed were true. They are all right; they are all correct. I am going to list some truths now. Tell me if I am telling the truth.

🔴 List off things that are wrong. Let them answer if it is true or wrong after each one.

- » The sky is orange, the grass is green.
- » My shirt is ____.
- » This whiteboard is black.
- » The floor is purple.

- ❓ Did you guys think I was wrong on any of the truths I listed?
- ❓ If everything I said was wrong, how do we decide or know what is true?

We hear all kinds of different messages about what it means to be a guy and what we are supposed to do. Friends, family, TV, things online, and our culture all try to tell us what it means to be a guy. We hear life is about our happiness and our feelings and we need to do whatever makes us feel good. The culture around us says we need to be true to who we are and that we determine our own purpose, and no one can tell us what to do but ourselves. The messages change all the time and it can be very confusing. It is hard to know what is true.

- ❓ How do we know when something is actually true and it will not change based on trends, media, or friend groups?

💡 Telephone Charades Game: GAME INSTRUCTIONS (don't read this paragraph out loud):

Explain that students are to form a line with each student facing the back of the person in front of them. The student at the back of the line will be given a phrase to act out (without talking!) for the person next to them in line. After watching the first student act out the phrase, the second person will then act out the phrase for the next person in line. This continues until the student at the front of the line receives a message. This final person will then act out the phrase they received for everyone to watch, and then the first student to go will show everyone what the original message was. The point of the game is to see how the phrase changes with each person in line and is no longer the phrase they were given at the beginning of the game.

Play telephone charades using one of these phrases: "I fell down while riding my bike," "I burned my hand cooking pancakes," "I hit my head while disco dancing," "I hit a home run and ran around the bases."

- ❓ Was it hard to get the original message when we passed it around the circle?
- ❓ Why do you think it was hard to receive the original message once it passed all the way around the circle?

The message becomes distorted as it gets passed so that it does not reflect what was originally said. Whoever passed the first phrase is the only one who knows the real truth.

To know the truth about us, we need to go to the beginning to who spoke the first truth. The Bible is the first truth. It is God's words written out for us today and it goes back to the very beginning, creation. The Bible is our authority, it gets to say what is right, wrong, and true in our lives because it is God's Word written out to us.

- 💡 Ask the guys to underline or highlight the bolded words in the verse (either in their workbook or their Bible).

📖 Let's look at some Scripture:

*2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is **inspired by God** and is useful to **teach us** what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It **corrects us** when we are wrong and **teaches us** to do what is right. God uses it **to prepare** and **equip** his people to do every good work.*

The Bible tells us what is wrong and what is true. God uses this to guide us. Verse 16 tells us that God spoke the words of the Bible. The Bible is God's unchanging truth with absolute authority in our lives. So there is no better place to find out who we are than to go to God's Word, the Bible.

- ❓ Where, what, or who are you looking to for truth in your life?
- ❓ Why do you think you look towards those things for your truth?
- ❓ What are some consequences of finding our truth in something other than the Bible?

❓ How do we know that we should look to the Bible for truth rather than to the people and things around us?

🏃 Play-Doh Exercise: Have students build a person out of Play-Doh. Next, ask them questions. Does it make sense that you decide what's true about the Play-Doh man since you made it or let that man decide for himself?

GOD - OUR CREATOR

Created to Bear His Image:

📝 Ask the guys to underline or highlight the bolded words in the verse (either in their workbook or their Bible).

📖 Genesis 1:26-27 *Then God said, “Let us **make** human beings **in our image**, to be **like us. They will reign** over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.” So God **created** human beings **in his own image**. In the image of God, he **created** them; male and female, he **created** them.*

Since God's unchanging truth found in the Bible is absolute authority in our lives, then we can know we were created by him. We were created by him in his own image.

So what is an image? An image is a reflection of something. It is a representation of the original person, place, or thing. As you experience an image of something, it teaches you what the original person, place, or thing is like. For example, an autobiography gives its readers an image of its author, because it teaches us what he or she was like.

🔴 Make sure students understand that an image doesn't just pertain to something's physical qualities. It can pertain to an item's intangible qualities,

too. When thinking about the image of God, it's not that we look like God, but it's that we are like him in our ability to think, feel, create, produce, enjoy, etc. The emphasis here is on the intangible qualities affecting how we think, feel, and act rather than how we look.

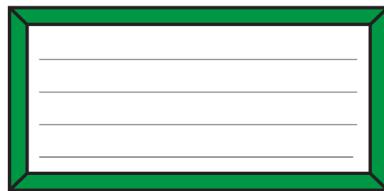
🏃 Have students write down three non-physical characteristics of themselves (funny, smart, athletic, creative, friendly, etc.).

One at a time, have each student read out the characteristics of himself.

❓ Can someone tell me what the differences are between the words each of you read and the person that those words represented? They are similar in that they both represent a person, but the words just tell you about the person. They just give you a small glimpse of what they are actually like. Whereas, with the actual person, you can fully experience them—have a relationship with him, laugh at his jokes, enjoy his art, play basketball with him, etc. Both the words and the person represent the same human, but one is just a small representation and the other is the bigger, real thing.

Just as the words you wrote down give us an image of what you are like, we ourselves give the world an image of what God is like! You were made in the image of God. We are called to reflect him and represent him to the world. We reflect God to the world in our ability to be loving, creative, athletic, hardworking, intelligent, relational, forgiving, and so much more. We can be like this, because the God that created you was like this first. When we make use of these qualities, they point back to our Creator who made us to be like himself.

● What is an image? Another way to think of being made in the image of God is a mirror.



?

What do you see when you look in a mirror?

That is right! You see you. A mirror is a reflection of yourself. It is not the original, but it is an image of the original. Just like a mirror, we are supposed to reflect God to others. Each of us will be able to reflect God in different ways because he made us each individually. We will look at how God created us all differently throughout this study.

Created for Him:

?

Ask the guys to underline or highlight the bolded words in the verse (either in their workbook or their Bible).

?

Colossians 1:16b . . . everything was **created through him and **for him**.**

We can easily forget that God created us for his own purpose, not our own. As we continue through this study, we will learn that God has a specific purpose for us: to take responsibility for ourselves and the people and situations around us.

God gives us certain abilities and responsibility to take the attention off of ourselves and put the attention on him. Like a child that takes a toy that is not theirs and yells “mine,” we often try to take control of our own lives separate from God’s purpose. It’s important to understand that Scripture tells us that everything was created for *him*, not me.

?

What does it mean that you are a creature of God’s creation?

?

How does knowing that God created us for his purpose affect the way we live our lives? (Our lives are not here to elevate ourselves—our lives are about elevating God, glorifying God.)

Created to Experience His Goodness:

Not only were we created to bear his image to others, we were created to experience his goodness and blessings.

?

Ask the guys to underline or highlight the bolded words in the verse (either in their workbook or their Bible).

?

Genesis 1:32 Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was **very good!**

God’s intention was that his creation would be good. That his creation would experience his goodness. That all of that goodness would point back to him. His idea for creation is that his creatures would enjoy his goodness and blessings. His design for us is for his goodness and blessing to flow out of us to others, displaying that we are an image of him.

?

How have you experienced the goodness of God?

?

How has that experience led to the way you talk and interact with other people?

?

Prayer Time

LESSON 2: GOD MADE YOU, YOU!

BEFORE YOU LEAD

This week, we will be covering the idea “God made you, you!” The goal of this week’s lesson is for participants to understand we were created in the image of God, we are called to reflect his characteristics, and he made each of us to be different.

We also will go over God’s design for us as males—someone who takes responsibility for himself and the people and situations around him. Someone who spends his own life making the lives of those around him better. The Bible tells us in Genesis 1:26–28 that we were made in the image of God. We were made to represent and reflect the characteristics of the greatest strength, God. While we are all supposed to take responsibility for the people and situations God puts in front of us, the way we each live this out is different. It is based on our individuality. Individuality is the combination of strengths, personality, interests, experiences, seasons, sins, and so much more. Please read Psalm 139. In Psalm 139, it shows us that God knows everything about us, he created us specifically, and created us all to be different. God made you, you!

Take a few moments to read about some of the men in the Bible. These men are all different, but they all show what it means to take responsibility and improve the lives of those around him.

- David: 1 Samuel 17:12–50, 2 Samuel 5–8
- Joseph: Genesis 39–41
- Jonathan: 1 Samuel 18:1–4, 19:1–10, 20:1–42
- Noah: Genesis 6:9–7:24
- Paul: Acts 9:1–31, 13:44–52

WELCOME

Welcome to Distinct week two!

We are here to learn that:

- **We are made in the image of God.**
- **We are broken sinners in need of Christ.**
- **We are valued and loved by our Creator.**
- **We are given a specific purpose by God to take responsibility for ourselves and the people and situations around us.**

This week, we are going to learn about what it means to be made in the image of God and that God made you, you! First, we are going to start off with a review of what we learned in the last lesson.

REVIEW

Last week, we discussed where we find the truth and that our truth comes from the Bible.

?

Where do we go to find the truth about our lives and purpose? What happened when we played the telephone game?

- » The Bible is the truth. The Bible is where God spoke the first truth. The Bible is our authority—it gets to say what is right, wrong, and true in our lives because it is God’s Word written out to us.

?

What did we learn about God as our Creator?
What were we designed for?

- » Created to be image bearers (remind them of the mirror)
- » Created for him
- » Created to experience and enjoy his goodness

GOD MADE YOU, YOU!

✎ Ask the guys to underline or highlight the bolded words in the verses below (either in their workbook or their Bible).

In Genesis 1:26–27, we learned that we were created by God in his image. God made us distinct for a purpose. As we learned in lesson 1, God's unchanging truth found in the Bible is the absolute authority in our lives. He is the Creator and we are the creature. Therefore, we do not get to define or create our own truth. We can go to the Bible to find the truth about God's distinct purpose and design for us specifically as males.

॥ Genesis 1:3-5 Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light **was good**. Then he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

Here God has created light to be day and from light he created dark to be night. Each for a specific function and each equally important.

॥ Genesis 1:9-10 Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it **was good**.

Here, God created land and sea—also set apart and vitally important to his design.

॥ Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God **formed the man** from the dust of the ground. He **breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils**, and the man became a living person.

॥ Genesis 2:15 The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to **tend and watch over it**.

Here we see God giving Adam the responsibility of tending to the Garden of Eden. This was part of God's original design for creation. Responsibility and work are good things designed for us!

॥ Genesis 2:18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. **I will make a helper who is just right for him.**”

॥ Genesis 2:21-23 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. Then the LORD God **made a woman** from the rib, and he brought her to the man. “At last!” the man exclaimed. “This one is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh! She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken from ‘man.’”

Just like light and dark, land and sea, God created us distinctly male and female. Both male and female were created equal in value and worth for his purpose and plan.

When we read Genesis 2:15, it tells us our specific calling as men is to improve life around us by taking responsibility for ourselves and the people and situations around us. When we willingly make our own lives harder to improve the lives of those around us, we are reflecting God's image to others. To serve others we have to think less of ourselves and more of others.

Have you ever seen your dad cut the grass or cook dinner for your family right after getting off work? He was accepting the responsibility of being a dad at that moment, even though he was tired from a long day at work. Another example might be your friend at school defending another classmate from the harsh words of the school bully. He could easily ignore what's going on, but instead your friend steps into the situation to try and protect your classmate. He is willingly making his own life harder to serve your classmate.

- ⌚ Can you give an example of a male in your life that takes responsibility for himself and the people and situations around him? How does he do that?
- ⌚ In what ways are you already taking responsibility?
- ⌚ Do you have new ideas for how you could take responsibility for yourself and the people and situations around you?

We know that God made us male for a specific purpose, but he made us all different! Our individuality is our personal uniqueness that varies for each guy. God gives us different and unique gifts to help us live out our calling of improving the lives of those around us.

- 📝 Ask the guys to underline or highlight the bolded words in the verse (either in their workbook or their Bible).

📖 **Psalms 139:13,15** *You made all the delicate, inner parts of **my** body and knit **me** together in **my** mother's womb . . . You watched **me** as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.*

God knows you intimately and created you specifically for his purpose. He made us all different, and that is good!

- 🔴 Talk through some of the differences in the group using the interests/personality lists.

- ⌚ What is your favorite movie? What is your favorite thing to do in your free time? Everyone has different answers because we are all different.

Examples are listed below.

Some guys like to...

- Paint/draw
- Run
- Write/read
- Play sports
- Travel/explore
- Learn new things
- Cook
- Shop

Some guys are...

- Quiet
- Loud
- Talkative
- Silly
- Organized
- Curious

- ⌚ Is there something you would add to this list?

We need these differences in the world. Have you ever seen a talent show before? How boring would the talent show be if everyone had the same talent? It would be terrible! What makes a talent show great? All of the different talents! Just like a talent show, we all have different skills and strengths.

- ⌚ Have you ever tried to act like someone else or be someone you are not? How?

We have all had times where we have tried to act like someone to fit in or join a group. God made you, you! He made us all different so we can reflect him in our own unique way.

What would happen if everyone in a band played guitar? We would have no singing, drums, piano, nothing! The music would not be very good. The band needs someone to sing, drum, play guitar, and piano. Without all of the different instruments, it wouldn't be a complete band. Just like the band, God made us with differences so that we can come together and help one another. God made you, you! He made you a male and he made you to take responsibility for yourself and the people and situations

around you. God made you with specific gifts, passions, interests, personalities, backgrounds, and strengths. God takes all of you and weaves it together to equip you to improve the lives of those around you! Knowing that God uses you just how you are frees you to be yourself and not copy another guy.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Materials needed: paper, markers/crayons

As students are making their handprint, read the verse to them and ask them to write down on their poster things that make them unique and different.

 **Psalm 139: 14** *Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous.*

Did you know that when God makes each person, he gives everyone fingerprints that are unique? No one has the exact same fingerprints. Even identical twins have different fingerprints. God made you different and unique from all other people.

- ?
- What are some ways God has made you different or unique from others? Write them on your paper.
- ?
- Look at the words you wrote down. Were there more words that described what you do, or did they describe your personality?
- ?
- What are some ways you take responsibility for yourself and the people and situations around you? Write those on your drawing.

Prayer Time

LESSON 3: THE FALL - MAKING YOURSELF THE RULER

BEFORE YOU LEAD

This week, we will be covering “The Fall” and “Making Yourself the Ruler.” The goal of this week’s lesson is for participants to understand we all sin, and we all try to make ourselves the ruler.

We are all unique and sin in different ways. The first topic we will be covering is The Fall. Please read Genesis 1–3. In Genesis 1–3 we see that God created Adam and Eve, and everything in the world was perfect. The serpent comes into the picture and creates doubt. Eve decides she wants to be in control, the ruler, and takes and eats the fruit. When Adam and Eve disobey, sin enters the world. They both shift the blame to each other, blaming one another for the wrong that has happened. Sin, or disobeying God, enters the world, and because of that, we now sin all the time. It is important for us to know we all sin and because we are unique (God made you, you), we will sin in different ways. To show how we sin differently, we will be walking through a short story book, to see how Ollie was corrupted in his view of a situation, hid, was passive, put himself first, and made himself the ruler. Remember from lesson one how men are created in God’s image, and we are meant to bear his image by taking responsibility for ourselves and the situations and people around us. Ollie does the opposite of that by making himself the ruler, and instead of taking responsibility for what his dad told him, he takes matters into his own hands.

WELCOME

Welcome to Distinct week three!

We are here to learn that:

- **We are made in the image of God.**
- **We are broken sinners in need of Christ.**
- **We are valued and loved by our Creator.**
- **We are given a specific purpose by God to take responsibility for ourselves and the people and situations around us.**

This week, we are going to learn about the fall and how we make ourselves the rulers.

THE FALL

We learned that we are supposed to be like a mirror and reflect God, his characteristics, and his glory.

● Pull out a clean mirror and black paint.

This week, we are going to learn about The Fall, which is when sin entered into the world. We are supposed to be like this new mirror, able to reflect God perfectly. If you look in the mirror right now, what do you see? You see a perfect reflection of yourself. We are not God, but we were able to be a reflection of God. When sin entered the world . . .

● Paint on mirror

... we were not able to reflect God anymore. Sin keeps us from being an image-bearer as God intended. The black paint represents sin in the world. What happens when you look in the mirror right now? What do you see? You see nothing! We are unable to see our reflection in the mirror. This is just like how sin in our lives keeps us from being an image-bearer and reflecting the characteristics of God.

Let's look at some Scripture and read about the story of creation and when sin entered the world. Remember the Bible is where we go for truth and to find out who we are. We are going to pick up in the story of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. They are currently living in a perfect relationship with each other and God. In Genesis 2, God gave his first command.

💡 Ask the guys to underline or highlight the bolded words in the verse (either in their workbook or their Bible).

📖 **Genesis 2:16-17** *But the Lord God warned him (Adam), “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”*

Genesis 3 shows where things started to change for Adam and Eve. In Genesis 3:1–5, a serpent enters the picture and tells Eve she will not die from eating the tree, but her eyes will be opened, knowing both good and evil. Let's keep reading and see what happens.

📖 **Genesis 3:6-7** *The woman was **convinced**. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to **her husband, who was with her**, and he ate it, too. At that moment their eyes were opened, and **they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness**.*

The serpent created **doubt**, and the woman decided on her own she would go along with the serpent. In this moment, we notice Eve is making a mistake. Now, I don't know about you, but if I were there I would like to think I would have stepped in and done something to stop the situation. Afterall, God was clear on the rules and had warned Adam. We can assume that Adam had told Eve, and they both knew the fruit was off limits.

❓ What would be a better choice than to stand by and allow this whole situation to play out the way it did?

I don't know exactly what the best answer is, but I know in that moment, Adam, who was with his wife **DID NOT** take responsibility for the **person** (Eve) or the **situation** (a talking snake saying the opposite of what God had said) **around him**. It could have been fear, uncertainty, or doubt that kept Adam from doing something or saying something, but in the end we know he **DID NOTHING**. When they ate the fruit, sin entered the world. Sin is going against or disobeying what God says. In Genesis 3:11–13, God asks Adam and Eve if they had eaten from the tree he commanded them not to eat. They then shift the blame on each other. They don't think they are wrong and make up excuses as to why they ate the fruit. Adam blames Eve, and Eve blames the serpent. When we struggle with sin, we want to hide; we don't want to go to God and confess our sins. Often when we do have the opportunity to confess, we pass blame, saying it is someone else's fault. “They made me mad. They made me do it.” When Adam did not take responsibility for the person and situation around him, The Fall happened, sin was brought into the world, and we were separated from our Creator, God, which is death.

❓ What did Adam and Eve do that resulted in sin entering the world?

We all sin and all have consequences because of

our sin. Sometimes we sin, sometimes people sin towards us, and sometimes things happen because of the sins of our grandparents, Adam and Eve. Sometimes bad, hard, and wrong things happen in this world because the world is broken. The world is not working the way it was supposed to.

- ?
- What are some ways you have sinned toward others in your life?
- ?
- Have you ever sat back and let a bad situation unfold without stepping in to stop it or help? Have you been mean to someone (siblings, friends, parents), made a mean facial expression, not obeyed your parents, or done things so you could get attention? How did those interactions make the other person feel?
- ?
- Have you ever confessed your sins to anyone or asked for forgiveness? If so, how did you feel afterward? If not, how does the idea of confession or asking for forgiveness make you feel?

One main way we sin is trying to be the ruler of our own lives and others' lives.

MAKING YOURSELF THE RULER

Ollie and his brother Andy were excited about their new remote control race cars they got from their grandfather. One day when there was no school, Ollie was prepared to play with his new car. His brother had an appointment at the doctor's office but thankfully Ollie didn't have to go. Ollie's car battery died right after he started playing with it. He thought he could play with Andy's car until they got back from the doctor. But, Andy was not okay with that plan. The boys' dad agreed with Andy and told Ollie not to touch Andy's car.

After Andy and their dad left, Ollie decided he would handle the situation in his own way. He decided he would play with Andy's car and simply put it back before Andy and his dad got back. While playing

with Andy's car, the battery died as well. Then, things got worse when Andy's car rolled into the road and a truck ran over it. At the same time, Ollie's dad and brother came home.

Obviously Ollie had created a mess of things. His dad told him that in order to fix the problem, he had to give Andy his remote control car. Ollie did not like this and tried to think of other ways to fix his mistake. No matter what solution he came up with, nothing else worked. His dad continued to say the only way to fix the problem was to give up his car. In the end, that is exactly what Ollie had to do. He finally realized that he wasn't in charge. He had to do what his dad said. The problem had to be fixed and there was only one way to do that.

- To understand why it is wrong to make yourself the ruler, we are going to take a look at Ollie from our story to see how he is an example of someone who makes himself the ruler.
- When Ollie's car battery dies, he is very upset. He comes up with a plan so he can still enjoy his day. When his dad tells him he cannot play with his brother's car, his plan is ruined.
- Ollie could have expressed his sadness and asked for help in coming up with another plan for his day. Instead he is quiet and takes matters into his own hands when his dad and brother leave. He decides he knows better, that he is in charge of himself and his own actions, and that he can decide for himself what happens next.
- When Ollie's dad and brother come home, his dad gives Ollie a way to make the situation right. But again, Ollie decides he knows better. He thinks he can come up with a way to fix things on his own. He doesn't need his dad. He can fix things in a way where everyone can be happy, including himself.
- We see Ollie's first mistake in taking his brother's car. This is clearly going against what he knows he should do. But he continues to prove he thinks he is in charge as he tries to devise a

plan to fix things. It isn't until the very end of the story that he realizes he is not his own ruler in this situation. He made the mess because he thought he knew better. He finally realizes he has to submit to his dad, and that the problem will only be fixed by moving in the way his dad has shown him.

When we continuously try to make ourselves the ruler, we are left empty and continuously wanting more. We are never satisfied by our own desires and need to rule. We are in need of a higher power.

As our Creator, God knows what is best for us better than we do and that is good! It all comes back to the fact that there is a good God, and we are not him, and that is good too!

● **Walk through each one of the sin graphic images and come up with ways we all hide, escape, put ourselves first, and how these result in us trying to be the ruler of our lives.**

HIDE	ESCAPE	PUT ME FIRST

Hide:

- It is not opening up in a small group and staying hidden because you don't think you have anything to offer, or not inviting others to sit with you because you are scared.
- We feel shame for something we have done, so we hide and refuse to talk to anyone about what we are struggling with. This can cause others to hide because you aren't willing to share.

● **What are some other examples of how we hide?**

Escape:

- Instead of thinking about things that matter and make you feel emotions, you get on your electronic device because it is "easier."
- Instead of taking ownership of your sin and asking for forgiveness or confessing, you try to forget about it, thinking it will blow over eventually.

● **What are some other examples of how we escape?**

Put Me First:

- Bragging with your friends or siblings when you get something they didn't.
- Getting frustrated and complaining to your parents when they ask you to help around the house to contribute to the family.
- Taking advantage of being the oldest, brightest, or biggest in a group of younger kids to ensure that you win a game or look like the best at something.

● **What are some other examples of how we put ourselves first?**

When we hide, we are deciding not to let others get to know us. We are being the ruler instead of following the rule of God. His purpose is for us to display his image to the world, and that includes being open with others about our sin and allowing godly relationships to help guide us. When we escape, we are avoiding being in a right relationship with God and/or others. When we put ourselves first, we are telling people they are in our kingdom, and we are in charge. All of the ways we listed earlier are all ways we are trying to make ourselves the ruler!

- ?
- 1 In what ways do you try and make yourself the ruler? Do you tend to hide, escape, or put yourself first? Explain.
- ?
- 2 Have you ever felt shame before? Have you spoken to anyone about the shame you feel?
- ?
- 3 What are some of the consequences of making yourself the ruler?
- ?
- 4 How do those consequences impact your relationship with others (friends, family)?

The main takeaway from this lesson is understanding that because of what happened in Genesis 3, we all sin. Because sin entered into this world, we all struggle with wanting to be the ruler of our lives. The entrance of sin into God's world resulted in brokenness and separation from God. This brokenness affects how we take responsibility for ourselves and the people and situations around us. We have a Savior who not only identifies with our weaknesses, but is strong enough to rescue us from our sin and empower us to live out our calling. Next week, we are going to talk about how Christ saves us from all of our sins!

Prayer Time

Thank you for this opportunity to meet together. I pray you would open our eyes and hearts to understand where we are making ourselves the ruler and where we are not helping, supporting, or putting others first. Show us where we are hiding, escaping, and putting ourselves first. I pray that we see who you created us to be, that you would show us how we do not have to fit in, and help us to learn how to reflect the attributes of your character. Show us the wrongs in our lives so we may better serve you and others. Amen.

LESSON 4: BECAUSE OF CHRIST

BEFORE YOU LEAD

This week, we will be covering “I am a new person” and “Because Jesus Did . . . I Can . . .” The goal of this week’s lesson is for participants to understand that because Christ died for our sins, redeemed us, and will restore us one day, we are free to use our strengths for others.

We will start this lesson off with a review. Take time before you meet with your group to look over the last three sessions. What do you need to review with your students or what do you need to explain or guide in discussion further? If your students asked you questions that you didn’t initially have an answer for, make sure you follow up with them.

Please read 2 Corinthians 5:17–21, Romans 6:6, and 2 Peter 1:3. Because of what Jesus did for us, we are able to turn from sin. The next part of this lesson goes over who we are in Christ and our identity in him. This is very important to know as a concrete truth for our lives. We are sons, loved, and chosen by God. Because of this and because of the things Jesus has done, we are free to pour out our lives by caring for those God has placed around us. In the last part of the lesson, we will walk through examples of things Jesus did that allow us to reflect his characteristics to others. Take some time before teaching to think of the ways you can use your strengths and uniqueness to take responsibility for caring for those around you. Think of how you are able to do this because of Christ and the sacrifices he made for you.

WELCOME

Welcome to Distinct week four!

We are here to learn that:

- **We are made in the image of God.**
- **We are broken sinners in need of Christ.**
- **We are valued and loved by our Creator.**
- **We are given a specific purpose by God to take responsibility for ourselves and the people and situations around us.**

REVIEW

This week, we are going to learn about what happened after The Fall and how because of Christ, we are a new person. He has given us our strengths so that we may pour out our lives serving others. First, we are going to start off with a review of what we have learned so far.

- ?
- What is something new you have learned that you are already applying to your life?
- ?
- What questions do you still have around the first three sessions?

I AM A NEW PERSON IN CHRIST

● Show colored-in mirror

?

What does this mirror represent? Why did we color in the mirror? What happened?

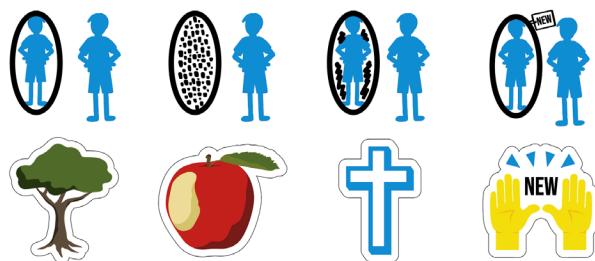
Last week, we talked about how our ability to reflect God's characteristics was changed because sin entered the world, and we all do wrong. The good news is that we can wipe away some of this paint on the mirror.

● Wipe away paint

As you can see, with some scrubbing, we can get most of the paint off. We are able to see our reflection better, but there is still some paint left on the mirror. The mirror can show the image, but it is not a clean, clear, or perfect mirror. The only way to have a perfect reflection is to buy a new mirror. Just like needing a new mirror to reflect an image, we need to be completely made new to reflect God's characteristics perfectly.

● Mirror/Creation graphic

We are going to walk through this graphic and see how the mirror relates to the gospel plan.



With the first mirror, the perfect reflection is creation. We were able to perfectly reflect God's characteristics. When sin entered the world in Genesis 3, our ability to reflect God's characteristics changed. Because of our wrongs, like the paint on the mirror, we are unable to reflect God's characteristics. The

good news is that Jesus was a perfect payment for our wrongs. He died on the cross in our place and covered our wrongs with his blood on the cross. He takes all of our wrongs and our punishment and gives us his perfect life.

?

Ask the students to underline or highlight the bolded words in the verse (either in their workbook or their Bible).

2 Corinthians 5:21 *God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin so that we could be **made right** with God through Christ.*

Jesus is the offering for our wrongs. When God looks at us, he sees Jesus, his loved son. Because of Christ, our mirror has been wiped and scrubbed clean. There is still some paint on the mirror because we still do wrong and make mistakes. We can reflect God's characteristics better, but we will never be perfect on this side of heaven. God will one day make the whole world new again and get rid of all wrongs. This is the new mirror, the mirror without any paint on it. This mirror is clean, clear, and able to perfectly reflect the characteristics of God. If we know Jesus, we can know one day we will be with God forever, reflecting him. If we know Jesus, we can find our identity in him.

?

Ask the students to underline or highlight the bolded words in the verse (either in their workbook or their Bible).

2 Corinthians 5:17 *This means that anyone who **belongs to Christ** has **become a new person**. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

Because of what Jesus has done, we are free to stop doing wrong and able to do what is right by reflecting God. We are free to take responsibility for ourselves and the people and situations around us. We are free to willingly pour out our lives by trying to make the lives of those around us better. Christ makes this possible. It is impossible to do this on our

own. We have to have help from the Holy Spirit. If we try to do it by ourselves by just trying harder, we end up making ourselves the rulers. We convince ourselves it's more important for us to be comfortable than it is for us to accept the responsibility God has given to us to serve the people around us.

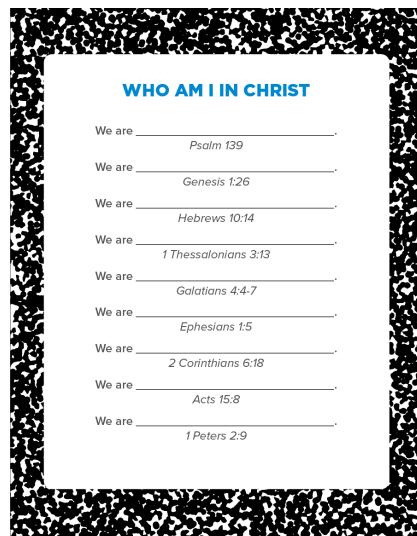
💡 Ask the students to underline or highlight the bolded words in the verse (either in their workbook or their Bible).

📖 **Romans 6:6** *We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. **We are no longer slaves to sin.***

📖 **2 Peter 1:3** *By his divine power, **God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.***

These verses show us that God has given us everything we need to stop doing wrong. In Christ, we have strengths and abilities to glorify him.

● Who I Am in Christ List



A few weeks ago, we talked about how we are all made in the image of God but we all have different unique talents and abilities. It is important that we

understand that our true identity and strengths are found in the fact that we belong to Christ! Because of Christ, we are free to reflect the characteristics of God because our true identity is rooted in him.

- We are fearfully and wonderfully made—knit together. (Psalm 139)
- We are made in God's image. (Genesis 1:26)
- We are being made holy. (Hebrews 10:14)
- We are blameless in Christ. (1 Thessalonians 3:13)
- We are God's heirs. (Galatians 4:4-7)
- We are adopted into his family. (Ephesians 1:5)
- We are sons of God. (2 Corinthians 6:18)
- We are accepted by God. (Acts 15:8)
- We are loved and chosen by God. (1 Peter 2:9)

💡 Are any of these truths about yourself hard for you to believe? Why or why not?

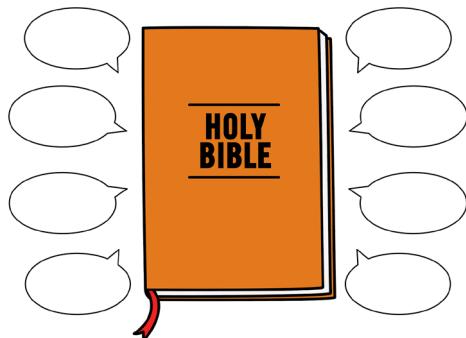
● Lies from the world graphic

This is a time where the leaders and individuals in the group can talk about lies the world tells us. Write these out or let the boys draw them in the blank circles above. Specific things they believe may be based on what social media, the internet, peers, or our surroundings tell us. Examples: unloveable, different, not smart, selfish.



● Truths from the Bible graphic

Using the Who I am in Christ graphic, find truths that counteract the lies the boys believe about themselves and write them out or let the boys draw them in the spaces above. This is a great time to speak truth into their lives, counteract lies of the culture, and fill it with truths from the Bible.



BECAUSE JESUS DID . . . I CAN . . .

We learned in 2 Peter 1:3 that we can stop doing wrong with the help of God. We can become more like God, reflecting his character by following the life of Jesus. When we turn from doing wrong and believe in Jesus, that he died for our sins and he rose again, he accepts us completely and gives us a new life. We become a new mirror so that we may reflect his characteristics to the world. That is the story of the gospel. We are free to live without hiding, escaping, putting ourselves first, or making ourselves the ruler.

God is the Creator and I am the creature. There is a God, and I am not him.

We are going to walk through some examples that show because Jesus is/did _____, I can _____.

● Because of Jesus List

Because Jesus is friendly, even though he was made fun of, I can be friendly and nice to others because I know that I am accepted in Christ!

- If we look back to the Who I am in Christ List, we see we are accepted and loved by God. This gives us the freedom to be friendly and nice to others even when they aren't nice to us.

Because Jesus has forgiven me, I can forgive others for wrongs they have done to me.

Because Jesus sacrificed and served at a great cost to himself, I can sacrifice and serve others.

- It is okay to not be first in line, help clean up trash when you don't have to, encourage others, or let a sibling get the front seat.

Because I am loved and accepted by Jesus, I can focus on putting others first.

Because Jesus was obedient without complaining, I am free to be obedient to my parents and the authority in my life. I can put them first and wake up and get ready on time for church without complaining.

● What are my strengths?

All of our differences and the unique way God made us can be used as a strength when we remember who we are in Christ.

STRENGTHS	HOW CAN MY STRENGTHS POINT OTHERS TO CHRIST?	HOW CAN I USE MY STRENGTHS TO HELP, SUPPORT, OR PUT OTHERS FIRST?
1.		
2.		
3.		

- ✍ Write down one strength—something you are good at.
- ✍ How can you use that strength to point others around you towards Christ?
- ✍ How can you use that strength to help, support, or put others first?

Share as a group.

Prayer Time

Thank you for this opportunity to meet today. Thank you for sending your Son to earth. He lived a perfect life and died on the cross to pay for our sins, for our brokenness. Thank you for caring for us and helping us be who you want us to be. Thank you for giving us all we need to represent and reflect your character. Thank you for your gospel and your promise to renew the world. Amen.

LESSON 5: PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

BEFORE YOU LEAD

This week, we are going to review all of the lessons we have learned over the past four weeks. This lesson guide will be different from the others in that it will be bulleted. It is meant to be an outline of potential areas to dive deeper based on questions or misunderstandings of the group. Before teaching this week, please go back over the previous four lessons. Try and remember any of the topics the guys struggled with or potentially had more questions about. If nothing comes to mind, use the guide to go back over all of the graphics and then move into a time of role play. Feel free to make up your own role-playing scenarios that are tailored to your group. Have them act some out with each other with you as their leader. Make sure that after each role-play, your group talks about what went right and what was wrong in the scenarios. It might be helpful for the leaders to act out a right and wrong prior to having individuals in the group act out a scenario. Take the time to let the guys give their thoughts on what they would have done in the situation.

Remember, the goal in all of these situations is to reflect God's character, our calling to take responsibility for the people and situations around us, not to make ourselves rulers but to support (not escape from the situation around us, but step in with wise choices or responses), encourage (not sinking back from the hard situation but lending God-given courage to the person in need), and put others first (not putting ourselves first by letting fear determine how we will respond).

We want to make sure they can answer these questions:

- How do you know who you are supposed to be?
- Where does your identity come from?
- Where do we find the truth?

WELCOME

Welcome to Distinct week five!

We are here to learn that:

- **We are made in the image of God.**
- **We are broken sinners in need of Christ.**
- **We are valued and loved by our Creator.**
- **We are given a specific purpose by God to take responsibility for ourselves and the people and situations around us.**

REVIEW

This week we are going to review all of the lessons we have learned over the past four weeks and discuss how we can put them into practice. If there is anything you don't understand or have questions about, please bring them up as we review each lesson.

MAIN IDEAS FROM SCRIPTURE

First, let's look to look at some big picture truths:

God is the ultimate authority of our lives and the definer of truth. He created us, therefore he owns us.

God created you for a specific purpose to reflect his image to others in a broken world.

God created us to experience his goodness and blessings. (Through this we are able to have his goodness flow out of us to others around us, ultimately pointing it all back to him.)

We all sin and struggle with trying to make ourselves the ruler. The sinful nature affects our ability to be an image-bearer of God.

When we turn from our sin and believe Jesus died for our sins and rose again, we are free to live without promoting or protecting ourselves because Jesus has paid for our sins with the perfect payment of his blood.

Because of Christ, we are free to reflect the characteristics of God because our identity is rooted in him, not in what others think of us.

SCENARIOS

We are going to move into a time of application and scenarios. There will be an example, and we will work through what was wrong and how we can change to be more like God. Remember to think about how we can bring strength to others by reflecting God's characteristics. In what ways can we support, encourage, and put others first? We can all take turns acting out the scenarios and answering the questions.

② Discussion questions to talk through after reading the scenarios

1. What do you notice about the situation?
What is wrong?
 - » Make sure to look at helping / hiding, supporting / escaping, coming to the aid of others / putting yourself first.
 - » Were they trying to make themselves the ruler?
2. What could we do to change the situation?

Andrew's parents are upset because he lied to them about cheating on a test. Andrew is in a small group at Fusion and that week happens to be on honesty vs. dishonesty. Andrew doesn't share anything about what happened that week and hopes it will just go away.

Leader notes to support conversation:

Andrew is not being responsible for himself and his actions and is hiding from the situation. He created a bad situation by lying, and is making a poor decision by hiding what he is dealing with from his group and group leader. Andrew should confess to his friends and leader and show humility by taking their advice on the situation.

Thomas is playing kickball with his friends at recess. His friends are making fun of a boy that is sitting off to the side of the game not playing. Thomas doesn't say anything but watches as the boy starts to cry.

Leader notes to support conversation:

Thomas is putting himself first, he is scared to reach out to the other boy because he doesn't want to feel the consequences he may face if he stands up to his friends and defends the boy who is being made fun of. Thomas should stand up to his friends and encourage the other boy to play or connect with him in some way.

Matt, Kevin, and Russel are brothers. They are playing outside the garage. Kevin and Russel go into the garage to get their bikes. When they don't come back out Matt goes in to check on them. They are playing on their dad's workbench. Matt gets his bike and walks out of the garage. As he walks out he hears things falling and crashing onto the workbench, but continues outside and does not do anything.

Leader notes to support conversation:

Matt was not taking responsibility for the situation around him when he heard the crashing objects. He should have made sure his brothers were okay and also should have found a parent. Matt escaped the situation instead of entering in to help. Matt could have also encouraged them to come out of the garage initially when he noticed they were taking too long.

 Prayer Time

SCRIPTURE TRUTHS

- When you are insecure about your body:
 - » Psalm 139:13-16, Isaiah 45:9-12, 1 Corinthians 6:15-20
 - » God created your body the way it is for a reason. God says you are fearfully and wonderfully made. He knows everything about your body. He created it to be a temple for his Holy Spirit and to build up his church through your own unique contributions.
- When you are overwhelmed by your emotions and feel anxious about life:
 - » Hebrews 10:19-23, Romans 8:26-39, Matthew 6:25-34
 - » God is in control and can be trusted. Sometimes emotions swirl out of control and you feel worried and overwhelmed by situations. When you feel this way, you can remember that God is trustworthy. He is in control and promises never to leave us. He is working all things out, especially things out of your control, for the good of those who love him.
- When you put yourself first and continue to put what you want above the needs and feelings of other people:
 - » Colossians 1:14-23, Philippians 2:3-11
 - » You are not the center of the universe—Jesus is. It's easy to be consumed with your own self-importance. But Jesus is actually the center of this world, and he has the power to hold everything together. He calls you to give yourself selflessly for his purposes because he gave himself for you, even if that means putting someone else's needs above your own.
- When you feel pressure to be like everyone else and compromise what you believe is right:
 - » Ephesians 4:21-32, 2 Timothy 1:9, 1 Peter 1:13, Proverbs 29:25, Romans 12:1-2
 - » Jesus is kind and has called you to live a life of holiness. Sometimes, you just want to look like everyone around you, because let's face it, it's scary being different. But Jesus calls you not to conform to this world. Instead, he created you to be holy and set apart. This may mean being unpopular at times, and it's in these times you have to remember that Jesus is your King, not other people. He deserves your devotion.
- When you feel like you deserve things or that your friends, parents, and even God owe you because of what you've done for them:
 - » Ephesians 2:1-10
 - » You are saved by grace, not by anything you've done. God created you, and he sustains you. When you feel like you are entitled to something because of what you've done, you are forgetting everything that God has done for you. Instead of being prideful, work on developing a thankful heart for what he has given you.

SO WHAT NOW?

LEADER NOTE

In this series of challenges we want to evaluate the conversation each week and pick one of these action steps for students to take. We want students to be specific with their intentions, and we as leaders must follow up on the action steps in the following week's meeting.

● Help students to realize the key obstacle to us taking responsibility for ourselves and the situations and people around us is our tendency to hide, escape, and put ourselves first. Challenge students to move away from this kind of living and towards accepting the responsibility God has given to them this week.

How can you take responsibility for yourself this week ?

- Is there a task you have to be asked to do each day, or each week that you know you should just do without being asked?
- Is there a chore in your room that needs to be completed?
- Is there a chore in the home somewhere you know you could take care of?
- Could you complete your homework every day this week without your parents having to remind you?
- Could you wake yourself up on time every day this week?
- Could you make your own lunches every day this week?

- Could you begin taking care of your own laundry?

How can you take responsibility for the situations around you this week?

- What situation have you found yourself in more than once where you blame others?
 - » Sibling
 - » Chores
 - » Grocery unloading
 - » Arguments at school
- Is there a friend or family member you know could use some help?
- Is there a situation you get in where you almost always find yourself in trouble?
- Is there a spot in your yard or house that is always messy? Take the time to clean that up.
 - » Organize the garage
 - » Rake the leaves in the backyard
 - » Clean up the attic
- Could you offer to cook dinner for your entire family two nights this week?

How can you take responsibility for others this week?

- Are there ways you can take responsibility for your friends in a unique way that you normally don't?
 - » Encouraging them towards good things
 - » Helping them in some way
 - » Pushing back on the bad things they want to do and say

- Are there ways you can take responsibility or help carry the load for a younger sibling or even a parent?
 - » Helping in some special way
 - » Playing with a sibling to help keep them out of trouble
- Is there a neighbor who you can offer free yard work to?
 - » Mowing their lawn
 - » Trimming their bushes
 - » Raking the leaves