

**WEEK 4**  
**LESSON GUIDE**

**MORE TO THE STORY**

**BIG IDEA**

We can be part of God's story.

**BIBLE**

John 14:12–21; Galatians 5:13–14, 22–25; Romans 13:8–10

**ABOUT THIS WEEK**

When we hear a great story, we want to share it with others so they can experience it with us. This week, we'll hear some of Jesus' words to his disciples as he prepared to leave them. These final words helped encourage the disciples as they prepared to continue what Jesus started on earth, showing us how **we can be part of God's story.**

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

**ACTIVITY | Amazing Race**

- Welcome to our final week of More to the Story! For the last three weeks, we've discussed how God is writing an amazing story, and we're all invited to participate. But like all the best adventures, this story is intended to be experienced together.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, set up seven stations, each with a picture of one of the [seven wonders of the natural world behind them](#). To play, have teenagers break into teams of seven. Have each team choose one wonder of the world they want to travel to, but they can each go to only one. Every player on the team needs to choose one wonder. When the game leader says go, the race begins. Each site has a challenge to complete in under a minute. Have an adult leader at each station to set up and time the challenge. The team that completes all stations the fastest or the most number of stations in the allotted time wins. The order of the events doesn't matter. This is intended to feel a bit chaotic. Have some fun with it. Choose some minute-to-win-style challenges that work for the culture of your group. Here are a few to get your imagination going.*
  - **Northern Lights:** *Each contestant will begin the game with one strand of uncooked spaghetti. They will put the dry noodles in their mouth and have sixty seconds to try and pick up as many raw pieces of penne pasta as possible from one paper plate and transfer them to a paper plate. They can only use the spaghetti noodles in their mouths.*
  - **Grand Canyon:** *For this game, ask each participant to invite a friend to help them. The object of this game is for the player to wrap another person up in an entire roll of toilet paper in one minute. If the toilet paper rips, the game is over. The person who wraps the fastest wins!*
  - **Mount Everest:** *Give each player a single stack of 36 [plastic cups](#). They have one minute to stack all the cups into a pyramid and then unstack them, making a single column again.*
  - **Paricutin:** *Get two different teams to play against each other. Give each player a pair of dice and have them invite a friend to help them. The player will roll the dice as many times as possible in a minute while their friend adds up the total for each roll. After one minute, the person with the highest combined total wins. The loser needs to play another team. If they lose a second time in a*

row, tell them another way to win is to lose twice and have them go to their next station.

- **Harbor of Rio de Janeiro:** Using one hand, each contestant will try to keep one balloon in the air for one minute. If this is too easy, add two or more balloons! They can't rest a balloon on their body. It has to keep moving.
- **Victoria Falls:** Each player will place a straw in their mouth, and, as they use only one hand to hold the straw, they will suction to transfer a pile of twenty-five M&Ms from one plate to another in under one minute.
- Great Barrier Reef: Fill two bins or buckets with Legos. Players must stack at least 45 legos in 60 seconds.
- A lot of that felt out of your control, right? You didn't choose where you were headed and what challenges you would face. You decided to say yes to these adventures before you knew what you were saying "yes" to. Some of you may love the element of surprise. You may live for the unexpected, but others love predictability and clarity.
- When we begin to follow Jesus, we agree to let him lead us and rewrite our story, but that can feel unnerving. What are we getting ourselves into when we say yes to following Jesus?

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
  - **If you had to compete in a worldwide race with one friend, who would you pick, and why?**
  - **Has your story ever taken a turn you didn't plan for? How did you respond?**
  - ★ **Have there been times you were going through something difficult and wish you had a guide? What was happening, and what type of guidance would have been helpful?**

## QUESTION | Not My Storyline

- **Have you ever gotten into a situation you were unsure of?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Invite teenagers to turn to their neighbor and tell a story about a time they were wrapped up in a story they didn't want to be a part of. Allow a few students to share their stories.
- We've all had stories unfold we didn't plan for. Sometimes, we can plan our adventures and craft the stories we want to write. We can plan how something is going to go and execute it flawlessly.
- Sometimes, we have an idea of how our story will play out, but the outcome differs from what we had in mind. What would it look like to have a guide that can help when we don't know what to do next?

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

## SCRIPTURE | John 14:12-21

- Jesus' followers had their lives turned upside down when they witnessed Jesus dying on the cross. They thought the story was over and didn't know what to do next. So, they were shocked to see Jesus again, alive and well, after he rose from the grave.
- I imagine many moments when Jesus' followers thought, "Um, what's happening here? This is not what I expected." I wonder if this is why, not long after Jesus was arrested, he shared these words of comfort, encouragement, and empowerment with his friends.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read John 14:12-21.
- When Jesus shared these words, he knew he would soon be crucified. At this moment, he knew these words wouldn't make much sense to his friends, but he hoped they could look back on them when he and their story took some unexpected turns. With God, there's always more to the story. Jesus told his disciples,

“You will do greater things than me.” Whoa. That’s a big deal! Think about that: we as a community will do more incredible things than Jesus.

- Jesus wanted them to know that his life was just the start of something new. This was part of God’s big story and will continue to write. God was making all things new and chose to use people to help unleash this new world Jesus had made possible.
- This seems like too much, though, right? It looks impossible for them... and that’s because it is. This is why Jesus reminded them that no matter what happened, God would help them. The same Spirit that guided him would advocate for, support them, and not leave them alone. He promised the Holy Spirit would live in them to comfort, guide, and empower them.
- This was a gift because it meant the pressure wasn’t on the disciples—and the pressure isn’t on us—to write our own stories. We get to rely on the Holy Spirit in God’s story of restoration and reconciliation.
- As we learn to trust the Holy Spirit, we live out the beautiful story Jesus started and invite others into it as well. It becomes the lens through which we see everyone and everything.
  - Instead of only seeing hopelessness, we can see hope.
  - Instead of only seeing brokenness, we can see restoration.
  - Instead of only seeing darkness, we can see glimmers of light breaking through.
- When we know God’s story—God’s plan for people and the world to flourish, we’ll be empowered to live out what the Bible says and trust the Spirit is leading us to create stories of restoration. We may not always know what’s around every turn. We may not be able to control or predict how the story unfolds, but we can trust the Holy Spirit, knowing that God is at work and inviting us into what God is doing in the world.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - ★ **What would you feel if you were the disciples hearing what Jesus said the night of his arrest?**
  - **What surprises you about one of Jesus’ last teachings to his disciples?**

## STORY | Panel: A Time I Felt Guided by God

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, ask for a panel of volunteers to share about a time their story took an unexpected turn and how they felt God’s guidance. Even when things didn’t go according to their plan, how did they see that they were now part of God’s great story? How did they sense God leading them? What’s changed in the way they trust God’s Spirit in their life?*

## SCRIPTURE | Galatians 5:13–14,22–25

- Imagine if you were about to go on an adventure to see the Seven Wonders of the World, and all you had were some Crocs, baggy sweats, and Redbull. You might be able to do it, but it may not be the best idea. We’re not completely unprepared when we choose to be part of God’s story. God gives us everything we need to navigate the adventure of our life, not in our power, but with the power of the same Spirit that guided Jesus in his life.
- Last week, we started looking at a section of a letter from an Early Church leader named Paul. People were trying to understand what it looked like for them to be part of the new story God had started with Jesus, and this is what he had to say.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Galatians 5:13–14,22–25.*
- There was division in the Early Church because some people thought everyone needed to live by the Old Testament Laws and customs to be a part of God’s story. But Paul reminded them they didn’t earn their salvation by keeping rules. They’re made new and invited into God’s story, not because of what they’ve

done but because of Jesus' death and resurrection.

- This doesn't mean rules are wrong. Guidelines and boundaries are important. But Paul wants us to see that following the rules doesn't lead to us being loved. We learn to trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit because we know we're loved. God wants what is best for us and will form us into the people we're made to be.
- Paul tells us that God brings good "fruit" into our lives as we trust God. It is easy to read the list of these attributes and feel like we don't measure up. The truth is we don't. That's why Paul calls these characteristics the fruit of the Spirit.
- We can't conjure up love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control on our own. God brings forth Jesus' character when we allow the Holy Spirit to lead, guide, and transform us.
- We're meant to be reflections of who God is in the world. Remember, during Week One, we talked about how we were made in God's image? The Spirit restores us to who we're meant to be. As we follow the Spirit's guidance in our lives, we play a part in God's restoration story for the whole world. **We can be part of God's story.**

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

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.*
  - **What do you think of how Paul summarizes all the Old Testament laws in "love your neighbor as yourself"? What can you do to make loving others something that marks your life?**
  - **Read Romans 13:8–10. What would it look like for you to "Love your neighbor as yourself" this week?**

## REFLECTION | Good News

- The world God created was and is good. The design was for the world to flourish and be a beautiful place. Throughout this series, we've seen evil and sin continue to attack goodness and beauty. But there's still hope because God is restoring and making everything new in creation. **We can be part of God's story.**
- When we trust Jesus with our lives and rely on the Holy Spirit to lead and transform us, we get to be part of God's hopeful, new work of restoration. This is great news. So, how can we do something and share this good news? Let's consider how we can be part of God's good news this week.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this reflection, you need newspaper, permanent markers, and the [slide included in this week's series materials](#). Give each student a piece of newspaper and a bold marker. Invite them to reflect on the application below by writing their thoughts in the newspaper. Load the slide with the questions for students to reference as they reflect.*
  - **WHAT ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT?** What gets you excited? What do you love to do? Do you love to make videos or create websites? Do you love to write poetry or sing? Do you love to talk and hang out with your friends? Those things you're passionate about aren't a mistake. Write down one or more of your passions on the newspaper.
  - **WHAT'S A PROBLEM YOU SEE?** What changes do you want to see in the world? Does knowing kids are hungry in your community break your heart? Does it make you angry when you hear about bullying in your school? Just like God gave you specific passions, God gives you a broken heart toward things because you are made to make a difference. As you think about this, write down a few problems that bother you.
  - **WHAT'S THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADING YOU TO DO ABOUT IT?** Our passions and the problems that bother us point us to how to do something on purpose. When you think about your passions,

ask God to help you figure out how to share your passion in a way that points others to God's hope-filled story. Write down one or two ideas about how you think God wants to use your gifts and passions to do something about the problems in the world this week.

- God knew you had a role in this incredible story and wired you in ways that bring you and others joy. When you think about your heartbreak or anger because of a problem, ask God to help you take action to bring light into dark situations.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - ✪ **Why do you think that focusing on the rules keeps us from missing the main objective of love? How will you focus on what's most important to God this week?**
  - ✪ **What are some ways that you have seen the Holy Spirit making you more like Jesus?**
  - **Today, how can you be part of God's story?**

## RESPONSE | Making a New Garden

- The whole story of God started with a tree. In the Garden of Eden, God asked us to help make the good creation better. Instead, we chose to do things our way rather than trust God's vision, but now, because of Jesus, we are invited to be part of God's story again.
- This means we're invited to show the world that God will make every wrong right, and until that time, Jesus is at work healing and restoring us with God, each other, and the world God created. As we follow Jesus and our lives start to look more like his, we are invited to plant little gardens of Eden in our communities, families, and friendships.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this response, you will need a [starter tree that will thrive in your area](#) for each student (if you would prefer not to do a tree, you can buy bulk flower starters from your local garden store), [small pots](#), potter soil, a table, a few small shovels and if you decided to do it, the water from "Dissolving Damaging Stories" module from last week. Invite teenagers to take a plan and re-pot it after students re-pot the plant. Use the water from last week's module to give the plant its first watering. Encourage teenagers to take it home and provide a place to grow.*
- Last week, we allowed God to dissolve the damaging stories in our lives. When you start following Jesus, those stories may not feel like they instantly go away. They are part of what shaped and made you who you are.
- So, one of the amazing things about Jesus is how he uses those stories to help make new ones. We dissolved those stories into water in our trees to symbolize that we will use it to water our plants to represent Jesus' grace and forgiveness and how God can use any story and turn it into growth because **we can be part of God's story.**