

# IT'S NOT ABOUT ME



THE MAIN AND THE PLAIN SERIES  
VINEYARD YOUTH CURRICULUM

**vineyard**youth

# NOT ABOUT ME

# WELCOME!

## to Vineyard Youth Curriculum

**Hello, friends.** What you hold in your hands is the product of lots of people, lots of prayer, and lots of purpose. As youth leaders in the Vineyard movement, we believe that the work we do with students will have much influence on what the movement will look like over the next ten to twenty years.

We set out to design a curriculum that communicates and reinforces the biblical and kingdom values of the Vineyard while inviting students to embrace the reality that they are part of something bigger than themselves.

Understanding the diversity within the Vineyard movement, we purposefully designed curriculum that can be utilized by groups of differing sizes led by either paid or volunteer leaders in any geographical setting or location. Easy, right? We believe we accomplish this by offering a buffet of activities that allow you—the in-the-trenches leader to choose what works for you and your group. We're pretty sure no one will use all of the material proposed, but we're confident some of it will be a good fit for your group.

### Each lesson will include:

- Experiential, hands-on activities that reflect a variety of learning styles
- Large group questions to frame a conversation (I.E., not a lecture).
- Application suggestions to live and reveal the kingdom of God.
- Small group questions.
- Times for you as the leader to tune into what God is doing in you and your students' lives.
- Times for students to hear from God for themselves

This curriculum is written by youth leaders for youth leaders. If you would like to join the team and contribute your voice to the conversation, we would love to hear from you.

You may not hear this enough, but thank you for what you do. It's important, it's needed, and it's laying the foundation for a new generation of leaders to continue the good things God has already done in the Vineyard movement. Keep up the good work!

## Why This Topic?

It would be hard to read much of the Bible without coming to the realization that selflessness is a key component to living in a relationship with Jesus. A lot of young culture tends to emphasize the self though, often at the expense of selflessness. How do young followers of Jesus learn to overcome materialism, greed, and the emphasis on self? How do they learn the way of Jesus who took all of his privilege and used it to serve others? These lessons try to ask hard questions of the students, and challenge the world view built around the self. It invites them into the freedom of learning to lay down our lives for others.

## Helpful Reminders For You, the Youth Leader

In working with this curriculum there are a few ideas we'd like to keep in front of you:

**Plug in your stories** wherever you can. These are bare bones here. You add the meat!

**Experiential learning lasts.** We've tried to make this as experiential as possible, rather than just providing head knowledge. We encourage you the leader to try it out—take some risks!

**Humor is key.** It's hard for us to artificially add this from a distance, but we encourage you to find all chances you can to connect through humor.

**Context matters.** We don't know what's going on in your group right now, but you do. We encourage you to pray and think about how this message applies to the new ones in your group, the veterans, and the seekers. How does this tie into the message of salvation through Jesus?

## These Lessons Are on Video!

Go to [www.vineyardyouthusa.com/resources](http://www.vineyardyouthusa.com/resources) to view the video teaching for this series. Each lesson is taught by Dave Paolozzi, and you can follow along with the written version.

# LIVING SELFLESSLY

## BIG IDEA

### LIVING SELFLESSLY BY PUTTING OTHERS NEEDS AHEAD OF YOUR OWN

## YOUTH LEADER SOUL CARE

If you are anything like me, you are giving nonstop right now. Self-care is so important. Take 30 minutes today and listen to a few of your favorite worship songs. While listening, do this breathing exercise. When you breathe in, say to yourself, "I have hope, I have life, I am loved, I am good enough." When you breathe out, name your anxieties and frustrations. (For instance, "I feel lonely, I am not good enough.")

## STARTER

Check in with the group. How is everyone doing? If you could have or do anything right now, what would you want to do or have?

## DISCUSS

What is the first thing that comes to your mind in the morning when you get out of bed?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Are you thinking of what you need to do first? Bathroom? Food? It's all self-focused though, right?

## LESSON

### **Philippians 2:3**

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others more important than yourself.

We need to actively look for ways to put others' needs ahead of our own. Why though?

From a young age we have been taught by our loving parents that our (individual) needs are important. When I was a baby, I needed my mom to change my diaper and feed me. I don't need that anymore, but do I still think I am the center of the world? One thing that reveals that is how I respond when I don't get something that I want. Am I angry? Sad? (For the leader: This is a great time to tell a personal story.)

Even though it feels like we are the center of life, there is so much more going on around us. Life isn't all about us and our wants and desires.

Put your finger on your nose and repeat after me: "It's not all about me."

Imagine a world where everyone looks out for the needs of others—a world where everyone considers others more important than themselves. Is that the kind of world we currently live in? Maybe not. But strangely, we seem to be moving in that direction.

In general, our world reflects a consumerist society. A consumerist society is one in which people devote a great deal of time, energy, resources and thought to "consuming." The general view of life in a consumerist society is consumption is good, and more consumption is even better. The United States is an example of a hyper-consumerist society. It's self-focused to get all you can get. And the media reinforces this at every turn. You see it don't you? Ads everywhere telling you how you need to buy this pair of shoes, or wear these clothes, or get this device, so that you will be happier!

It's hard to look out for other people when you are constantly consuming more products.

How often do you do something for someone without trying to get something out of it for yourself?

Is it healthy to have the world revolve around you?

Are you a hyper-consumer? Do you need more all the time?

## RESPONSE

Take a few moments and let the Holy Spirit talk to you. Are there any areas where you have made life all about you? Are you feeling frustrated because things are not going the way you want them?

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How do you respond when you don't get what you want?
2. Are you carrying any frustration or anger related to this topic?
3. On a scale of 1–10 with 10 being high, what is your level of need for control? Is this something you can let go of?
4. What can you do to change the way you consume media?

## OUTREACH APPLICATION

This week, find things around the house that you can do that are helpful. Try to do these helpful things in secret. Don't let anyone know that you did it. Some ideas include doing the dishes, doing the laundry, and taking out the trash.

# LIVING WITH OPEN HANDS

## BIG IDEA

**GENEROSITY IS MUCH MORE THAN GIVING MONEY. IT IS HAVING AN OPEN-HANDED APPROACH TO ALL THAT YOU OWN. IT IS THE ROAD TO SELFLESS LIVING.**

## YOUTH LEADER SOUL CARE

Think about your life, your family, and your ministry. What do you hold most near and dear to your heart? Take five minutes of quiet time. During that time picture yourself holding the things you have close to your heart. With open hands offer these things to the Lord. Speak these words over them, "Jesus, this is yours and I steward what does not belong to me."

## STARTER

Have students say what their favorite things are. Use a whiteboard or sheet of paper to make a list of their answers.

## DISCUSS

What is one material possession that you could not live without?

## LESSON

Why is this an item that you cannot live without? Take a moment, and everyone use their phone to google when your item was first invented. The point is, people lived without this for how long?

(Note: the first cell phone was on the market in 1984.)

### **1 John 3:16–18**

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

Obviously we won't have many opportunities to lay our lives down for anyone. But what might this look like in a practical way for us today? It looks like going the extra mile, setting our own wants and desires aside for a moment, and running to grab the door when Mom's hands are full.

If we don't have a chance to literally lay our lives down, how can we do it figuratively? (For the leader: Tell a story where you went out of your way for someone.)

- Live life in a generous and open-handed way by looking for ways to be generous. What can you be generous with? Your time? Ability? Possessions? Who can you be generous with?
- Think of your material possessions differently: Instead of thinking "I own my material possessions," live as though you steward what does not belong to you. All that you have is given to you by God. What if you thought of it as God's stuff, that you get to use? How would you act or live differently?
- Love is an action word: Love should not be confined to words or speech. We use the word love so freely and it has many meanings. We say, "I love my Mom," and "I love ketchup." When we do, are we talking about the same type of love? Love is really about action and deeds. James talks about this, in chapter 2 verse 18: But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

#### **Back to the Big Idea**

Generosity is much more than money. It is having an open-handed approach to all that I own. It is the road to selfless living. Generosity is a major part of Christianity. The early Christians were dependent upon each other. This certainly looks different for modern Christians, but we need to continue to find ways to be generous.

## DISCUSS

What are ways you can be focused on others when it comes to things you own, your money, and your time?

What is the hardest part of living generously with your things, your money, and your time?

## APPLY

Living generously looks different for different people. Find a way this week to live in an open-handed way.

## RESPONSE

Take a moment and be quiet. During this time ask God to show you anything in your life that you hold onto more tightly than you should (possessions, money, time). Once you have this in mind, ask God to be involved in the process of giving it to him. Now ask a few people to pray for you and check in with you concerning this.

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What stands out from today's lesson and why?
2. Do you hold anything too tightly?
3. What does living "open handedly" mean to you? How can you do it?

# GENEROSITY BRINGS UNITY

## BIG IDEA

**WHEN WE SHARE OUR STUFF, IT BRINGS UNITY WITH THOSE AROUND US.**

## YOUTH LEADER SOUL CARE

Look at Psalm 139:1–18. Go through each verse slowly, allowing time for each one to penetrate your soul. He knows you and he likes you.

## STARTER

Play the grocery game. This is a memory game. To avoid cheating, have students hold their hands where you can see them. The first student starts by saying something like, “I’m going to the store to get eggs” (for example). Each subsequent student will add to the list but first say all the items that were said before. Second student, “I’m going to the store to get eggs and milk.” If a student can’t remember the list or says the list out of order, they are out.

## DISCUSS

Imagine you’re at Walmart and you have ten minutes to fill your cart. What are the items you put in your cart? Food? Toys? Toilet paper? Once you pay and go outside, you feel moved to give some of the items from your cart to a poor family sitting outside. What items from your cart do you give them?

Why would you choose to give away those in particular? If this was real life, would you have given anything from your cart? Does generosity and selflessness come easily to you?

## LESSON

### **Acts 4:32–35**

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.



## DISCUSS

## APPLY

## RESPONSE

Selflessness brings unity. When we have an open-handed generosity toward those around us, it breaks down barriers.

Holding our possessions loosely in our hands brings selflessness. When we hold on to our stuff tightly, we become more self-focused on what is best for us. We often forget about those around us.

Closed-handedness creates bullying, outcasts, and division. How does it do that? If I want to keep what is mine, I want to separate myself from you. In order to do that, I often will be required to put you down. To put you to the outside. In some way to lift myself higher than you.

Selfless generosity brings unity, togetherness, and camaraderie. (For the leader: Tell a personal story about selfless generosity and open-handed giving and how that impacted the community.)

### **Back to the Big Idea**

When we share our stuff, it brings unity with those around us.

When we put others' needs ahead of our own, it brings unity and a sense of community.

Why do you think generosity brings unity?

Do you have a neighbor who you don't get along with? Strategize with your family about what you can do to be generous. Cook them a meal and leave it on their porch? Mow their lawn? Get creative.

Do you have something you own that you can give away to a family member or friend or a family in need? Look around your room and see if you can find something. Or consider spending some of your birthday money and buy something new. (Make sure your parents are on board.)

Sit quietly and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Ask: What can I do to live with a selfless, open-handed generosity? Put ideas in my mind (use your imagination in a big way).

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What stands out from today's lesson?
2. What are some ideas or strategies that came to your mind?
3. How can you be a blessing to the world around you?

## OUTREACH APPLICATION

Strategize on your own, as a youth group, or with your family (if that works in your personal situation) how you can bless your neighborhood, families from your church, and the broader community around you.

# THE FIRST SHALL BE LAST

## BIG IDEA

WHEN WE TAKE CONTROL OF OUR INTERIOR LIFE, IT OPENS THE DOOR TO HELP AND SERVE OTHERS IN A SELFLESS WAY THAT RECEIVES NOTHING IN RETURN.

## YOUTH LEADER SOUL CARE

Take 15 minutes today and ask God to search your heart and renew you. If you're like me, a flood of things will come into your mind. Write these things down, whatever they are. Once the flood is done, sit quietly with Jesus. Feel his peace wash over you.

## STARTER

Watch this ice bucket challenge video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H50W0\\_cH-ag](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H50W0_cH-ag)

Ask the students if they've ever done the ice bucket challenge.

## DISCUSS

Imagine this, every time you have a thought that was not healthy or good, dumping a giant bucket of ice on yourself. Saint Francis of Assisi would actually do this. Well not a bucket of ice water but he would jump into an icy ditch. (Galli 83)

If you were to do this, how often would you be covered in ice water? How can you take control of your interior life—the thoughts that go through your head every second?

## LESSON

### Mark 10:42–45

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

This is what I call kingdom math. To be first you must become last. To be regarded highly you must put yourself aside. My philosophy is that if I am working on a project with others and it is successful, I find someone to give the credit to; if it's a bust (doesn't go well), I take the blame for the failure. Or I will let others take credit for my ideas. Why? It builds them up. It gives people a sense of ownership. And it takes me out of the equation for a job well done.

I love basketball, and I especially appreciate players like John Stockton. He was a point guard throughout his career, and although he wasn't super popular, he was the most valuable player on his team for years. Why? Because he made other players better. He shared the ball—put others in situations where they could succeed.

I think of Saint Francis of Assisi where he was so repulsed by lepers that he moved into a leper colony. He began kissing the hand of the lepers. He said, "What before had been bitter was now turned to sweetness." (Galli 49). What was he doing? He was so repulsed by lepers, but he knew that caring for them was at the heart of Jesus.

This is the same guy that if he had an impure thought would throw himself into an icy ditch. (Galli 83). Part of those thoughts were of self promotion and sinful temptations. He wanted to help others so much that he was willing to put his body into serious check.

#### **Back to The Big Idea**

When we take control of our interior life, it opens the door to help and serve others in a selfless way that receives nothing in return.

## DISCUSS

Do you think it's even possible to take control of your thoughts and impulses? What are some strategies that can be helpful once you recognize negative, destructive, or unhealthy thoughts? Do you have someone you trust that you can tell about these thoughts?

## APPLY

Start by recognizing the words you say to yourself, especially if they are negative, destructive, or unhealthy. Recognize this and call it what it is.

## RESPONSE

Take a few minutes and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about your interior talk. Ask him to help you take control of your thoughts. What might the Holy Spirit be saying to you?

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What stands out from today's lesson?
2. What are some strategies you can employ to help yourself in this area?
3. How will taking control of your interior thoughts help you to be focused on others?

## WORKS CITED

Galli, Mark. *Francis of Assisi and His World*. Intersociety Press, 2002.

# WELCOME TO VINEYARD YOUTH CURRICULUM

Hello friends. What you hold in your hands is the product of lots of people, lots of prayer, and lots of purpose. The Vineyard movement is at a crucial place, and we believe that the work we do with students will have much influence on what the movement will look like over the next 10-20 years. We set out to design a curriculum that communicates and reinforces the biblical and kingdom values of the Vineyard while inviting students to embrace the reality that they are part of something bigger than themselves.

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## Each lesson includes:

- Experiential, hands-on activities that reflect a variety of learning styles.
- Large group questions to frame a conversation (I.E., not a lecture).
- Application suggestions to reveal and experience the kingdom of God.
- Small group questions each week.
- A devotional for the leader to help them grow in this area.
- Planned activities to help students hear God for themselves.

## Why This Topic?

The fast pace of life, and our culture's values, tend to draw inward to focus on ourselves. God calls us to love him, love others, and live outside of a "me/I focus." This series will look at what it means to live selflessly and, taking the focus off ourselves, to live as Christ commands, with love toward others. We will dig into practical ways to put others first remembering "Its not all about me."

## About the Author

*Dave Paolozzi*

Dave Paolozzi is the Associate Pastor at Tehachapi Vineyard where he oversees kids, youth, and whatever else needs to be done. He and his wife, Jen, have been in youth ministry on and off for 20+ years. They have a 19 year old daughter who has completed two missions trips with YWAM. Dave graduated from St. Stephens University with a Masters in Ministry. Dave and his family have a passion for missions. They often take trips to Mexico to build houses, help the local church with outreaches, and visit orphanages. One of Dave's focuses is developing disciples that Love God and Love Others.