

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



**FIVE EVENTS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED
AND HOW GOD CAN REDEEM THEM**

SIX WEEK SERIES
VINEYARD YOUTH CURRICULUM

vineyardyouth

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

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.

A Different Kind of Curriculum - Thank you!

We want to thank Amy Fletcher and the amazing people of Vineyard Community Church in Overland Park, KS for sharing this curriculum with us. Below you will find her vision behind this particular curriculum, and some basic instructions on how it is intended to be utilized. We hope this helps you pastor your teens through experiences they may have missed due to the pandemic.

About This Curriculum

- The idea for In Case You Missed It came from the Facebook group “Stuff You Can Use: A Youth Ministry Community.”
- The teachings are intentionally short. Due to COVID, students haven’t been in school or church for months. We want them to be able to use their short attention spans for good, not evil.
- Teachings are geared a little younger as we will be teaching 5th–12th grade all together.
- Teachings do not build upon one another. We simply picked biblical messages we thought they would not have heard before; or if they had, they might not remember.
- Included is a suggested game (setup included). The games are chosen with respect to our state/county physical distancing guidelines/mandates. We have a prize bucket for games with cheap prizes we have collected over the years (nothing over \$5). Please use as little or as much as you want of this.

Our Schedule Looks Like This

- Check-in (5–10 minutes)
- Welcome/Announcements (5–10 minutes)
- Game (10 minutes)
- Worship (15 minutes)
- Teaching (10–15 minutes)
- Small Groups & Ministry Time (20–30 minutes)

Set Up

Our room is set up with round tables—three chairs at each. There is a small stage used for worship and teaching. We have a banner across the back of the stage area that says, “In Case You Missed It” and we have a suitcase up on the stage to pull out tactile illustrations for each message (a case full of things we may have missed in reading the Bible). The tables are decorated each week for the theme (only because we already have the supplies on hand).

Graphics (aka masks) are not a statement, simply a sign of the times. It could have also been toilet paper, but we liked the colorful aspect of this better.

Helpful Reminders For You, the Youth Leader

In working with this curriculum there are a few ideas we’d like to keep in mind:

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/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?

LESSON 1 : INTRODUCTION

BIG IDEA

We are not that different from the early church. God's church gives us life when it is full of his Spirit, power, and love.

BIBLE VERSES

Acts 20:7–12 (NIV)

SUPPLIES

For the opening activity:

- Bingo cards <https://bingocardgenerator.com/print-bingo-cards/>
- Markers
- Bingo Number generator app <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/bingo-number-generator/id607450375>
- Prize bucket

For the teaching:

- A suitcase
- In the suitcase: paper skeleton, some sort of plastic fish, fake money, teddy bear (or if you have it a volunteer in a bear suit running through the group would be amazing!), pillow, sleep mask

OPENING ACTIVITY

BINGO!

(simple, physically distanced, and requires listening, which plays right into the teaching)

TEACHING

Have you ever told your parents or your friends a story and known that they weren't actually listening? Or have you ever excitedly told your friends and family something important to you only to find out later that they forgot? How did that make you feel? *(Allow for a couple answers.)*

[Share a personal story of a time that you forgot about something a friend shared with you.]

The truth is that we will not remember every story shared with us or every moment of our lives. Did you know that we experience the world in a series of pictures, sounds, and feelings that go by at light speed in our brains? In case you didn't know, that is 186,282 miles per second!

With our brains processing information at that speed, we are bound to miss some things, especially when we aren't living through it. For the next five weeks we are going to celebrate some of the things we may have missed while we were safe at home, and we are going to discuss some amazing stories in the Bible that we may have missed.

In case *(tap on the suitcase and open it)* you missed it, there are stories in the Bible about:

- ***(paper skeleton)*** The dead leaving their tombs and going to town after Jesus is resurrected
- ***(fish and fake money)*** Jesus asking the disciples to pull money from the mouth of a fish they had just caught
- ***(teddy bear)*** Some kids making fun of a man of God because he is bald, and then bears attack them.

All of those are great, but today we are going to touch on something I think all of us can relate to: ***(pillow and sleep mask)*** getting bored and falling asleep when we are supposed to be paying attention. ***(LONG pause as you look about the room trying to catch someone bored or asleep.)***

Before we get started, let's pray. ***(Pray)***

TEACHING CONT.

Let's take a look at God's word. Paul at this point had been preaching everywhere! People would gather to hear him speak of the Good News, of Jesus Christ, of God's great love for them. And in Acts 20:7-12, we find him in Troas (troh-as | modern day Turkey) preaching. Let's read verses 7 and 8:

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. (NIV)

Paul was well known and there probably would have been a lot of people at this meeting. It would have been a room full of people, hazy from the lamp-smoke, stifling. I can almost feel the heat, the stickiness of the room.

Verse 9 begins, "Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus..." Eutychus (YOO-tuh-kuhs) is between 7-14 years old. Maybe, in a sticky room full of people, he was just trying to get some fresh air?

Let's continue reading:

Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

Imagine this: Paul is talking on and on about Jesus, the son of God, who taught about the kingdom of God, who healed the sick and cared for the poor, who died on a cross taking all our sin so that we could simply be with God, who then rose from the dead and promised us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul is sharing the good news! And this boy falls out of a window and dies. This could have a tragic ending, but God. God chose this moment to demonstrate his loving kindness to all. The power of God is working

through Paul as he throws himself at the young man, and God resuscitates him. God brings him back to life!

What do they do next? They go back in the room, eat together, and listen as Paul teaches about God's great love for them. As morning came, they went home, with Eutychus alive, greatly comforted.

What is it like to feel greatly comforted or, as The Message translation says, "full of life"? Our world, not unlike the early church, is confusing and stressful. Not unlike the early church, we come together to hear God's word and be encouraged. God's power is at work in his people, in his church, just as his power was at work in Paul. We come together, as did the followers of Jesus in Troas, to share the stories of faith and pray for each other.

Is God's word a comfort to you? Does God's power fill you with life? Is God's church an encouragement for you?

Let's break into our small groups to discuss and pray for each other.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. After being apart for so long, how has it been coming back to church and youth?
2. How do you feel like we, as the church in the 21st century, are like the early church?
3. How have you been comforted by God's word? If you haven't, are there stories from the Bible that you feel connected to? Why or why not?
4. God's power is given to us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Have there been times in your life when you have seen God's power at work?
5. Are you, as a follower of Jesus, asking God to fill you with his Spirit? How can you be an encouragement to your brothers and sisters in Christ? How have you been encouraged by other believers?
6. Pray for each other.

LESSON 2 : GRADUATION

BIG IDEA

BIBLE VERSES

SUPPLIES

OPENING ACTIVITY

God sees the heart and continuously pursues us!

Numbers 22:21-35

For the opening activity: 2 options

- #1—DYM Crowd Charades <https://www.downloadyouthministry.com/crowd-charades-graduation-edition>
- #2—3 slips of paper and a pen for each senior

For the teaching:

- A suitcase
- In the suitcase: donkey (from Shrek if you have one, can find one, or print one)

#1: DYM—Graduation Crowd Charades

#2: Two Truths and a Lie

Have each person or just the seniors (depending on the size of the group), write two truths and lie on a slip of paper with their name. Read them aloud. Have the rest of the group vote on which is the lie. After two or three guesses the person reveals which is the lie.

TEACHING

We are continuing our series of Bible stories we may have missed. Today we want to talk about Balaam (bal-ah-am'), where God uses a talking donkey (*pull donkey out of the suitcase*) to check a man's heart. Sometimes God likes to use the extraordinary to get our attention and invite us into a relationship with him. Let's pray before we get into it.

[Share a time that God used an extraordinary experience to draw you closer to him.]

There are two big differences between me and Balaam:

1. Balaam didn't actually believe in the God of the Israelites
2. I'm not famous.

Balaam was known as being "gifted" in the art of divination. He made a living by interpreting dreams, casting spells, using sorcery and trickery to predict the future. He was willing to believe in many gods to make a buck. God used Balaam's fame for his own purposes, to encourage and protect his people—which succeeded. God used Balaam's desirous gift, believing he could commune, hear from and speak to a god, to continually invite him into a relationship with the one true God—which unfortunately did not succeed.

Let's get to it.

The Israelites, God's people, had crushed the Amorites and were now camped near the Moabites. The Moabites got scared, and rightly so. Balak, the king of Moab, knows of Balaam's "gift," tells his messengers to get Balaam to have Balaam curse the Israelites. Balaam tells the messengers to wait while he gets an answer from the Lord.

The Lord says no.

They send more messengers, fancier messengers, which let Balaam know that the Moabites would pay dearly to have him curse the Israelites.

TEACHING CONT.

Balaam continues to ask the Lord. The Lord says no—until he doesn't. The Lord knew Balaam's heart. The reason he kept asking was not out of a desire to do the Lord's will, but out of a desire to hear a different answer. Balaam really wanted that money.

Sometimes God lets us make the wrong choice if we are determined to make that choice.

Enter donkey...

Numbers 22:21–35 (NIV) says:

Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite officials. But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road.

Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat the donkey again.

Then the angel of the Lord moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff. Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"

Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now."

The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?"



"No," he said.

Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

The angel of the Lord asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it."

Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back."

The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you." So Balaam went with Balak's officials.

Do you have questions? I have questions!

1. Why was the Lord angry?
2. Why did God have an angel appear to the donkey and not Balaam?
3. Is Balaam really repentant?
4. If the Lord was angry, why does he still let Balaam go to the Moabites?
5. And last but not least, if God can get a donkey to talk, why does he need to use Balaam?!

Here are my thoughts, knowing God operates from a place of love as he is love himself.

1. The Lord is angry that Balaam won't open his eyes to God being the one true God. God can see Balaam's heart, and the Lord knows that he hasn't really changed his ways. Balaam is still looking for the easiest, most infamous way to make a buck.
2. When given the ability to speak, the donkey rebukes Balaam with, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have

I been in the habit of doing this to you?" Balaam was so set on going to Balak, the Moabite king, so hungry for the payout, that he didn't trust in the animal that had faithfully delivered him from town to town. The Lord wanted Balaam to make the right choice, gave him multiple chances to turn around and deny the Moabite king. God keeps giving Balaam chance after chance and he was willing to use a talking donkey to do it.

3. Unfortunately, we don't see that Balaam is truly repentant. Balaam is mentioned later in scripture as one who "rushed for a profit" and "loves the wages of wickedness"
4. God used Balaam's greed and fame to bless the Israelites rather than curse them.
5. Balaam is continually invited into a relationship with the one true God—the God of Israel, the God that protects and provides for his people, the God who actually speaks with him! Sure, God could use a donkey communicate with his people, but he wants Balaam's heart to be changed. He wants Balaam to come into an everlasting relationship with Him.

What about you? Are there things that you have continually asked from the Lord, knowing his answer, and hoping it will change? Are you so set on making a wrong choice? Do you need a donkey to rebuke you? Do you want to respond to God's invitation of love?

Let's break into our small groups to discuss and pray for each other.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Does anyone have an extraordinary experience of God's great love for them? It doesn't have to be a talking donkey. It can be an answered prayer, healing, vision, or overwhelming peace, generosity, or patience when you felt completely empty.
2. Do you ever feel like Balaam—saying what is right but in your heart wishing for something else? Can you bring that to God right now? (Give students time to silently pray.) Remind them of Psalm 103:8—"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and rich in love." If it is appropriate for your group, ask them to share how they feel after giving this heart issue to God.
3. Do you have a "donkey" in your life—someone trusted that may be able to more clearly see how God is working in your life? Do you listen when they give you guidance? Why or why not?
4. Do you know of God's relentless love for you? How have you responded? Would you like to respond to God's invitation today?
5. Pray for each other.

LESSON 3 : EASTER

BIG IDEA

The interior work of God in our hearts will overflow into who we are and what we do.

BIBLE VERSES

John 19:38–42; 3:1–21

SUPPLIES

During check-in:

- Jar of jelly beans
- Slips of paper
- Pens

For the opening activity:

- Plastic eggs (put something inside them for a little weight)
- Plastic cups — large enough for the egg not to get stuck (no-contact)
- Prize bucket

For the teaching:

- A stool (or something to help the view)
- A suitcase
- In the suitcase: whipped cream (helpful hint: open this before teaching so you don't have to wrestle with the safety tab), cup, tablecloth

OPENING ACTIVITY

Have a big jar of jelly beans at the check-in table. As they check-in, students write their best guess for how many jelly beans are in the jar. During announcements, we will award the person with the closest guess the jar of jelly beans, which will be picked up at the end of the time together.

Egg toss—Have the students get into pairs. Give each student a cup for tossing and catching the egg and give each pair one egg. Have them line up (6 feet apart) and put their other hand behind their back. Each successful throw/catch they need to take one step back. The last pair standing wins a prize from the prize bucket.

TEACHING

Alternate Game: Bad Joke Battle Easter Edition from
Download Youth Ministry
<https://www.downloadyouthministry.com/bad-joke-battle-easter-edition>

We have students stand up if they like option 1 and stay seated if they like option 2.

(Download Youth Ministry has A LOT of Easter games available.)

Let's start with prayer.

In case you missed it, we all celebrated Easter at home this year. What are some of your favorite Easter traditions? *(Give students time to respond.)*

In case you missed it, we all celebrated Easter at home this year. What are some of your favorite Easter traditions? (Give students time to respond.)

One of the most basic things we learn as children in the church is that Jesus died for us so that we can be reconciled to God, now and for eternity. John 3:16 anyone? (Allow students time to recite the verse.)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Can anyone tell me what John 3:17 says?

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Easter is when we celebrate Jesus' triumph over death. Hope that God can and will save us from our own selves. Hope that there is more. I need that hope. I cling to that hope. My hope in Jesus is what gets me through the day and gives me purpose.

TEACHING CONT.

The verses in John 3:16–17 are Jesus' words of hope to a man that was looking for something more: a man that was following the laws, knew all the rules, was promoted within the ranks of the Jewish council, and came to Jesus knowing that He offered more. Nicodemus.

This is a man some of you probably already know. The part we miss is the end of his story.

Let's start at the beginning, from John 3:1–21, partially paraphrased:

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Jewish ruling council comes to Jesus at night. Nicodemus knows that Jesus is special, that he comes from God because he performs miracles only God can do. Jesus begins to speak to him and the disciples of being born again. Jesus says several times that no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. Nicodemus doesn't understand this. How can we be born again? To answer him, Jesus goes into the famous verses we all know:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Nicodemus knows of Jesus but he doesn't truly know Jesus until this encounter. Nicodemus goes looking for more. More clarity? More hope? How many of us know of Jesus, know of God, but refuse to go to him for more?

Jesus gives Nicodemus the keys to the kingdom. Nicodemus is a logical man, a student of the law. God sees Nicodemus and meets him where he is at—in his logical arguments and Jewish tradition of learning. Jesus tells him to be born again. Be born of the Spirit. Believe in the Son of God. Live in truth. Live in the light of God. In doing so, he will see and experience the kingdom of God.

And what does Nicodemus do after this? Does he experience the kingdom of God? We see in the next verses that Jesus and the disciples go into the countryside, but we don't know exactly where Nicodemus goes from here. Here is what we do know though. The next time we see Nicodemus is in John 7.

Some of the Jewish people are arguing about who Jesus is and the Pharisees are getting nervous. They want Jesus arrested. They want the mob calmed. They want the leader condemned. Nicodemus, still a Pharisee (a leader in the Jewish council), simply asks, ***“Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?”*** Nicodemus quietly but firmly comes to Jesus' defense, using the Pharisee's own laws to hold off the arrest.

What do you think this tells us about Nicodemus? *(Give a few moments for students to answer.)*

And last but not least we see Nicodemus in John 19.

Jesus was crucified. His body left on the cross, broken and bruised. Jesus' disciples were scared. Joseph, one of Jesus' disciples, asks Pilate for permission to take the body away. They want to properly bury Jesus. Joseph comes with Nicodemus to get Jesus' body. Here it is in John 19: 28–42:

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish

TEACHING CONT.

burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Nicodemus was still a Pharisee, a leader of the Jewish Council, the group of people that condemned Jesus, and brought him to the Romans for trial and crucifixion. But Nicodemus was also a man that had an experience of Jesus.

If you have been here the past two weeks, you know that I always have something special from our case for our teaching.

(Take out the tablecloth and set it on the ground. Put the stool on the tablecloth. Pull out the cup and put it on the stool. Last, pull out the can of whipped cream.)

Here is what I think happened with Nicodemus after his experience with God.

(Read this next part while you slowly spray the whipped cream into the cup—to overflowing.)

Nicodemus watched and learned and grew to understand who God was through Jesus. Slowly Jesus grew in his heart. He couldn't help but quietly defend Jesus when he saw the Pharisees setting him up for arrest. He couldn't stand by while Jesus' body hung lifeless on the cross. God was working on Nicodemus's heart. His love overflowed into who Nicodemus was and what he did.

Do you look for God? In your everyday life, are you looking for God's work? God's love? Are you willing to ask God for more when you don't understand or are unsure of the way forward? Are you willing to grow and learn as God teaches you new things?

Let's break into our small groups to discuss and pray for each other.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How do you know Jesus? Nicodemus knew Jesus as a teacher and a miracle-worker. Who is Jesus to you?
2. Are you willing to ask God for more? What do you need more of today?
3. As God shows you new things, are you teachable? Are you willing to grow and change as God opens your eyes to his kingdom at work around you?
4. Have you ever experienced an overflow of God's love? Was there something that you just couldn't stop yourself from doing because of God's love?
5. Pray for each other.

LESSON 4 : JUSTICE MOVEMENT

BIG IDEA

God uses what society thinks of as weak to do mighty things.

BIBLE VERSES

John 19:38–42; 3:1–21

SUPPLIES

For the teaching:

- A suitcase
- In the suitcase: tent peg, mallet

OPENING ACTIVITY

Never Have I Ever

Just have everyone put a finger down for every one that is true for them. After 10 statements the person/people with the most fingers left up is the winner.

- Never have I ever cheated on a test.
- Never have I ever cried watching Homeward Bound.
- Never have I ever licked a frozen pole.
- Never have I ever had gum in my hair.
- Never have I ever taken a horrible picture on picture day.
- Never have I ever been a bully.
- Never have I ever wanted to be a superhero.
- Never have I ever been scared of the dark.
- Never have I ever had trouble sleeping after watching a scary movie.
- Never have I ever stayed up all night.
- Never have I ever been to a sleepover.
- Never have I ever had a birthday party.
- Never have I ever cried at school
- Never have I ever sang on a stage.
- Never have I ever performed in a talent show.

- Never have I ever killed ants with a magnifying glass.
- Never have I ever dropped Mentos into Coke or Pepsi.
- Never have I ever eaten something on a dare.
- Never have I ever used the excuse "my dog ate my homework."
- Never have I ever believed my toys had feelings.
- Never have I ever watched Blue's Clues.
- Never have I ever been terrified of a theme park ride.
- Never have I ever been to a haunted house.
- Never have I ever dressed up as a zombie for Halloween.
- Never have I ever been sent to the principal's office.
- Never have I ever built a fort with blankets.
- Never have I ever fallen off a bike.
- Never have I ever played video games all day.
- Never have I ever stolen money from a sibling's piggy bank.
- Never have I ever wished I had bunk beds.
- Never have I ever played Pokemon.
- Never have I ever been on a family road trip.
- Never have I ever named a stuffed animal.
- Never have I ever used training wheels.
- Never have I ever eaten only candy for dinner.
- Never have I ever stayed in character all day.
- Never have I ever lied about being related to someone on TV.
- Never have I ever written notes on the desk to use during a test.
- Never have I ever tried to sign a permission slip for my parents.
- Never have I ever stolen a friend's story and pretended it happened to me.
- Never have I ever thrown something out of the school bus window.
- Never have I ever lied about staying after school and gone somewhere else.
- Never have I ever hopped seats on the school bus.

TEACHING

This is week 4 of our series, In Case You Missed It.

How many of you watch the news? Or maybe you just read the headlines from social media?

In case you missed it, there has been a lot of talk about the Black Lives Matter movement. This is not a political issue, but a human rights issue. As Christians, we do believe that all lives matter, but we see Jesus standing up for the oppressed over and over again. Yes, Jesus cared about the Pharisees, Romans, Jews, and Gentiles, but we see him standing up for women, children, widows, the poor, lepers, and Samaritans—the outcasts. He specifically fights for the oppressed. We should love as Jesus loves: caring for all but standing up for the oppressed. This includes our black brothers and sisters who are still fighting for everyday freedoms. This includes the Indigenous women that have been disappearing for years. This includes the Latino children being kept in detention centers with no representation and little support. This includes the starving in Yemen and the child brides in India. And probably so many more we don't see. As we learn, we grow, and we represent Jesus well by standing up for the oppressed. In the future we can learn some practical tips on how we can stand up for the marginalized and oppressed. For now, let's look at simply helping promote their stories.

Today's missed biblical story includes an oppressed people group and some mighty women.

Let's pray.

We are looking at the book of Judges today.

Othniel was the first judge of Israel. Then Ehud, the second judge of Israel, led the people in driving out their enemies. When Ehud died, the people began to turn away from God again.

The Lord allowed Israel's enemy, Jabin, to defeat them and rule over them—to oppress them. It seems that Jabin's way of oppressing the people was to take most of their crops and their sheep and cattle. Jabin's iron chariots pulled by swift horses would simply run over anyone who tried to stop

them. The people were suffering and they turned to the Lord. They prayed to God for help.

True to the cycle of the times, the Lord sent a judge to save the people—the prophetess Deborah. Deborah is the only judge described as a prophet. A prophetess is a woman whom God chooses to convey his special messages to others. Since God told Deborah what to say, the people wisely went to her to have their quarrels settled. The Bible says that Deborah held court under a palm tree.

God told Deborah to have Barak gather and lead an army to defeat Jabin, the Canaanite king, and his captain Sisera. God promised that Sisera would come to fight, but Barak would win. Barak agreed to go only if Deborah would accompany him. Deborah agreed to go along but she pointed out that a man would lead in the battle, but a woman would get the credit for killing Sisera.

At that time, the Canaanites had a definite technological edge over the Israelites. With their iron chariots the Canaanites could control the plains. When Sisera heard about the Israelite army, he assembled his chariots and moved up the narrow plain beside the river to meet the opposition.

Again, Deborah promised victory, and Barak led his troops to meet the Canaanite army. The Lord defeated Sisera and the Canaanite army. He brought a big rain (Judges 5:4–5). Their heavy iron chariots bogged down in the mud. Sisera himself left his chariot and ran away on foot. The enemy troops fled back down the valley, but Barak’s men destroyed them before they could get inside the city walls.

Sisera ran in panic trying to find refuge. There had been some friendly relations with the family of Jael so he made his way to her tent. This woman invited Sisera into her tent and told him to go to sleep. She gave him a warm cover. When he asked for water, she gave him milk instead. All of this would have helped him sleep soundly. During the night, Jael used a hammer to drive a tent peg through his skull. (***Pull the hammer and tent peg from the suitcase.***)

TEACHING CONT.

The Lord brought the rain that allowed defeat of the army and freedom for the Israelites, but victory over the enemy was usually not considered complete until the leaders were eliminated. When Barak finally tracked Sisera down, Jael showed him the dead commander. Deborah's prediction had come true: Barak lost the honor of vanquishing his chief rival. Sisera had died at the hands of a woman—in that culture a disgraceful death.

God defeats an army with a rain storm! Deborah leads the Israelites to freedom and peace for 40 years! And Jael claims victory by defeating the captain of the Canaanite army!

Look at it this way:

- Anyone looking at the Israelites would see a weak nation.
- Anyone looking at Deborah would see a woman in charge of a desolate nation.
- Anyone looking at Jael would see a simple wife that runs a welcoming home.
- God uses what society thinks of as weak to do mighty things—like setting an entire nation free.

Have you ever felt weak or alone or not important? Have you ever been oppressed? Do you believe that God can still use you to do something mighty?

In our small groups we are going to spend a little time talking through this, but we are going to spend a lot of time praying for the oppressed and as the Lord leads.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Is this a biblical story you have heard before—the story of Deborah, Jael, and the tent peg?

2. Have you ever felt weak or alone or unimportant? How do you think the Lord sees you? Do believe that God can still use you to do something mighty?

3. Have you ever been oppressed? (Definition of oppression: prolonged cruel or unjust treatment, being subject to unjust treatment, mental pressure or distress) How can we pray for you?

4. Pray for the oppressed. Be sensitive to your group's emotional and spiritual maturity in these matters. Approach with love and care. Here are a couple of issues and people you can pray for:

- Systematic racism
- Indigenous peoples, specifically women
- Latino families separated and children kept in detention centers
- The people of Yemen
- Sex trafficking
- Refugees across the world

LESSON 5 : SPRING BREAK

BIG IDEA

BIBLE VERSES

SUPPLIES

OPENING ACTIVITY

Vanity—how do you get caught?

2 Samuel 18:6–33; 14:25–26

For the teaching:

- A suitcase
- In the suitcase: a wig

1, 2, 3, Get to Know Me

Have players pick numbers from 1–5. For each number have students answer questions about themselves. Play for three rounds, beginning with more silly questions, leading to deeper questions.

Round 1:

- What's the most ridiculous way you've hurt yourself?
- What's the funniest thing you've seen a kid do?
- What's your worst/funniest bug-related story?
- Is a hot dog a sandwich?
- What animal would be the most terrifying if it could speak?
-

Round 2:

What is your favorite activity to do with your family?

Where is your favorite place to spend time alone?

What makes you laugh?

What is your favorite movie or TV series?

If you could do anything for a whole day what would you do?

TEACHING

Round 3:

- What is something you couldn't live without?
- What is something you're afraid of?
- What is your dream job?
- What's your favorite childhood memory?
- What's one way you would want to change the world?

(Share a story about a time that you were more worried about how you looked doing something than what you were actually doing.)

We all have that friend or are that friend sometimes, right? The one that might nail a dance on TikTok then turn around and trip over nothing. Or maybe the one that refuses to drive with the windows down because his hair looks just perfect that day. Or sometimes, we just get so caught up in trying to perfect our look that we neglect to focus on submitting and perfecting our heart.

In this session of In Case You Missed It we are going to look at a young man that got a little too caught up in his looks (*pull the wig out of the suitcase*) with dire consequences.

Let's pray.

Today's Biblical excerpt is from 2 Samuel, and it's about Absalom.

Absalom was one of King David's sons. He and his dad have quite a difficult relationship. Absalom kills Amnon, his oldest brother, as payback for an awful crime he committed. Then Absalom has to flee the city. He lives in exile for three years before Joab, one of King David's captains, retrieves him.

TEACHING CONT.

It is another two years before the king will see him. In this time of living in Jerusalem, but not necessarily on good terms with his father, we find this statement about Absalom in 2 Samuel 14:25–26:

In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him. Whenever he cut the hair of his head—he used to cut his hair once a year because it became too heavy for him—he would weigh it, and its weight was two hundred shekels by the royal standard.

Absalom was a good-looking guy! Not only that, he was of royal descent on both sides, for his mother was a king's daughter. Over the next four years, Absalom uses his good looks, his charm, and his natural charisma to woo the people of Israel. He gains such popularity that he is able to go to Hebron (where David became the King of Judah) and plot a coup to overthrow his father! Absalom declares himself king and marches towards Jerusalem.

Absalom has such a following that King David flees for his life and Absalom takes over the city of Jerusalem. Absalom starts to get adverse advice on how to move forward. Some are telling him to immediately pursue David with a small force and kill him. Others want him to recruit a large army to attack David. All the while, spies are sending messages to David in exile.

Absalom decides to gather his forces and attack with a large army. David gathers reinforcements for a battle with his son. And this is where we pick up the story in 2 Samuel 18:

David's army marched out of the city to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. There Israel's troops were routed by David's men, and the casualties that day were great—twenty thousand men. The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest swallowed up more men that day than the sword.

Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's hair (his beautiful, gorgeous, written about in scripture hair) got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.

When one of the men saw what had happened, he told Joab, "I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree."

Joab said to the man who had told him this, "What! You saw him? Why didn't you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels of silver and a warrior's belt."

But the man replied, "Even if a thousand shekels were weighed out into my hands, I would not lay a hand on the king's son. In our hearing the king commanded you and (the other commanders), 'Protect the young man Absalom for my sake!'"

Joab said, "I'm not going to wait like this for you." So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom's heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree. And ten of Joab's armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him.

Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them. They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes.

The pride of Absalom's good looks, his long locks, became his greatest defeat. Absalom had everything he ever wanted, his father's throne, fortune, and power, yet he tragically dies because of his ridiculous need to look good while doing it. Absalom's greatest sin was not taking the gifts he was given and submitting them to God. His heart was hardened and his actions prove him to be handsome, selfish, and scheming.

TEACHING CONT.

Are you more concerned with how others perceive you than how your heart looks to God? Do you have a gift that needs to be submitted to God? Would you say that you are more focused on getting ahead in life, making money, having a great relationship, trending on TikTok, or going viral on YouTube than you are focused on building a relationship with God, listening for his voice, and slowing down to simply be with Him?

Let's talk about the things that might "tangle" us up in our small groups.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Do you feel like you are sometimes more concerned with how people might perceive you rather than becoming more of who you truly are? What things help you to turn that around and focus on God transforming your heart?
2. Absalom was proud of his looks and particularly his hair. In the end, that pride ended up being what defeated him. How do you keep from being tangled in the branches?
3. Do you have a gift that needs to be submitted to God? How can you submit your gift to join God in what he is doing around you?
4. Pray for each other.

LESSON 6 : SPORTS / SHOWS

BIG IDEA

God cares about the little things.

BIBLE VERSES

2 Kings 6:1-7

SUPPLIES

For the teaching:

- A suitcase
- In the suitcase: an axe (preferably a kids' toy - not real!), or you can use your phone

OPENING ACTIVITY

DYM Crowd Charades - Sports Edition

<https://www.downloadyouthministry.com/crowd-charades-sports-edition>

TEACHING

Today is our last week in our series, In Case You Missed It. If this is your first time here since we started this series, we have been going over some stories in the Bible that sometimes get overlooked. My personal favorite was the story where the prophet Balaam angrily argues with a donkey, and the donkey wins.

I'm going to pray, and then we will get started. *[Pray.]*

[Insert personal story about how God cared about something in your life that you saw as small.]

God doesn't just care about the BIG things in your life; he also REALLY cares about the little things too. Today we are going to be reading a short story from 2 Kings and discussing God's desire to show you his BIG love in the little things of your life.

2 Kings 6:1–7

The company of the prophets said to Elisha, "Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to meet."

And he said, "Go."

Then one of them said, "Won't you please come with your servants?"

"I will," Elisha replied.

And he went with them. They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axehead fell into the water. "Oh no, my lord!" he cried out. "It was borrowed!"

The man of God asked, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. "Lift it out," he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it.

I think that's CRAZY! Imagine this for a second: ***(Pull the axe or phone out from the suitcase.)***

You're hanging out at the lake with some friends, or with your family, and you accidentally drop your phone or your iPod or your Nintendo Switch into the lake. You'd probably start freaking out because that costs a lot of money and you know your parents are going to be so frustrated. Your friend walks up and simply asks, "Where did you drop it?" She then tosses a stick in that direction and YOUR PHONE FLOATS TO THE TOP.

Tell me you wouldn't be like, "Whaaaaaat the?!"

Reactions to the supernatural in the everyday are often varied. We may offer thanks to God: "Thank you God for saving my phone!" Or we may question, "Why did God choose now to help me with this little thing?" Or simply, "Did God save my phone so that I wouldn't have to purchase a new one like the guy that lost a borrowed axehead?" If we are really feeling it, we might even ask, "Did God allow this to happen because he wanted the people gathered around to see a miracle?" Maybe! We don't know exactly why God performed this miracle.

TEACHING CONT.

What I see in this story is a God who cares deeply for his children, a God who not only cared for Elisha and all the people with him, but cared for an axe. That may look like a silly little detail, but God cared about it.

Sometimes we view God as someone who we go to with BIG problems or BIG concerns, because that's all we think he cares about. We will go to God whenever we're in emotional pain, perhaps over the loss of a friend or family member. Maybe we got to him when we're in physical pain due to an injury or a bad sickness. Those things may be what moves us to ask the Lord for a miracle because we feel like those are BIG things that God really cares about; and those are big things, and God does care.

What we tend to forget is that God also cares about what we would view as little things. God cares about the fact that you've misplaced your favorite book. He cares about the phone you dropped in the lake. God cares that you're upset because someone said something hurtful to you, or that your younger sibling broke an item you love. He cares about what you need, what you want, and what you love. God cares about you, period.

As we move into our small groups, I'm going to have you each take a few minutes to ask God what some things in your life are that you've cared a lot about but haven't given over to God because you feel these things are too small or too unimportant for God. And you're going to have an opportunity to lay those things before God, because he cares so deeply for each of you.

Let's pray and split into your small groups.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What is something in your life that would drive you crazy if you lost it?

2. Can you share a time when you have seen God move in the little things in your life?

3. Are there little things in your life that maybe you're holding onto because you don't feel like they are important enough for God, or you feel like he doesn't care about them?

- *Feel free to take a minute of silence and encourage the students to ask God to highlight some things*

4. Pray for each other.

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.

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 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.

Why This Topic?

We want to thank Amy Fletcher and the amazing people of Vineyard Community Church in Overland Park, KS for sharing this curriculum with us. Their vision in this curriculum is to revisit some of the things teens have missed due to the pandemic, and look at them through the lens of similar biblical stories. We hope this helps you pastor your teens as they continue to navigate an uncertain world, with faith in a loving and faithful God.

About the Author

Amy Fletcher

Amy Fletcher serves as the Youth Pastor for 5th-12th grade at Vineyard Community Church in Overland Park, KS and leads Project Timothy MidWest South. Amy and her husband, Robert, have been married for 15 years. They have a 13 year old son, Ethan, and an 8 year old daughter, Zoey. Amy graduated from Sterling College in 2003 with a degree in Christian Education, focus on Youth Ministry. She has served in youth ministry at several churches since her graduation and is facing new and wonderful challenges having her own kid in youth! Amy loves encouraging students to find their true identity in God and learning how to walk daily with God. In her free time, Amy loves playing board games, watching shows, reading books, and eating good food.