



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

This Is Real Love / Week 3

SERIES OVERVIEW

SERIES SUMMARY

A 3-week series about what Jesus did to demonstrate His love at Easter.

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

What Jesus said and did to show us real love.

WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: Jesus shows us what real love is.

WEEK 2: Jesus treats everyone like they are important.

WEEK 3: Jesus offers everyone forgiveness.

SCRIPTURE

This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins (1 John 4:10 NLT).

NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

THINK ABOUT THIS

This conversation asks middle schoolers to apply some abstract thinking to look for a God at work whom they can't physically see. This kind of thinking is still developing in this phase, so concepts like this can be challenging. In addition, your discussion will ask middle schoolers to join in the work of justice themselves. This might be hard for students on a number of levels. Some may feel too young, too powerless, too ill-equipped, or too unsure to choose to respond to injustice right now. Others may already be working with God for justice, so they recognize the need to honor those who have come before them as well as continue the work today. Some may be experiencing injustice themselves, so asking them to join in to do the work may feel impossible (or inappropriate) as they're needing someone to step up on their behalf. They may even struggle to see how God is at work when the injustice they're experiencing is still very real. No matter where your students come from here, lead the conversation in a way that helps your group see two things more clearly: how God is doing good work for justice and how they can choose to be part of it.

NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

This week's talk will center on Peter's experience with Jesus—first, with Peter denying knowing Jesus and then Jesus offering a chance for Peter to right his wrong and receive forgiveness. In the Scripture, Peter is referred to as both "Simon Peter" and "Simon son of John." To avoid confusing students, the name "Peter" is used in your Teaching Script. However, feel free to explain that "Peter," "Simon Peter," and "Simon son of John" are all referring to the same person.

INTERACTIVE 1: PETER AND JESUS

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll help bring this week's Scripture to life for your students. When prompted, you'll display the provided artwork that corresponds with events that occurred around Jesus' crucifixion.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- The provided artwork slides:
 - Peter fishing
 - Peter sharing Jesus' message
 - Crucifixion
 - Jesus' arrest
 - Cross
 - Resurrection
 - Disciples fishing
 - Jesus calling from the shore
 - Peter and Jesus
 - Scripture
- A way to display the slides for your audience

PREP

- Read through the Truth section of your talk, noting the prompts for when to display the provided images.
- Put the Interactive images in order using your preferred software program.

TEACHING OUTLINE

After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

Jesus repeated the question, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17 NLT).

INTRODUCTION

- Today, we're celebrating Easter and the things Jesus said and did to show us real love.
- Easter is a time to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, which means He died and came back to life.
- There's more to the resurrection than it just being cool that Jesus came back to life!

TENSION

- It can be hard to understand how an event that happened thousands of years ago can impact our lives today.
- Even if we believe in God and know how much God loves us, the mistakes we've made can make it hard to feel like we're really loved, accepted, and forgiven.
- It can sometimes feel like the real love God gives isn't really for us.
- *[Tell a personal story about a time you felt like your choices made you unlovable, guilty, or unforgivable.]*
- Our mistakes have a way of making us feel like, after what we've done, no one could love and accept us, especially not God.
- Jesus died for our sins and offers us forgiveness. His resurrection made a way for us to be with God now and forever.
- Believing the truth of the resurrection can change everything for us, including how we handle our mistakes and mess-ups.

TRUTH

- In the New Testament, we can read about an encounter Jesus had with one of His closest friends and followers, Peter.
- Peter left his life and career as a fisherman to follow Jesus, and he eventually became a leader in the early Church.
- It's easy to think that Peter never messed up or did anything to keep him from feeling loved, accepted, and forgiven by God.
- But Peter made some pretty big mistakes in his life, one of which happened right around Easter.
- Jesus knew that when the day came for His arrest and crucifixion, His disciples would also be in danger, so Jesus warned them about the events that were going to take place.
- Peter promised to stand by Jesus no matter what, but when Jesus was arrested, Peter denied knowing Jesus three different times. Talk about a mess up!
- After Jesus' death, Peter and the disciples didn't know what to do since their Friend and Teacher had been killed. But then, Jesus rose from the dead!
- One of the first things Jesus did after His resurrection was seek out His friends.
- While fishing with the other disciples one night, Someone called to them from the shore. When they realized it was Jesus, Peter dove into the water and swam to Him.
- Jesus could have been unhappy to see Peter because of his betrayal, but this is what happened instead: *After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him. Jesus repeated the question, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you." "Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said. A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17 NLT).*
- Peter denied knowing Jesus three times, so Jesus gave Peter three chances to make it right and receive forgiveness.

- Peter's mistakes didn't prevent him from having a big part in God's story.
- God always loves us and wants to use us for important things in this world, despite our failures and mistakes.
- Easter reminds us that Jesus offers everyone forgiveness.
- Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are all forgiven and free to be really loved by God.

APPLICATION

- Jesus went toward, not away, from Peter when he messed up. The same is true for us!
- God moves toward us in the middle of our mistakes, offering forgiveness and a chance to start again.
- During this Easter season . . .
 - Ask yourself what you think is keeping you from God's love and forgiveness. That thing in your life doesn't have the power to separate you from God's love and forgiveness.
 - Make a choice to take a step in your faith toward God, knowing that there's nothing that can separate you from God's real love.

LANDING

- Your small group is a great place to talk about what Jesus did for us at Easter.
- In your group, you can ask questions, celebrate steps you take in faith, and encourage each other.
- Remember, Jesus offers everyone forgiveness.
- As you head to your group, think about this question: How does it feel to know that Jesus offers forgiveness to everyone—including you?

TEACHING SLIDES

All bolded words and phrases in the Teaching Script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier subscribers.



TEACHING SCRIPT

This Is Real Love / Week 3

BOTTOM LINE

JESUS OFFERS EVERYONE FORGIVENESS.

INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

Happy Easter, everybody! We're so excited to celebrate the things Jesus said and did to show us real love by closing out our series called *This Is Real Love*.

Why are we so excited about Easter around here? Well, besides the candy (because Easter candy is really the best holiday candy!), we're celebrating **the resurrection of Jesus**. The word "resurrection" means that **Jesus died and came back to life**. That's something worth celebrating because . . . well, it's just cool. How often does someone die and come back to life?

Now, stick with me, because there's more to the story than it just being cool!

TENSION

4 MINUTES

Now, maybe you're like, *"I just don't see how Jesus coming back to life thousands of years ago has anything to do with my life today."*

If that's how you feel, then I'd say I totally understand. I've felt that way before, too! Honestly, sometimes I still do! Even though I believe in God and know how much God loves me, I also know I'm not perfect. I've definitely done some things that were wrong. And because of that, **it can be hard to feel like I really am loved, accepted, and forgiven by God!** It can be hard to believe that real love is really for me!

TELL A PERSONAL STORY

Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following thoughts or ideas . . .

- Tell a story about a time you felt like your choices made you feel unlovable, guilty, or unforgivable. A time when what you had done left you thinking God would be angry or unforgiving toward you.
- Maybe you cheated on a test, lied to someone, spread a rumor, stole something, etc.
- Whatever it is, make the example age and phase-appropriate. Focus less on the action and more on how you felt after the fact—that you wouldn't be forgiven!

I bet you can relate! Big or small, our mistakes have a way of making us feel like, after what we've done, no one could actually love and accept us. That no one could truly forgive us—especially not God!

Well, that's where Easter comes in. All that stuff about Jesus dying for our sins and offering us forgiveness? How His resurrection makes a way for us to be close with God forever? Well, it's true! And believing this for ourselves has the power to change everything, including the way we handle our mistakes and mess-ups along the way.

TRUTH

5 MINUTES

To help us out here, let's look at an encounter Jesus had with a guy named **Peter**, one of Jesus' closest friends and followers. This encounter was recorded in the New Testament, the part of the Bible that was written after Jesus came to Earth.

INTERACTIVE: Peter and Jesus

This is where you'll help bring this week's Scripture to life for your students. When prompted, you'll display the provided artwork that corresponds with events that occurred around Jesus' crucifixion.

Peter was a fisherman *[display image of Peter fishing]* who completely left his life and career to follow Jesus. He eventually became one of the leaders in the early Church and shared the message and hope of Jesus with others. *[Display image of Peter sharing Jesus' message.]* You'd probably think that a guy like Peter pretty much had his life put together. No mistakes, no mess-ups, nothing to keep him from feeling loved, accepted, and forgiven by God, right?

Not so fast. See, Peter was also known for making some pretty big mistakes. He had a way of acting first and thinking later, which turned into a recipe for a lot of major mess-ups in his life. One of the biggest actually happened right around Easter!

As Jesus was nearing the end of His life, He knew what was coming. He knew that He would eventually be captured and then killed on a cross. *[Display crucifixion image.]* He knew that this meant a lot of potential pain and danger for His disciples, including Peter. After all, they had dedicated their lives to following Jesus. They were closer to Him than anyone! Jesus knew that when the day came for His arrest and crucifixion, His closest followers would also be in danger. Because of that, Jesus warned His disciples of the events about to take place. And Peter? Well, he promised to stand by Jesus to the death.

But when Jesus actually was arrested, what did Peter do? *[Display Jesus' arrest image.]* He denied even knowing Jesus! Three different times that night! Talk about messing up! I can't imagine coming back from that.

After Jesus' death, Peter and the other disciples weren't sure what to do. *[Display cross image.]* Their Friend and Teacher had been killed, and they were left alone, afraid, and, in Peter's case, feeling guilty. But then, that amazing thing we celebrate at Easter happened: Jesus rose from the dead! He came back to life. *[Display resurrection image.]* And one of the first things Jesus did was seek out His friends, including Peter.

It turns out that Peter was at the Sea of Galilee, a place he knew really well and had visited with Jesus several times. Peter decided to go fishing with the disciples. *[Display image of disciples fishing.]* That night, they hadn't caught a single fish. That's when someone from the shore called to them. *[Display image of Jesus calling from the shore.]* To the disciples' surprise, that someone was Jesus. Peter dove right into the water and swam to the shore just to see Him again. *[Display Peter and Jesus image.]*

Now, remember one of the last exchanges Peter had with Jesus? When Peter had denied knowing Jesus in His last moments alive? Because of that, you might think that Jesus greeted Peter here with less than a warm welcome. But look at what happened: *[Replace image with Scripture slide.]*

After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

Jesus repeated the question, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17 NLT).

Jesus gave Peter a chance to right his wrongs. How many times did Peter deny knowing Jesus? Three! And how many times did Jesus give Peter the chance to show that he loved Him? Three! That is pretty incredible. I think Jesus knew the guilt Peter must have been carrying around. I think He knew that Peter probably felt like his failures kept him from God's love or forgiveness. But here, Jesus extended three chances for Peter to make it right. To be forgiven.

And not just that, **Jesus wanted Peter to continue to have a place in God's story.** So often we might feel like our own mistakes or failures not only keep us from God's love but they keep God from wanting to use us for big and important things in this world, too. But when Jesus asked Peter to take care of His sheep here, He wasn't actually talking about real sheep. Jesus was talking about His followers—the other people who would one day come to know and follow Jesus, too. That's a pretty big job! It's one that Jesus offered to Peter because He loved him, believed in him, and knew that his failures weren't the end of the story.

And guess what? The same is true for you! The story of Easter reminds us that **Jesus offers everyone forgiveness.** The wrong things you do don't disqualify you from God's love. They don't keep you from being close to God or even being used to accomplish some really great things. Because of Jesus' death and

resurrection that we celebrate at Easter, you are forgiven. You are free to be really loved by God, and that's something to celebrate!

APPLICATION

1 MINUTES

What I love about this story is the way it demonstrates God's love for us when we make mistakes. Jesus didn't move away from Peter when he failed. Instead, Jesus came toward him. The same is true for us! God moves toward us in the middle of our failures, offering us forgiveness and a chance to start again.

Today and during this Easter season . . .

Ask yourself what you think is keeping you from God's love and forgiveness. Is it one bad choice? A series of mistakes? A secret that nobody knows about? Whatever it is, I want you to know that because of Jesus, that thing in your life doesn't have the power to separate you from God's love and forgiveness.

Make a choice to take one step toward God. Maybe it's talking with your small group leader about how to start a relationship with Jesus. Or maybe for you, that's saying a prayer or reading the Bible to learn more about God. Maybe it's listening to worship music and thinking about what the lyrics mean. Maybe it's asking God for forgiveness and help to start over. Or maybe it's showing up at church or small group to keep figuring out what you think about faith. Whatever it looks like for you, try to take a step toward God this week, knowing that there's nothing that can separate you from God's real love.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

As we head out, you'll have a chance to talk about all of the things we remember at Easter. We've created these groups so that you have a place to talk honestly about what you're learning here. In your group, you can speak up with your questions, celebrate big steps you take in faith, and encourage each other to keep going and believing in God's best for your lives. Sharing with your small group might be the best step you can take toward God in your life right now!

As you head to small group today, remember **Jesus offers everyone forgiveness.**

Then, think about this question: **How does it feel to know that Jesus offers forgiveness to everyone—including you?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
