

LOVE FIRST

STUDENT EDITION



FOUR WEEK GUIDE

The Art of Being All There

The Art of Acting Intentionally

The Art of Risking Awkwardness

The Art of Letting Go

WEEK ONE

The Art of Being All There

Relationships are a huge part of our life – that’s the way God designed us! He wants us to be in fellowship with others and gave us the most perfect example of a loving relationship through His Son, Jesus. We all know how great relationships are when both parties give it their all – but what happens when we’re not “all there,” and what does that really mean? Knowing what goes into a relationship can help you get a lot more out of it.



PRE LESSON Questions

1. What relationships do you want to improve upon from participating in this study?
2. What distractions keep you from being all there for your friends and family?

PRAYER

God, please come into our meeting tonight and show us what it means to really “be all there.” Lord open our hearts and our minds to hear your words and to apply them to our lives in order to strengthen relationships and honor you in all that we do. Father, we thank you for the perfect example of “being all there” in Christ Jesus, and it is in His name that we pray.



LESSON PART-1

Quality Time

Read: John 13

Questions:

1. How do you define “quality time”?
2. What was the significance of Jesus washing His disciples’ feet?
3. How do you demonstrate spending quality time with your friends?

LESSON PART-2

Removing Distractions

Read: Mark 5:24-34 & Luke 19:1-10

Questions:

1. What were potential distractions for Jesus in these passages? How did He remove them?
2. If Jesus hadn’t removed the distractions, how might this story have been different?
3. What distractions keep you from “being all there” for your friends? What steps can you take to get rid of them?

LESSON PART-3

Being Authentic

Read: John 4:7-25

Questions:

1. How would you define authenticity?
2. How important is authenticity of relationships to you?
3. How often are you truly authentic in your relationships? Sometimes? Always? Never?
4. How can you apply authenticity to your relationships? What benefit will come of it?
5. Is there anyone you are not truly authentic with? Why is that?
6. Give an example of a time where you just “went through the motions” and weren’t all there for a friend. How did it impact your relationship with them?

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CHALLENGE

We may not “be all there” for our friends and loved ones right now, but the good news is – it’s not too late! It’s never too late to start building those truly strong, authentic relationships – the way God designed them to be. Remember that our first and most important relationship is and always will be with God – so spend some time focusing on your relationship with Him, devoting more time, energy and attention to this important relationship.

Also, take the time to meet face-to-face with a friend you usually call, IM, email or text. Set aside all distractions, and truly give your relationship 100% attention. Think about what it means to “be all there” for them, and take note of how it makes you feel in the process.

Pray for God to reveal your most important relationships over the course of this study – that He would show you which ones to focus on, which ones need help and what you can do to “be all there.” Investing in God’s will for your life will always yield a great return.

NOTES



WEEK TWO

The Art of Acting Intentionally

⋮ We've all heard stories that end with "well, they had good intentions..." but those never turn out very well. The truth is, even if we approach things with the greatest of intentions – with pure hearts, clear heads and the right motives – the result will never be good enough unless we take it to the next level: obedience. Because we're all sinners by nature, our best efforts won't get us very far – but if we put our trust in the Lord and let Him guide our actions, not just our intentions, our obedience will bring us closer to Him and to others.



PASTOR'S STORY

[Before you can hit a home run, you have to step up to the plate]

PRE LESSON Questions

1. What goals do you have in life right now? In five years? In ten years?
2. What are the first steps you must take to achieve your goals?
3. What stands between you and the accomplishment of your goals? How can you overcome these obstacles?

PRAYER

Tonight, as we discuss the differences between having good intentions and acting intentionally, I pray that God will open our hearts and minds to what we need to hear. I hope He will challenge us with opportunities in our daily lives to follow His will and be obedient to His plan for us. Finally, I pray that through our willingness to act intentionally in our relationships, we will grow stronger as the body of Christ and serve Him faithfully.



LESSON PART-1

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Questions:

1. How can you tell if a relationship in your life is genuine, and which are just surface-level?
2. What does it mean to act intentionally?
3. Give an example of how you've had the best of intentions, but didn't act intentionally.

LESSON PART-2

What the Bible Says About Relationships

Read: Matthew 22:37-39

Questions:

1. What does it mean (or look like) to love yourself?
2. Is it easier to love yourself or love others? Why?

Read: Psalm 139 & Ephesians 2:10

1. Give examples of loving intentionally. How did God demonstrate this for us?
2. God had a plan for us and for our lives. He does everything intentionally! How often would you say you act intentionally?

WEEK TWO

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LESSON PART-3

How to Love Our Neighbor

Read: Luke 10:25-37 [The Good Samaritan]

Questions:

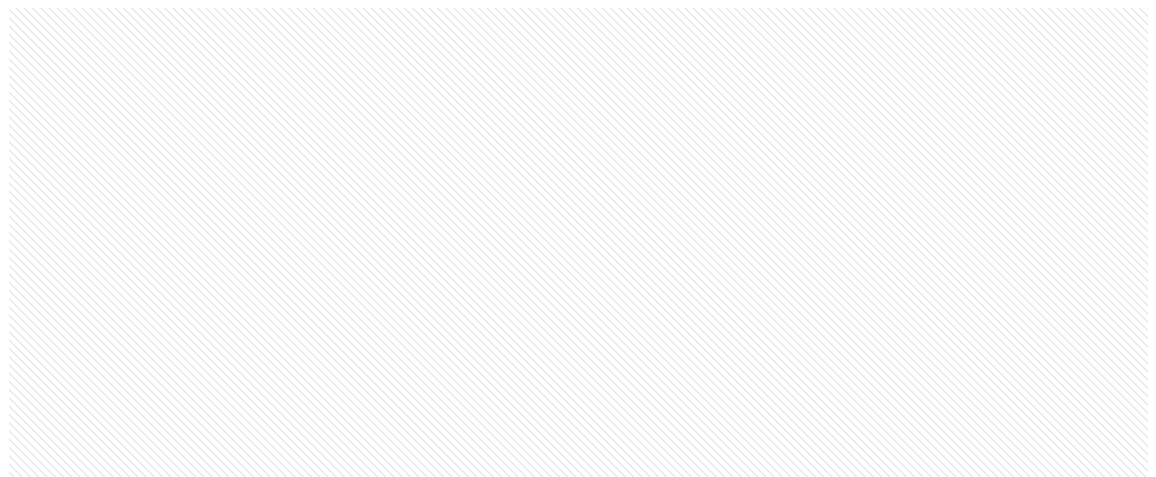
1. Who is our neighbor?
2. What barriers stood between each man – the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan – in helping the injured man?
3. Samaritans were looked down upon in Jesus' time, yet in this story it is the Samaritan we should emulate. What investments in the wounded man did the Samaritan make? How can we make similar investments in each other?
4. Has anyone ever walked by you when you were down? How did it make you feel? How would an encouraging word or investment from them have changed your situation?
5. On the flip side, when were you the Samaritan? Give an example of a time where you stopped to help and invested time in someone that others had overlooked.

CHALLENGE

This week, act intentionally. Have a plan and a purpose behind everything you do – and then do it! Check your motives and truly invest in someone in a meaningful way. In the process, take note of how it made them act or feel – and how it changed you as well.

This week's challenge is to break out of the "cycle of good intentions" and start a new trend – one of acting intentionally. Purposefully sit at a new lunch table, talk to someone you've walked past or sat next to but never spoken with, or reach out to someone in need. Don't just think about it – DO it!

NOTES



WEEK THREE

The Art of Risking Awkwardness

Being awkward is perhaps a young person's biggest fear. Putting yourself out there with the fear of being ridiculed, judged or disliked can be a very risky thing; however, the risk lessens in our minds when it's done on behalf of someone we truly care for. Think about it – you're a lot more likely to act silly in front of your family or a small group of close friends than to stand in front of the entire school in a clown costume, right?



PRE LESSON Questions

1. How do you define awkwardness?
2. What does the risk of being awkward mean to you? How does it make you feel?

ICEBREAKER

[Play a game]

PRE-LESSON Questions

3. What about that exercise was awkward? Why?
4. At any point, did the awkwardness diminish or lessen? Why do you think that happened?

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for this time of gathering and studying your word. Father, I pray that you remove all distractions and prideful tendencies so that we may be forever changed through your word and through tonight's lesson. God, I ask that you give us boldness in proclaiming your word and our faith – that we would not fear awkwardness but instead confidently proclaim your glory. Let us not fear awkward situations, but rejoice in the advancing of your kingdom. Thank you for this time and the opportunity to fellowship together. Father, it is in your son's name that we pray. Amen.



LESSON PART-1

The Art of Risking Awkwardness

Read: Matthew 10:33, 2 Timothy 1:7-12 & 2 Timothy 4:4

Questions:

1. Why is being a Christian considered awkward sometimes? Does anyone make you feel this way?
2. Sharing your faith can be both awkward and scary. Can you be a Christian without sharing God's word? Why do you think that?

LESSON PART-2

Stephens's Story

Read: Acts 6:1-15; 7:1-39

Questions:

1. In what ways was Stephen's situation awkward?
2. Think about the story of Stephen. What are some of the "consequences" of risking awkwardness to share your faith? What are the rewards?
3. God calls us out of our comfort zone and into awkwardness. Why do you think He does this?
4. God blesses us when we are obedient to Him – even if it makes us uncomfortable. In what ways did God bless Stephen, and how have you seen blessing come from awkward situations in your life?

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LESSON PART-3

Being Bold

Read: Romans 1:16, Proverbs 16:3 & Luke 17:25

Questions:

1. We've talked about the risks of being awkward, but what are the risks of avoiding God's calling and not pursuing awkward situations to share your faith? What consequences could we endure?
2. Think of the story of magician Penn Jillette, a non-believer. Someone risked awkwardness to share the gospel with him, and it made an impact! What take-aways do you have from this story?
3. Is there anyone in your life that you know needs or wants to know more about Jesus? What's stopping you from sharing God's word with them? What steps can you take to start those awkward conversations?
4. Give an example of a relationship or situation that used to be awkward, but now isn't. What changed? What did you learn from the experience, and how did both parties benefit?

CHALLENGE

Awkwardness is often a "surface-level" emotion – one that quickly disappears once we get to know someone and barriers are broken down. This week, take the time to get to know someone beyond the surface level. Dig deeper, beyond the awkward stage and begin building a more meaningful relationship. Find out more details about their life, and if an opportunity arises – share Christ!

NOTES



WEEK FOUR

The Art of Letting Go

⋮ Sometimes, we think we're indestructible. We envision ourselves as superheroes that can take on the world, save the day and win the heart of our beloved – and we invest all of our time, energy and strength into these things. We think we can handle our problems, our relationships, our schoolwork and our jobs without any outside help – and when things get tough, we'll just hold on tighter. But the truth is, we all have a breaking point – a point where we just can't hold on anymore and are forced to let go.



PASTOR'S STORY

Check out this video of a boy who put everything he had into one relationship:
[<http://www.youtube.com/watch#!v=xSrc-rTKP1o&feature=fvw>]

PRE LESSON Questions

1. The boy in the video invested all of his time, energy and strength into one relationship – and when he lost control, he was angry! Talk about a time you invested your all into something – and thought you had complete control – only for it to slip through your fingers.
2. What happens when we depend on ourselves for happiness, instead of depending on God?

PRAYER

Tonight, as we discuss the art of letting go, I pray that God will show each of us which areas of our lives we need to give over to Him. Which areas are we clinging to so tightly, that give us that false sense of security and control? Lord show us these things and help us to realize that it is you who is in control of everything. Father, lift these burdens from our hearts so that we can focus on you, trusting fully that you are working in our best interests.



LESSON PART-1

Distractions From Depending on God

Read: Psalms 146:3-10

Questions:

1. What distractions keep you from depending on God?
2. In what areas of your life are you most apt to fully rely on God? In what areas are you the most reluctant?

LESSON PART-2

Start Trusting

Read: Job 1:13-22, Jeremiah 29:11, Philippians 4:18-22, Job 42:12-15 & Proverbs 3:5

Questions:

1. Job had everything taken from him. Think of a time when something was taken from you – a friend, family member, relationship, job or otherwise. How did you react?
2. What is the hardest part about praising God in the trying times? Why do you think it is so hard?
3. Why do you think God takes things from us at times? What can we learn from these times?
4. What are some ways we try to meet our own needs, and how do we fall short?
5. Name a time where you quit relying on yourself and gave it all to God. How did it make you feel? And how did it turn out in the end?

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CHALLENGE

We must all realize that only God can meet our needs – not ourselves, other people or things we can buy. Once we accept this, we can begin living a more peaceful life – one where we have let go of our worries and trusted fully in God's provision.

This week, make a list of the things that distract you from fully trusting God – the things you're clinging to for dear life. Put the list on the bathroom mirror, on the car dash, or somewhere easily visible so that you're constantly reminded to pray about those distractions and giving it all over to God. Over time, look back and see how God has changed your heart, and how you've begun to learn the art of letting go.

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