



Be Yourself!
Leader's Bible Study Guide
***and* Bible Study Workbook**
(A companion to BY! Master Curriculum Guide)

"Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!"

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Foreword

BY! Bible Study

What does it mean to “Be yourself”?

A friend may say to you, “Relax, be yourself.” Usually that’s an invitation to let go, “loosen up,” and just “be who you really are” in their company. Some of us are lucky enough to have good friends with whom we can relax and loosen up, laugh about our faults and not feel as if we have to pretend to be someone we’re not. Even so, many of us still struggle deep down with accepting or even knowing whom we *really* are, especially in light of so many pressures from friends, family, or work, to perform or act in a certain way. We might even wear a kind of mask - sometimes bold and outrageous, sometimes very quiet and shy - to hide our true self from others or even from ourselves. To “be yourself” really involves a much deeper understanding of our *value* and *identity*.

According to the Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary, *identity* is “The distinguishing character or personality of an individual.”¹ We could say, the “you” that is uniquely “you,” created by God for a unique purpose and destiny. However, in this materialistic world, many thorns and thistles created by pain, rejection and sin can grow in us and around us covering, twisting, or hiding who we truly are. It takes courage to make this journey to discover our true self as Christ sees us.

Interestingly, the Bible never uses the phrase, “be yourself.” In fact, it quite frankly tells us to crucify our “old self” or sin nature (Romans 6:6; Luke 9:23). That’s a pretty radical statement. At the same time, the Bible has wonderful things to say about whom we are as a *new creation* (2 Corinthians 5:17) and adopted child of God (Colossians 1:12-13). He created us all (Genesis 1:26-27), knows us all (Psalm 139: 13-14) and, accepts us (John 3:16). Yet, His plans for us are only fully realized in a loving relationship with Jesus as our Lord, reflecting His image and walking in His purpose.

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ~ Ephesians 2:10

The Bible talks about God’s special care and provision for his children. Those who look to him in faith are given eternal life and are adopted into his family thereby gaining a Kingdom inheritance that is beyond what is available to non-believers. This promise is for all who believe, whether rich or poor, male or female, any color, any shape, and any people group (John 3:16).

*<http://www.merriam-webster.com>

*Yet to **all** who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God ~ John 1:12*

As children of God, we are new creations, the old sinful self is dead and we have a new self, a **new identity** that we cannot separate from God. It's true that *everyone* has an identity and a self, but outside of God, an identity rooted in worldly truths and values is subject to all the cruel and empty temptations that put our body, mind and or our spirit at great risk without any real or lasting satisfaction. Instead, God offers a new life that comes with an eternal joy, a joy that rises up from within so we can sing a new song of praise.

How do we know who we are?

What is our *true* self?

Will we truly be accepted, loved and valued if we expose our true self?

Why do we pretend to be someone else?

What are some of the masks we wear?

How do we learn to accept and encourage others and ourselves and embrace our true identity?

This Be Yourself! curriculum hopes to take you on a journey to answer those questions, or to at least begin the discussion. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to use these activities to bring you closer to God, and closer to knowing, loving and accepting your true identity and value. Then you will sing a new song of praise and many will hear and believe!

I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.

*² He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.*

*³ He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.*

Psalm 40:1-3

New Song Programs Overview

Master Curriculum Overview	You Are Special (YAS)	Be Yourself! (BY!)	You Are Mine (YAM)
Topics	Self-worth and resisting labels	Identity and combating negative peer pressure	Our importance, materialism and proper stewardship
Enduring Understanding (main take-away for end-user)	You are special - unique, important, created for a purpose!	Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!	You are important, not because of what you have but because of who(se) you are.
Companion book by Max Lucado (bilingual edition)	<u>You Are Special</u>	<u>If Only I Had a Green Nose</u>	<u>You Are Mine</u>
Targeted Grade/Ages*	5 th grade (expanded use to 8-12 year olds)	6 th grade (expanded use to 12-14 year olds)	7 th grade (expanded use to 14-16 year olds)
Lesson Times* (for end-user)	School Day Curriculum (SDC) of 8, 1-hour lessons; Saturday Curriculum (SC) of 4, 2-hour lessons	5, 1.5 hour lessons	5, 1.5 hour lessons and 1-1.5 hours of extended learning
Additional Biblical Resources (for use in “open” settings)	YAS Companion Bible Study, essay on self worth	BY! Companion Bible Study, essay on self worth	YAM Companion Bible Study, essay on self worth
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All programs work as seed planting with unbelievers.• All programs work as a discipleship tools when in coordination with Bible Study.• YAS is foundational to BY! and YAM but they can be implemented as “stand-alones”.• Because of the depth and nature of BY!/YAM, they require more time for lesson exploration and can be less versatile.		
*Please note that lesson times and age ranges are adaptable			

New Song Programs Biblical Framework

This is basic foundation on which we base all New Song curricula and Bible studies.

- 1) Everyone is special.
- 2) Everyone is special because they are made by God
- 3) Everyone is special because they are made by God because they are loved by God.
- 4) Everyone is special because they are made by God because they are loved by God so that they can be secure in God.
- 5) Everyone is special because they are made by God because they are loved by God so that through Christ they can be secure in God and share this message with others.

You Are Special (YAS)

Overview

Publisher's Description of You Are Special by Max Lucado:

"Every day Wemmicks do the same thing: either stick gold stars or gray dots on one another. The pretty and talented ones always get stars. Others, though, who can do little or who have chipped paint, get ugly dots. Kids will love seeing how Eli the woodcarver helps Punchinello understand how special he is--dots and all. Parents will appreciate the message this story sends to kids: that regardless of what the world thinks, they are precious in God's sight."

Enduring Understanding:

You are special - unique, important, created for a purpose!

MCG Lesson Objectives with Bible Study Key Scriptures:

Lesson 0

The participant will see the relationship between esteeming God and understanding his/her self-worth as well as hear the salvation message.

Key Scripture: Psalm 96:2

Lesson 1

The participant will state the theme of the book as "you are special".

Key Scripture: 1 John 4:8b

Lesson 2

The participant will define "special."

Key Scripture: Genesis 1:26

Lesson 3

The participant will recognize his/herself and others as special through acknowledging similarities and appreciating differences.

Key Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7b

Lesson 4

The participant will know they are special by identifying and explaining traits that show that they were made that way.

Key Scripture: Ephesians 2:10

Lesson 5

The participant will explain the symbolism of stars and dots.

Key Scripture: Matthew 7:1

Lesson 6

The participant will understand that it is a choice to accept stars and dots, and that the best choice is to accept neither.

Key Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:18

Lesson 7

The participant will demonstrate understanding of the importance of sharing the good news of the YAS message by helping others know they are special.

Key Scripture: Romans 10:14

Lesson 8

The participant will celebrate his/her specialness and the specialness of others.

Key Scripture: Romans 12:10

Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!

Be Yourself! (BY!)

Overview

Publisher's Description of If Only I Had a Green Nose by Max Lucado:

"Just like Punchinello, we all want to fit in. To be accepted by the crowd. But at times that may mean we either have to look and act like others, or risk being rejected. Punchinello's hard-earned lesson shows us how important it is to be who we were created to be, and why that matters. So let this wonderful tale help you remember two things: that you were made unique for a reason, and that there is one who will always help you be you--wonderfully you."

Enduring Understanding:

Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be.

MCG Lesson Objectives with Bible Study Key Scriptures:

Lesson 1

The participant will read and discuss If Only I Had a Green Nose by Max Lucado, be introduced to the theme of the Be Yourself! program, and learn to recognize their own uniqueness and that of others.

Key Scripture: Psalm 139: 13-16

Lesson 2

The participant will define "peer pressure" and identify types of positive and negative peer pressure.

Key Scripture: Romans 12:2

Lesson 3

The participant will identify reasons he/she might give in to negative pressures as well as become aware of tricks of advertisers.

Key Scripture: 1 John 2:15-17

Lesson 4

The participant will examine the negative consequences of giving in to peer pressure.

Key Scripture: Galatians 6:7

Lesson 5

The participant will practice ways to resist negative peer pressure and personally apply concepts of Be Yourself!

Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:13

Bonus Bible Study Lesson

The participant will explore the difference between being a "Lover of Self" and "Loving Yourself."

Key Scripture: Matthew 22:39

You Are Mine (YAM)

Overview

***Publisher's Description* You Are Mine by Max Lucado:**

"It's a new day in Wemmicksville for the enchanting wooden people, and there's a new problem for the little Wemmick named Punchinello. The Wemmicks compete with each other to collect the most--and the nicest--boxes and balls in order to appear more "important" than others, which means that, once again, there is havoc in the village. And one again, Punchinello is caught in the middle. But in the end, there's a message that kids need and parents will love: God's children are loved because He made them. They do not have to collect "things" to compete for status in His eyes. With the warm illustrations of artist Sergio Martinez, this new sequel to the phenomenal bestseller You Are Special is sure to become a classic in its own right."

Enduring Understanding:

You are important, not because of what you have, but because of who(se) you are.

MCG Lesson Objectives with Bible Study Key Scriptures:

Lesson 0

The Participant will hear a clear presentation of the gospel message.

Essential Question: How is it possible to have a close relationship with God?

Key Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-13

Lesson 1

The participant will be introduced to the theme of the You Are Mine program.

Essential Question: Is wanting wrong?

Key Scripture: Matthew 6:21

Lesson 2

The participant will examine the notion of success and the price he/she is willing to pay to feel important.

Essential Question: When is the cost of success too high?

Key Scripture: Proverbs 11:28

Lesson 3

The participant will determine if their actions reflect their core values.

Essential Question: What defines you?

Key Scripture: Hebrews 10:14

Lesson 4

The participant will explore generosity and its relationship to happiness.

Essential Question: Am I a bucket or a pipe?

Key Scripture: Proverbs 11:24

Lesson 5

The participant will define "stewardship" and examine what it means to properly steward their time, talent and material resources.

Essential Question: What is proper stewardship?

Key Scripture: Psalm 24:1

Extended Learning

The participant will consider the impact of consumerism.

Essential Question: How can I make a difference?

Key Scripture: Ephesians 2:10

Introduction to Use

The Be Yourself! (BY!) Master Curriculum Guide (MCG) explores negative peer pressure and how to fully embrace whom you are uniquely created to be. These lessons are designed for youth ages 12-14.

This BY! Bible Study can be done simultaneously with the MCG or following it. Each MCG lesson is about 1.5 hours. Each Bible Study lesson is about 1.5 hours and includes portions of the MCG that may have been modified to convey the Biblical perspective. An asterisk* indicates those portions of the Bible Study that are taken directly from the Master Curriculum Guide.

We recognize that it is not always feasible or practical to use the full MCG and the Bible Study together. Other options can be:

Alternative Option 1: Use the Master Curriculum Guide only and have participants memorize the lesson's Key Scripture in order to build the Biblical foundation for each lesson. We can't stress enough our belief that every Leader should read through the entire Bible Study before implementing the Master Curriculum in order to grasp the Biblical basis for each lesson.

Alternative Option 2: Use Bible Study only, without full implementation of MCG. The Bible Study incorporates key portions from the MCG. However, the Bible Study cannot be implemented without knowledge of some of the main concepts and lessons in the MCG. Please include these lessons where indicated with an asterisk*. We recommend that the instructor read through the entire MCG before doing the Bible Study with participants.

NOTE: We have created a companion BY! Bible Study Workbook that allows participants to complete the exercises in a personal workbook. Handouts for classroom use can be found in the Appendix or within the lesson itself for those not using the YAM Bible Study Workbook. They can be copied from the printed curriculum guide or from the digital version. If printing the YAM Bible Study Workbook is impractical, participants can do the exercises in a regular notebook with some simple instruction from the leader.

Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!



Be Yourself! (BY!) Leader's Bible Study Guide

(A companion to the BY! Master Curriculum Guide)

"Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be"

!

Lesson 1

Key Scripture: Psalm 139:13-16: *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

MCG Objective: Participants will read and discuss If Only I Had a Green Nose by Max Lucado, be introduced to the theme of the Be Yourself! program, and learn to recognize their own uniqueness and that of others.

Materials:

- If Only I Had a Green Nose by Max Lucado (1 per participant)
- Bible Study Workbook (1 per participant)
- Markers, Crayons, Pencils
- Two or three (artificial) flowers and matching flower seeds
- One piece of square paper for each participant (A4 cut down to square)
- ***BY! MCG**

Opening Anticipatory Exercise (20 min.):

The Leader will hold up flower seeds and a few of the flowers from that type of seed. Explain to participants that even though each seed will produce the same kind of flower, each flower is unique. They will explain that the participants are like these flowers. The participants will then illustrate the outline of a seed on a *square* piece of white paper. Leader shows the participant how to make a square piece of paper by folding one corner over to the other edge to form a perfect square and cut or tear off the excess edge. The participants will color in their face on the seed outline and around the seed will write down information about themselves (hobbies, likes, dislikes, dreams, etc.) Participants ARE NOT to write their names on these. Once participants have finished their seed portraits, they can share about themselves with the group. Once finished, have the participants save these seed portraits for the Maple Seed exercise to do later in the lesson if you have time (See Appendix).



The participants will each receive a BY! Bible Study Workbook that will be used throughout the Bible lessons. Participants are to write their name on the page of their Workbook where indicated. They could then decorate this first title page by turning it into a flower garden as a reminder that they are wonderfully unique. Challenge the participants to have the garden creatively contain information about them. (Examples: Flower centers could be faces of family; colors of flowers could represent something to them; they might illustrate their pets in the garden or something from a favorite book).

Learning: Introduction to the story If Only I Had a Green Nose (10 min.):

Leader introduces the theme to the Be Yourself! program and explains to the participants that throughout the upcoming lessons they will recognize the importance of being themselves. Leader states: You must first "*be yourself*" before you can "*become a better self*." A person cannot be himself or herself if they don't know or accept themselves first. Each participant is different and must stop comparing themselves to others. Oscar Wilde said, "Be yourself, everyone else is already taken." Leader will introduce If Only I Had a Green Nose book, as a story about a boy, Punchinello, who does not celebrate Be Yourself! and surrenders to pressure to be like everyone else. This causes problems for Punchinello. This book is going to be referenced in all the lessons to follow so participants should pay close attention to the story. (YAS reference: For those participants who went through the You Are Special program, remind them that they have already met some of the characters before, like Punchinello, Lucia, and Eli from the You Are Special book. In that book Punchinello learned he was special and should not base his self worth on what others thought of him. Punchinello will learn another lesson in this book about being and accepting whom he is uniquely created to be.

Guided Practice/Experience the Learning (25 min.): The leader will read the book and continue to engage participants by showing illustrations as they read (For a large class, participants should be divided into smaller groups with an adult group leader.). When finished, the leader should invite discussion about the main characters, setting, problem and solution to make sure participants understand the story elements. Once sure of the participants' comprehension of the basic storyline, discuss their opinions about events in the book. The participants should conclude that Punchinello surrendered to pressure to be like others because he was not content with himself. This decision caused some hardships for Punchinello, taking away from his happiness.

Possible discussion points:

Did you like the story? What part was most moving? Why?

What do you think is the message of the story?

Who do you think Eli represents? Who is Lucia?

Who does Willy Withit represent?

What does painting the nose green signify?

How can the story relate to our everyday lives?

Which character in the story do you relate and why?

What help do we receive from Eli's words?

How was Punchinello different than other Wemmicks? How was he the same?

Participants will use a dictionary to define "image" or "likeness" as it is used in **Genesis 1:26** and write the definition in their Workbook. They will then copy the verse in the space provided.

Leader will ask, "What responsibility do you think you have to God knowing you are made in His likeness?"

Leader will explain that while all mankind is created in the likeness of God and shares some characteristics with Him, each person is created to be **unique**. Like the flower at the beginning of the lesson, each person is the same but different. Perhaps the picture of the Trinity gives a deeper understanding of being the same but different. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all One, a truth that is hard for most to fully grasp. Yet, accepting this, believers understand that each Person of the Trinity is also unique. The Father and the Son are one and the same (**John 10:30**), yet the Son submitted to the Father's will and gave his life on the cross. The Holy Spirit comes from the Father and bears witness here on earth to Jesus (**John 15:26**). All three **uniquely** testify to God and His Kingdom. In the same way, each person is **uniquely** created to testify to God with his or her life. Each was created to be a **unique** expression of God's character, beauty, and wonder.

Participants write out John 10:30 and John 15:26 above this sentence found in their Workbook, **"I am created to be a unique expression of God's character, beauty, and wonder."**

David wrote,

Psalms 139: 13-16

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Participants will list some of their God-given qualities in their Workbook where indicated, thinking about how God knit them together in their mother's womb:

Answer: How are you the same as your family members?

Answer: How are you different?

Leader will point out that **Psalm 139** describes a God who knows each person intimately, who participates in their very formation within the womb, and who knows their **unique** destiny. Is it possible that God, the Creator of everything, could know and care about each one so personally? It's hard to believe, but it is true.

We are valued.

Participants are to write out Matthew 10:29-31 in their Workbook.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Leader will explain that this passage shows how tenderly God cares for each person and how much they are **valued**.

The leader will ask, "What do you do with **valuable** things? You Take care of them, right? The higher the **value**, the better the care."



"What is your **value** to God?"

"There *is* a price tag on your head.

No, I don't mean this kind of price tag." (Leader will show picture.)

Leader continues by saying, "The **value** put on you is a *ransom price* that has been paid by someone else. You were held hostage to sin, Jesus paid IN FULL your ransom price. In God's mind, you are very **valuable**!"

Participants are to draw a price tag with the verse **1 Peter 1:18-21** written on it.

Participants write out John 3:16 in their Workbook.

"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."

Participants will **define** the meaning of "the world" used in this verse and answer these questions:

Do you think God *loves you* but may not love other people? Why or why not?

Do you think God loves *other people* but may not love you? Why or why not?

Participants will **READ Romans 5:8**. **Leader** will ask for volunteers to fill in the missing words.

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were _____
(Still sinners), Christ died for us.*

Leader will ask the following:

Is there any one Christ did not die for?

Do you believe that God knows every hair on your head?

Do you believe that you are worth more than many sparrows?

Do you believe that God sent His Son to die for you personally?

Do you believe that you are uniquely created by God and valued?

Leader continues discussion by saying, "Believe it or not, it is true. Wouldn't it be wise to believe the truth instead of a falsehood? Who wants to believe a lie anyway? This is why it is important to base your beliefs on what the Bible says about you and not on what others say."

Leader tells participants, "God knows us completely. He knows that we need our mind renewed in our thinking (Romans 12:2) so we can live His good and perfect will. He has given us his Scriptures to teach us this (2 Timothy 3:16)."

Participants are to rewrite the "Do you believe...?" series of questions above as statements making them personal. For example:

God knows every hair on my head.

To God I am worth more than many sparrows.

God sent His Son, Jesus to die for me.

I am uniquely created and valued by God.

Participants are to read and copy the verses from Romans 12:2 and 2 Timothy 3:16 in their Workbook underneath the statements they made.

Prayer:

The leader will instruct participants to take a minute in quiet prayer and before God confess and **turn from** any false beliefs they have held about themselves that are contrary to these Scriptures, and **turn back to God** asking Him to open their heart and spirit to believe His truth about them, that they are **unique** and **valuable**.

And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

John 8:32

In closing:

Leader will close by saying, "Can we trust God and really be who we are? The Bible tells us God is love! **(1 John 4:8)**. This is an amazing statement and another foundational building block of Christian faith. God loves humanity enough to make the greatest sacrifice He could make in order to see His children free and restored back to a wholesome, loving relationship with Him - **back to our true identity**. He gave his one and ONLY Son, and He did this for people in all times and places on earth."

The leader continues, "Furthermore, our capacity to know God and love others begins with His love for us. In fact, the reason we have the capacity to love at all is because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). What a special relationship mankind has with God."

Lastly, leader states, "It is upon this very simple yet profound truth of God's love for mankind that we can extend love and acceptance to everyone without discrimination. He created each of us as **unique and valuable**."

Leader will have participants copy these verse references (1 John 4:8, 19) in their Workbook under Lesson 1 for future study.

Note: Leaders have the freedom to continue with all or some of the exercises in the Be Yourself! Master Curriculum Guide Lesson 1. However, as this is a Bible study, they should not skip the Bible Study portion. This Bible study should be done first. Then, they may continue with any additional lesson activities as time allows.

Lesson 2

Key Scripture: Romans 12:2 *Do not be conformed to this world^u but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

MCG Objective: The participant will define “peer pressure” and identify types of positive and negative peer pressure.

Materials:

- If Only I Had a Green Nose by Max Lucado (1 per participant)
- Bible Study Workbook (1 per participant)
- Markers, Crayons, Pencils
- Jar filled with small candies
- Paper (scraps on which to write guesses)
- ***BY! MCG**
-

Anticipatory Set/Engage (20 min.):

Before the lesson begins, leader will fill a glass jar completely with candies. They need to make sure they know how many candies are in the jar. They will hand each participant a piece of paper and pencil and have each participant guess how many candies they think are in the jar. Participants write their guess down. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THEY NOT TALK OR SHARE ANSWERS YET. Next, participants partner with one other person, agreeing together on an answer. They should write it down on their own piece of paper. This process continues next in groups of 4, then groups of 8. When the whole class is basically divided in half, leader informs the two groups that the group with the closest estimation will receive the candy to divide among its members. Participants are given a few minutes to discuss their answer. The leader calls on a representative from each group to share their guess. Leader reveals the number of candies to the whole class, determines the group with the closest answer, and gives them the candies at the end of the exercise.

Discussion Questions:

How did you make your estimate when it was just you alone?

How did your partner influence your decision?

Did you accept the decision of the group each time?

Did you stand up for your answer?

Did you come to a compromise within your group?

Did one person make the choice for the entire group? Did you agree with that person?

Did you change your answer, against your better judgment, because of the influence of the group?

Did you make a better or worse decision because of the influences of others in your group?

How does this activity relate to decisions you make on a daily basis?

Teach/Explain the Learning (10 min.):

Leader will explain, "In the curriculum we explore that, in order to become a better self, you must understand some influences that affect your choices." Participants will define these terms in their Workbook:

Pressure

Peer

Peer pressure

Positive peer pressure

Negative peer pressure

Participants will fill in the blanks below with the correct terms from above:

_____ is the use of persuasion or intimidation to make someone do something.

_____ is a person of the same age, status, or ability as another specified person.

_____ is influence from members of one's peer group.

_____ is the use of persuasion and/or influence from your peers which makes you want to behave in a way or do a certain thing that is socially perceived as positive.

_____ is the use of persuasion, influence, or intimidation from your peers that makes you want to behave in a way or do a certain thing that is socially perceived as negative.

Guided Practice/Experience the Learning (30 min.):

Participants are to refer back to If Only I Had a Green Nose and come up with examples of positive and negative peer pressure. They will write examples in their Workbook and share with the group. (Leader will remind previous YAS program participants of some of the peer pressures that Punchinello faced in You Are Special such as Lucia being a positive influence but the stars and dots given out being negative pressure.)

Learning: Understanding the content of the story

The leader will tell participants they can see from the opening exercise that the natural tendency is to “conform” to what others say, especially in a group of peers. Sometimes this is good, sometimes bad, and sometimes it’s neutral and neither good nor bad.”

In their Workbook where indicated participants will take a minute to write an example of a situation where it would be good to conform to the group’s will and not just their own.

Participants should then write an example of a situation where it is NOT good to conform to what the group says.

Finally, participants should write an example of a situation where it doesn’t really matter if one conforms to the group or not.

The leader will have participants **discuss their answers with the group.**

Recognizing negative peer pressure

The leader will explain that, in the story If Only I Had a Green Nose, Punchinello was pressured by his friends and his community to conform to having a green nose. Several types of “peer pressure” were used. Participants are to find the list below in their Workbook. Then they are to take a few minutes to go back through the story and see if they can point out examples of each of these negative pressures and **discuss within the group.**

Rejection - Threatening to leave someone out or end a friendship

The Put Down - Insulting or calling names to make someone feel bad

Reasoning - Giving reasons to do something or why it would be OK to do it

The Huddle - A group standing together talking or laughing with their backs out to others

The Look - Kids thinking they’re cool giving a look that means: “We’re cool and you’re not.”

The Example - Popular kids setting an example simply buying, wearing, or doing something causing others wanting to follow

Below each type of negative pressure, **participants are to write an example** from their own life - either examples of their own experience of being pressured or having themselves applied this type of pressure to others.

Bible Study (30+ min.):

Participants write out Romans 12:2.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Leader explains, "Regardless of how old or young, how rich or poor, each of us experiences relentless pressure to conform to another image. It may be pressure to have something we think we want, to do something we think we should do, or to be like someone else. It seems the world is designed to bombard us with messages that would have us conform to images that are not necessarily our true self. Just like Punchinello in the story, sometimes we give in to these pressures and we are taken farther away from our God-given identity."

In their Workbook, participants are to list some pressures to be like someone else that they may experience in their life:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

They will put a ★ star next to the one they feel especially worried about giving in to.

The leader says, "Being a believer in Jesus doesn't make you free from outside pressures. However, it can and should strengthen you in your faith so you can love and accept who you are, just as you are, and trust God for what you need and want. It is important to base your love of yourself on what the Bible says about you and not what the world says about you. The world sees only ordinary human experience without true spiritual insight."

Participants are to write out 1Corinthians 2:14.

The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

The leader explains that God sees what the world does not.

Participants are to write out 1 Samuel 16:7.

The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

Participants are to look at these examples of negative peer pressure in the Bible, write the questions, and write their answers in their Workbook (Allow 20 min.).

How was Jesus REJECTED in John 1:11? _____

What were some examples of REASONING that Satan used with Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4? _____

What kind of PUT DOWN did Jesus experience in Mark 15:16-20? _____

What HUDDLE experience did Jesus encounter in Luke 15:2? _____

Who probably gave THE LOOK to Jesus and under what circumstances in Luke 13:13-14? _____

What EXAMPLE did Jesus not follow in Matthew 21:13? _____

The leader states, "We see that even Jesus was exposed to pressure to conform. He experienced all that we have experienced, yet without sin."

What about positive peer pressure? The class discusses (Participants can take notes in their Workbooks under the question headings):

Can you think of an example in your life of positive peer pressure? _____

Where in the story did Punchinello experience positive peer pressure to have a green nose? _____

If it's felt as *pressure*, is it good? Why or why not? _____

Participants write out Romans 12:2 in their Workbook.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Participants write out these actions to take and define them:

Do not **conform**. Define *conform* _____

Be **transformed**. Define *transform* _____

You will **test**. Define *test* _____

And **approve**. Define *approve* _____

Participants now rewrite this passage from Romans in the space below these actions using their own words.

Participants will write the three words that describe God's will for them in their Workbook next to the Scripture reference according to the passage in **Romans 12:2-3** (*Answer: good, acceptable, perfect*).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Leader asks, "If God's will for you is described as so positive, why do you think you resist and try to conform to another image?" Participants write their answer in their Workbook.

Prayer:

The leader tells participants, "If you have applied negative pressure to others, now is a good time to ask God for forgiveness. If you have given in to negative peer pressure and recognize your error, take a minute to **confess** this to God, **turn back** to Him and He is faithful to forgive. Receive His forgiveness and move on to new behavior."

In Closing:

Leader says, "Temptations are real. We are all tempted to conform to another image, especially if we have weaknesses, and everyone has weaknesses. Take comfort from the Scripture, **Hebrews 4:15-16.**"

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Participants **write Hebrews 4:15-16** in their Workbook.

Leader tells participants that it is important to know that Jesus can sympathize with their weaknesses. Not only that, but he gives them a way out and access to the Throne Room of God.

Read **1 Corinthians 10:13.**

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Participants then discuss Verse 14, which goes on to say, "*Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.*"

Leader explains that "Idolatry" from a Biblical perspective is "The worship of manmade objects," or "putting anything above God."

Participants are told when they put someone else's idea of who they should be above God's idea, then they have created an idol - a false god. They certainly do not want to worship things created by man and that includes false images of one's self.

The leader tells participants that the next lesson will look at **motives** for giving in to pressure.

Note: Leaders have the freedom to continue with all or some of the exercises in the Master Curriculum Guide Lesson 2. However, as this is a Bible study, they should not skip the Bible Study portion. They should do this Bible study first then they can continue with any additional lesson activities as time allows.

Lesson 3

Key Scripture: 1 John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

MCG Objective: The participant will identify reasons he/she might give in to negative pressures as well as become aware of tricks of advertisers.

Materials:

- If Only I had a Green Nose by Max Lucado (1 per participant)
- Bible Study Workbooks (1 per participant)
- Markers, Crayons, pencils
- Opaque bag with bubble gum in it
- ***BY! MCG**

Anticipatory Set/Engage (15 min.):

Leader holds up a sealed bag or container that conceals its contents. (Known only to the leader, the bag contains chewing gum.) The leader asks the participants if they want to see what is inside the bag. Yes or No?

Leader explains to the participants that inside the bag is the key to being **totally cool**. The item in the bag is easy to carry, comes in many varieties, and is packaged in a number of ways. It can be consumed. Leader asks, "Do you want what is in the bag? Yes or No? Would you make the same decision if you were told that what is in the bag is not healthy? Inside the bag are cigarettes. Do you still want it? Yes or No?"

Leader opens the bag and tells participants that it contains bubble gum. Leader asks, "Do you want what is in the bag since it is not life threatening? Yes or No?"

The leader reminds participants that when they were advertising the contents of the bag by saying how great and cool it would make them, the participants were interested in the contents. This is a technique that advertisers use and is one reason people give in to negative pressure. They want to be cool and believe the "tricks" used in advertisements.

Teach/Explain the Learning (20 min.):

Participants are to be reminded of what was learned in the previous lesson about negative and positive pressures. They are to turn to a neighbor and define peer pressure. Participants refer to their Workbook, Lesson 3, and look for the list of "Why People Give in to Peer Pressure." They should list some reasons why they think people give in to negative pressures. (Leader should NOT share the suggestions listed below until the participants come up with their own.)

This list as well as the participants' lists should be reviewed:

- Want to be "cool"
- Want to be liked, have more friends
- To improve academic standing
- Want to be part of the crowd
- Want to attract attention or deflect attention
- People they respect are doing it
- Fear of being rejected by others
- Don't want to lose a friend
- Want to appear grown up
- Curious
- Don't want to be ridiculed
- Don't want to hurt someone's feelings
- Aren't sure of what they really want
- Don't know how to get out of the situation
- Believe lies others tell them
- Tricked
- To avoid negative consequences

Participants should refer to the If Only I Had a Green Nose book and, as a class, come up with reasons that Punchinello had his nose painted green and *write down some examples in their Workbook*.

Leader will discuss how important fashion is in determining one's self worth. The leader states, "Advertisers get people to buy their product by using words like "greatest", "best", or by using celebrities to endorse their products thereby sending the message that their product will make you popular or will make you cool. These techniques are types of peer pressure. Next, we will look at the things that motivate us to give in to peer pressure."

Bible Study (45 min.):

Group will reread 1 John 2:15-17.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

The leader will explain that this passage talks about “lusts.” Lust is defined as a “passionate and overwhelming desire.” To have desires or wants is not necessarily bad. In fact, there are many good desires to have; like the desire to succeed, the desire to have friends, the desire to be married, etc. Nor is it bad to be passionate about something; for example, being passionate about doing the right thing, passionate about God, etc. But lust in this passage is an *overwhelming hunger* for something the world offers, overwhelming to the point of being willing to give up and compromise one's true self for it. For example, in the story of Jacob and Esau, Esau was willing to give up his birthright, his inheritance as the first-born son, just for a bowl of warm porridge. The choice he made had consequences for all eternity.

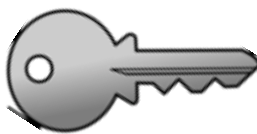
Class reads Genesis 25: 29-34.

The leader states, "Esau let his physical hunger compromise his earthly future. (Someone reads Hebrews 12:16-17). It's a pretty frightening thought that we could do the same for something so ordinary as cereal, but each time we give in to negative pressure and compromise our true self, we do just that, setting aside the real inheritance that God has for us as believers."

The leader tells participants that, in Matthew 4, Jesus gives the best example of living out this directive to forsake the worldly desires. In the story, Satan confronts Jesus with very real and earthly temptations.

Class reads Matthew 4.

Leader says, "Jesus shows us in this chapter how he resisted pressure when confronted with temptation. Even though he was God, he was fully human and still had to wrestle with fleshly needs. In his response to Satan we see the keys to overcoming temptation."



Leader explains The Keys:

Jesus...

- knew who he was,
- knew the Word of God, and
- knew his mission was to glorify God the Father.

Leader states, "Because of this, Jesus could resist the pressure to satisfy his real and natural needs as well as resist Satan's offer of power and dominion."

”

Leader continues, "In the same way, we resist temptation to be other than whom God created us to be when we:

- know who we are,
- know the Word of God,
- know what is our mission or purpose."

In their Workbook, Lesson 3 page, participants are to draw 3 keys and label them ACCEPTANCE, VALUE, PURPOSE. Participants should leave room for notes about each key from this teaching.

Leader says, "Usually the reason for giving in to pressure has to do with one of three needs: the need for **acceptance**, the need for **value**, or the need for **purpose**. These three qualities make up a void or empty place in our heart that can only be filled by God. If we don't feel fully *accepted* by God, we will seek acceptance in all the wrong places through the wrong things or with the wrong people in the wrong relationships. As one songwriter wrote, we will be "looking for love in all the wrong places." If we don't feel *valued*, we may constantly strive for perfection, or operate with false pride, or depend on material wealth to give us value, all of which can crumble in one quick moment. If we have no *purpose* we can fall into depression and hopelessness, or grow angry and bitter, and separate ourselves from people who love us. It is common to be vulnerable in any or all of these areas because they are real needs that should be filled. The problem comes with how we choose to fill them."

The leader continues, "Advertisers are especially good at identifying and targeting these areas of human weakness. Advertisements are some of the most obvious forms of manipulation that apply both seen and unseen pressures to conform to the world's standard of success, wealth, beauty, happiness, etc. Young people are especially vulnerable to these pressures as they begin to form their values and identity separate from their parents and within the context of their peers and their culture. For that reason, it is wise to honestly examine the kinds of pressures and your motives for giving in to them."

Leader asks, "Which one of these three - being **accepted**, being **valued**, or having a **purpose** - do you think is your greatest weak spot? Put a star next to that Key in your Workbook because those notes will be most valuable to you. Can you identify a brand name or company that attempts to fill this particular need for young people through their ads (i.e. Nike, Apple, Samsung, others)?" Give participants time to take some notes in their Workbook.

To address this issue, participants will go back to their beliefs about God and about who they are to Him. They should be instructed to remember the foundation bricks in Lesson 1:

"Belief's lead to attitudes, attitudes to feelings, and feelings to actions."

The leader explains, "In Lesson 1 we see that God made mankind in His image. From this we understand the intrinsic value of all human beings. We also know from Scripture that God formed us in our mother's womb and knows every day of our life before we lived one (Read Psalm 139). But does that mean we are righteous, clean, holy and ready to stand before God? No. To be cleansed of our sins we must first believe that Jesus came to save us and receive him as Lord. When we invite him to be Lord of our life we take on a new life (Read 2 Corinthians 5:17)."

Leader continues, "And this is where the road to our true IDENTITY and self takes a turn from the world's definition of self. Once we are His, we are a totally *new creation*. The old has passed away. Who we are is totally defined by us now living in and for Christ."



We are ACCEPTED (first key):

Leader states, "Yes, God loves everyone, and he desires that no one should perish and that all should be saved from the destruction of sin (Read 2 Peter 3:9). In fact, this is why Jesus came to earth - for the purpose of taking upon himself the full punishment for sin and purchasing eternal life for His people (Read John 3:16). He did this in order that mankind could live free to enjoy full fellowship with God just as Adam and Eve did in the Garden. And he did this EVEN though we were sinners."

Participants are to read Romans 3:23-24 and write the verse reference in their Workbook section where indicated.

Participants should take a minute and think or discuss with a group as a whole: Can you name an ad or a brand that appeals to the need to be **accepted**?

Class reads John 1:12-13 and writes the entire verse where indicated.

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Leader says, "Jesus **accepts** us! And when we accept Him, we are made new. When we are created new, we have a new identity."

We are VALUED (second key):

The leader explains, "If we fully understand Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross, we must accept that God VALUED us enough to give his one and only Son in exchange for our life."

Class writes out 2 Corinthians 5:21 where indicated in Workbook.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Class will discuss: According to this passage, for whose sake was Jesus made to be sin?

What was the gift he purchased for us?

If a price tag could be put on Jesus' life, what would it be?



If the Father's will was to exchange Jesus' life for yours, how valuable are you?

Stop and think or discuss this with a group.

Can you name an ad or brand that appeals to the need to feel **valuable**?

Participants read 1Peter 1:18-21 and write this verse reference only next to the price tag drawing.

Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Leader says, "We cannot emphasize this enough: your **value** is not based on your good works, your good deeds, what you earn, or how important others say you are. **Your value is based on God's love for you just as you are.**"

We are PURPOSEFUL (third key):

Leader asks, "What about purpose? So many people today are seeking real purpose in their lives. Purpose is defined as the "the reason why something is done or used: the aim or intention of something"² Why were we created? Why do we exist? To have a God-defined purpose is an aching cry in the human heart." (Ecclesiastes 3:11 is read and the reference should be written next to the key.)

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/purpose>

Leader further explains, "Without this, we attempt to satisfy our hearts with all kinds of meaningless things. Can a new phone or computer give us purpose? Will having a husband or wife or even having children satisfy the need for purpose? Be careful! While relationships are important, without God in the midst of them, relationships will only temporarily satisfy. All things that appear shiny at first will eventually tarnish and fade away unless God has brought life and purpose to them."

Participants will stop and think or **discuss** with a group, "Can you name an ad or a brand that tries to appeal to the need for **purpose**?"

The leader states, "Through Christ we are restored back to God's household just like the son in the Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15). In being restored back into the Family of God we are given an inheritance to all the Father's promises (1 John 3:1-2; Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4). Here are just some of those promises. Take a minute to look up the verses and briefly write the promises mentioned in them under the Purpose Key."

2 Peter 1:4 _____
Philippians 4:19 _____
1 John 3:1 _____
Psalm 84:11 _____

Leader continues, "If all of those promises *and more* are yours in Christ, how could that affect your response to peer pressure? Write the question with your answer in your Workbook."

Prayer:

Leader tells participants, "If you have an unmet **need for acceptance**, to **be valued**, or to **have purpose**, you are not alone. But, if you think one of these or all of these needs are pushing you to do something that you know is unhealthy, unwholesome, dangerous, or even illegal, STOP now and pray. Pray for God to reveal his TRUTH to you that you are accepted, valued, and have purpose. Ask God to help you see and believe and turn away from these things."

Closing:

The leader closes by saying, "We want to examine our motives, to see whether we are in the faith (Read 2 Corinthians 13:5). People who have fully put their trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins need not doubt their salvation, but maybe more encouragement is needed to let Jesus take over our daily life so we can walk in the fullness He intended for us."

Leader continues, "Otherwise you might constantly be looking for approval from other sources and be vulnerable to pressures of the world to conform to false images. God has a plan for you. This is really exciting. He has known you since before time, and he has something for you to do."

Participants are to write out Ephesians 2:10.

Leader says, "He made each of us for a purpose that He prepared in advance."

In BIG letters in their Workbook, participants are to write at the end of the lesson page:

- KNOW WHO YOU ARE,
- KNOW THE WORD OF GOD,
- KNOW WHAT IS YOUR MISSION OR PURPOSE.

So you can resist peer pressure just as Jesus did in the wilderness through the power the Holy Spirit.

Participants write out Ephesians 1:7-10 and close by reading:

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

Note: Instructors have the freedom to continue with all or some of the exercises in the Master Curriculum Manual Lesson 3. However, as this is a Bible study, the Bible Study portion should not be skipped. This Bible study should be done first. Then the lessons may continue with any additional lesson activities as time allows.

Lesson 4

Key Scripture: Galatians 6:7 *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

MCG Objective: The participant will examine the negative consequences of giving in to peer pressure.

Materials:

- If Only I Had a Green Nose by Max Lucado (1 per participant)
- Bible Study Workbook (1 per participant)
- Markers, Crayons, Pencils
- ***BY! MCG**

Anticipatory Set/Engage: (10 min.): The leader will tell the participants a fable. *Once upon a time there was a farmer who needed to sell his ox. The ox was a strong and healthy ox so he knew anyone would be lucky to get this ox. A neighboring farmer owned three oxen but wanted a fourth to pull his large wagon and plow. He went to look at the oxen for sale. He asked the farmer if he could take the ox to his farm for a week before he decided. The farmer selling the ox thought that was a strange request since his ox was obviously strong and healthy, but he agreed. The next week the neighboring farmer returned with the ox and said, "I am sorry but I cannot buy your ox. He is not a good ox." The selling farmer didn't understand and asked for an explanation. "Well," said the neighboring farmer, "I have three oxen already. Two of them are well behaved but one of them tries to push the others out and takes their food. He can be stubborn. When I put your ox in the pen with the other oxen, he immediately went to be with my ox that causes trouble. He stayed close to this ox the whole week and ignored the two well-behaved oxen."*

Leader will ask participants to state the moral of this fable. (*Behavior is influenced by the company you keep.*) Participants should write the moral of the fable in their Workbook as indicated.

Leader comments, "Choices lead to consequences. Good choices result in good consequences, and bad choices result in bad consequences (although the impact may not be immediate)."

Teach/Explain the Learning (15 min.):

In small groups participants look through If Only I Had a Green Nose to find examples of consequences that Punchinello and the Wemmicks faced by going along with having their noses painted. After sharing examples, leader can include the examples below and allow for discussion.

Examples that to be included:

- The Wemmicks ran into walls, doors, and even each other because they walked around with their noses in the air.
- Their necks hurt.
- The mayor's wife had to go back to be repainted because she couldn't bear to think she had a chip in her paint and was upset her real me was showing.
- Willy Withit was vain because he kept looking at himself in the mirror.
- The paint stings your nose and stinks.
- The paint only came off with sandpaper.
- The Wemmicks were not better selves with their green noses because they were cruel and teased those who were different.
- Punchinello started looking down his nose at the unpainted Wemmicks.
- Punchinello and his friends had several layers of paint on their noses because the rules kept changing.
- Punchinello forgot what he really looked like.

The leader will point out where Punchinello asks Eli, "Does a green nose make them smarter? Does a green nose make them stronger? Does it make them faster? What does a green nose make them?" and will ask participants to remember Eli response (Greener). Participants will write Eli's response in their Workbook where indicated.

Leader explains that giving in to negative peer pressure can result in negative choices that can cause many problems socially, academically, physically, or emotionally.

Guided Practice/Experience the Learning (20 min.):

Participants are to complete the handout, "For Better or Worse?" found in their Workbook at the end of Lesson 4 and discuss in small groups. Participants may mark both positive and negative for some. The leader should encourage open discussion or consider setting up debate teams. (Participants at this age love to debate and it encourages participation and thinking!) The point is for the participants to discover the consequences, not to be told what the consequences are. *(For the sake of time, the leader can divide the participants into small groups and give them only part of the list. If working in small groups, each group should elect a representative to share any major points of discussion when sharing with the whole class.)*

Bible Study (45 min.):

Participants are to write out **1 Corinthians 15:33** in their Workbooks.

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

Leader states, "We are not expected to live in isolation from everyone who is not a Christian. In fact, how will anyone ever learn of Jesus unless we fellowship with people who have not yet heard about him? However, it is wise to examine what kind of influences rub off on you when you are around people who have a different focus in life. Bad influences can corrupt good character. The reverse is true also. But be aware! To have the influence go the right direction, you need to be strong in your faith."

Leader tells participants, "The law of "sowing and reaping" (Galatians 6:7) applies to life choices, too. As stated earlier, choices have consequences, and bad choices lead to little deaths in some form or another. Let me explain. Each time we make a "bad" choice, one contrary to God's will, our heart becomes a little more closed, a little bit more calloused and hard. If we continue to make bad choices, we can become numb to the leading of the Holy Spirit and feel distanced from Christ. Yes, we have a wonderful gift of free choice, and God has given us great freedom, but God always advocates for us to choose life as he gives us that freedom to choose. He has outlined those life choices in the Bible. (Deuteronomy 30:19; John 10:10)."

Participants are to draw a picture of a "hard heart" and label it in their Workbook.



Participants write out Deuteronomy 30:19 under the heart.

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now CHOOSE LIFE so that you and your children may live.

Leader responds to verse, "God will reward every life-giving choice we make. This is His law of sowing and reaping."

Class reads Galatians 6:7.

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Leader says, "The Books of Psalms and Proverbs are especially full of wisdom on how to make wise choices." Participants will write "According to Psalm 111:10, Wisdom comes from _____. (Where?) Participants fill in the blank in their Workbook.

Leader continues saying, "Even non-believers can possess some wisdom when they live in reverence and respect of the One True God (Acts 10:1). In addition, God has given every person a conscience (Romans 2:15). Through the conscience we appeal to all people to "do the right thing," believing that their conscience knows what that is."

Participants write out Psalm 1:1-2 where indicated.

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

Participants are to write the answers to this exercise in their Workbook:

Explain "walk in step with the wicked" _____

Explain "stand in the way that sinners take" _____

Explain "sit in the company of mockers" _____

Participants are to write down any real life examples they can think of for the three definitions above.

What were some of the consequences?

Leader warns, "**Don't be fooled**; bad influence is hard to resist unless you are strong in your faith. There are numerous Biblical examples of people who appeared strong at first but who gave in to worldly pressures."

Participants will find the three columns in their Workbook labeled PETER, SOLOMON, and DAVID and read the Scripture references given for each. They should take notes from the discussion.

Peter (Mark 14)	Solomon (1 Kings 11)	David (1Chronicles 21)
<i>Peter was one of Jesus' most faithful and enthusiastic disciples, but he was afraid of what others would think of him, and when pressured, he <u>denied Jesus</u> three times.</i>	<i>He was the wisest and richest man in the world, but the influences of his many wives turned him to worship other gods, and he <u>lost his kingdom</u> as a result.</i>	<i>The shepherd started off as a young giant killer having only a slingshot and faith in his God. Later as king, David demonstrated pride in his own earthly strength by taking a count of his warriors. As a result, God sent a plague on Israel.</i>

Leader will **Ask** and class will **Discuss**:

How did Peter's denial affect him and others?
How did Solomon's choice affect him and others?
How did David's choice affect him and others?

Leader says, "In every case we see strong men of faith give in to pressures with devastating results that affected more than just their own lives. It effected future generations as well. Notice however, Peter and David later repented and became godly examples to us showing us that even when we make mistakes God can redeem them and us."

Leader instructs participants to find in their Workbook the second chart with three columns labeled: Daniel, Joshua, and Ananias. They should include the Scripture references and take notes in the columns.

Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (Dan. 3:10-30)	Rahab (Joshua 4:1-7; 6:17; 22-23; Mat.1:5)	Ananias (Acts 9:1-9)
Choices/Consequences	Choices/Consequences	Choices/Consequences

Class reads Daniel 3:10-30 and discusses:

What good choice did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego make?

What were the consequences when seen to the end?

Class reads Joshua 4:1-7; 6:17, 22-23; Matthew 1:5 and discusses:

What good choice did Rahab make?

What was the consequence?

Class reads Acts 9:1-9 and discusses:

What good choice did Ananias make?

What were the consequences?

Leader instructs, "We see from these examples that choices have consequences beyond us. Negative peer pressure is not a meaningless thing. It can have serious effects on our health, our home, and our future. Be wise as it says in **Proverbs 13:20**, *Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.*"

Prayer:

Leader states, "Now is the time to pray for release from negative pressures. God came to give us life and life abundantly (John 10:10). Take a minute now and ask God for the strength to turn from negative pressures and to find the grace to make life-giving choices. Jot down any notes you have from your prayers."

In Closing:

Leader instructs participants to receive these words, not just as a challenge, but also as an encouragement. Galatians 6:7-9 *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

Philippians 4: 8-9

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Leader tells participants that God has a different way of defining or measuring wisdom or success. When one does right and good, they have peace with God. One should know that peace is a precious promise available to all believers. But that peace is found in God and not in the world. Seek His Kingdom and all these other things will be given to you (Matthew 6:33). One must look to God to satisfy their needs.

Proverbs 13:20

(Leader comments, "This is so beautiful!")

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life. You can write this at the end of Lesson 4 in your Workbook and add a drawing that makes a fitting ending to the lesson.



Note: Instructors have the freedom to continue with all or some of the exercises in the Master Curriculum Manual Lesson 4. However, as this is a Bible study, the Bible Study portion must not be skipped. Leaders are to do the Bible study first. Then they can continue with any additional lesson activities as time allows.

For Better or Worse

Decide if the following decisions would have positive or negative consequences. Some might have both.

Decisions	Positive	Negative
Eat healthy		
Wear only brand name clothes		
Exercise		
Not study for a test		
Play video games		
Tease		
Spread rumors		
Listen to music		
Skip school		
Drink alcohol		
Smoke cigarettes		
Be kind to a new people		
Enjoy a hobby		
Choose friends who get in trouble		
Do something so you'll be popular		
Desire to be "cool"		
Play on a sports team		
Take painting lessons		
Judge yourself based on what you own		
Attend a party		
Share the message from <i>Green Nose</i>		
Learn a foreign language		
Buy a new outfit		
Cheat on a test		
Walk away from dangerous situations		
Be Yourself		

Note to leaders: "Critical thinking is purposeful, reflective judgment concerning what to believe or what to do." * Allowing this kind of open discussion can be new and different and uncertain for both participant and leader. Give participants the opportunity to share openly.

Lesson 5

Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

MCG Objective: The participant will practice ways to resist negative peer pressure and personally apply concepts of Be Yourself!

Materials:

- If Only I Had a Green Nose by Max Lucado (1 per participant)
- Bible Study Workbook (1 per participant)
- Small items to use as Bingo markers (i.e., paper clips, erasers)
- Sheet of paper (1 per participant)
- ***BY! MCG**
- ***Refusal Skills Posters (see Appendix)**
- ***Celebration Banner (optional)**

Anticipatory Set/Engage (20 min.): The Leader will give each participant a sheet of paper, pencil, and something like small candies to be used as markers for “bingo”. The Leader will give participants a list of ways to say “No” in different languages. (See Appendix. More “no’s” could be added and/or more ways to say “no” in Chinese. In English you might say “no”, “nope”, “uh uh”, “no way”, “count me out”, etc.) The participant will create a bingo board by folding a sheet of paper into 16 squares. They are to write one way to say no in each space. The leader will call out one of the “no’s” until someone gets four in a row up and down, across, or diagonally. If someone gets four in a row they can shout out, “Be Myself!” Perhaps the winner can call out the next round or have everyone applaud them. The leader will tell participants that in this lesson they are going to learn some strategies to help them resist negative pressures. One way is to say, “No.”

The leader will tell participants that learning to say no is important, and this game is fun, but ultimately a person has to find a way to resist negative pressure in a way that is real and true to their needs and situation. This involves learning to say “no” from a much deeper place in one’s heart and mind.

Teach/Explain the Learning (10 min.):

Participants should come to understand that the key to resisting negative influences is feeling support of others, knowing what they want to do, and having a safe way of avoiding what they don’t want to do. It is important to know some strategies ahead of time for use when needed. Leader will write the **Refusal Skills** on posters and hang them around the room for reference (See BY! MCG). Participants are to refer to the list of Refusal Skills found in their Workbook. Participants should read through them as a class.

Class will discuss: Why did Lucia not give in to pressure? (*Participants can write their ideas in the space provided in their Workbook*)

The leader suggests that perhaps PUNCHINELLO could have avoided his negative consequences if he had used some **refusal skills and known the Biblical foundation for them.**

Bible Study (60 min.):

Either alone, or in small groups, participants are to read through the verses under each Refusal Skill. The reading can be shared by having different group members read a verse. When finished with a Skill, a participant will pick a verse that is especially meaningful and write it out in their Workbook under that Skill. They should do this for each Skill. Now participants have the truth of God there to support each reason to refuse peer pressure.

Exercise Control-Know the reasons you don't want to give in and remain confident. *Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 6:14-18; Psalm 139:13-14; Proverbs 25:28; Psalm 34:12-14; Proverbs 14:30; Romans 15:13*

Stay Surrounded by Positive People-Surround yourself with positive friends and people who respect your choices. *Psalm: 1; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Hebrews 6:12; Proverbs 13:20; Ephesians 5:8-11; Proverbs 13:14*

Walk Away-You owe no explanation. Remove yourself from the situation. *Proverbs 29:8; Proverbs 13:20; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 3:34-35; Proverbs 3:5-6; Proverbs 29:11; John 8:36*

Think Ahead-Practice some refusal words or what you would do when faced with a negative pressure. *Proverbs 15:28; 2 Timothy 1:7; Proverbs 12:18; Proverbs 17:28; Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 16:24; Proverbs 15:4; 1 Corinthians 13:5*

Be Your Own Cheerleader-Speak positively and encouragingly to yourself. *Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 2:16-17; 1 Samuel 16:7; James 1:12; Psalm 37:4; James 4:1-3; 1 John 4:18*

Make Another Choice-Think of something else you can do. *James 3:16-18; James 1:12; James 4:1-2; James 4:6-7; Luke 6:37-38; Proverbs 3:35*

Be Assertive-Stand straight, make eye contact, and say how you feel. *2 Timothy 1:7; Philippians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:24-25; Matthew 7:12; Ephesians 4:32*

Now, in smalls group, leader instructs participants to read through the points in "How to Appreciate Yourself" section (at the end of the lesson) and discuss each. All the verses can be read later in personal devotional time.

Prayer:

Leader says, "Take a moment and pray with someone in your group (either draw names, or pick pairs). Allow yourself to share where you really need help in light of this lesson. If you are on your own, pray through each of the points in the "How to Appreciate Yourself" section. Confess, turn back to God, and receive forgiveness and insight into new ways to do things."

In Closing:

Leader tells participants, "In this last lesson you have discussed ways to resist negative peer pressure and ways to appreciate yourself. It is important to be able to do these two things so you can stand strong and be yourself."

Leader reminds class of the following from lesson 3:

"We resist negative peer pressure when we:

- **know who we are**...*that comes from Knowing God more intimately.*
- **know the Word of God**...*by being in the Word regularly.*
- **know what is our unique mission or purpose**...*by drawing close to God and waiting on him.*

We must believe we are loved, accepted, valued, and have purpose. The Bible is true and we must make a choice about what to believe. Will we believe the world around us, or God? The answer is clear, but because it is clear does not mean it's easy. Believing God takes knowledge, courage, and strength. But be encouraged; God is for you!"

Class finishes this lesson in their Workbook by writing out Psalm 118: 6.

The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

**Rejoice in who you are;
Befriend people who can rejoice with you;
Be Yourself!**

Banner:

If leader does not do the Bonus Bible Lesson, then they should finish the class with everyone adding their signature to a large banner with the BY! Pledge:

"I promise to be kind to myself and others accepting everyone as unique and worthwhile. I will examine my motives before giving in to peer pressure. And most importantly, I will love and embrace who I am uniquely created to be, and Be Myself!"

"How to Appreciate Yourself"

(In your quiet time, read one or all of the verses under each point. You can use these points as a prayer focus as well.)

1. Be careful about comparing yourself to other people. Sometimes that can make you feel good or even inspire you to improve in some way, but sometimes it can make you overlook what's truly good about yourself and cause you to feel bad.

Psalm 139:13-14; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Timothy 4:12; Galatians 1:10; Romans 12:3

2. Think about times when you've done something good. Include those times when you've made a difference to somebody else by being helpful, kind, or thoughtful.

Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 16:24; Proverbs 15:4; 1 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Proverbs 25:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:11

3. Take part in activities that make you feel good such as hobbies, reading, sports, or spending time with good friends. Proverbs 18:24; Philippians 4:8-9; Luke 16:10-12; 1 Corinthians 10:31

4. Don't be so afraid of failing that you are not willing to try something new. New experiences can help you grow and discover wonderful new things about yourself. 1

John 1:9-10; 1 Peter 4:8; James 1:2-4; Philippians 4:13; Philippians 2:13; Psalm 37:4-5

5. When you do fail at something, don't get down on yourself. Think about what you can learn from the experience and how you can do better next time. Romans 8:28-30; Proverbs 3:6; 1 Peter 5:6-7; Romans 8:1; John 3:17; Romans 8:34

6. Think about things you do well. Enjoy your successes.

Psalm 37:4; James 4:10; Proverbs 16:3; Luke 16:10-11; Jeremiah 29:11; 2 Timothy 3:17

Proverbs 3:1-4; Philippians 4:13

7. Remember, the most important thing about people is what we're like inside, not what we own or what we've accomplished.

Proverbs 20:5; Proverbs 4:23; Colossians 3:10; 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 7:1-5; Proverbs 31:30; Colossians 3:17

Ways to Say "No."

These should be written out on the board and participants use them to fill one square each on their Bingo page with a way to say "no."

La - Arabic
Bu - Chinese
Ne - Dutch
No - English
Hindi - Filipino
Non - French
Nein - German
Den - Greek
Ni - Irish
Tidak - Indonesian
Lo - Hebrew
Nahi - Hindi
Niet - Russian
Yok - Turkish
Na - Persian (Farsi)
Nai - Japanese
Nie - Polish
Nu - Romanian
Aniyo - Korean
Hakuna - Swahili

(Could add more or come up with 16 different ways to say "no" in the participant's native language.)

Bonus Bible Study Lesson

Key Scripture: Matthew 22:39

And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Objective: Participants will explore the difference between being a “Lover of Self” and “Loving Yourself”.

Materials Needed:

- Bible Study Workbook (1 per participant)
- Two water bottles; one with fresh clean water, one with clear but salty water
- A piece of candy
- C.O.M.A. Worksheets (In Workbook)

Opening Anticipatory Exercise (15 min):

Leader will place two glass/clear plastic bottles at the front of the room. One of them should contain purified drinking water. The other should contain heavily salted drinking water, but it should appear exactly the same as the other (i.e., the salt should be completely distributed and diluted throughout the water). Leader asks if anyone is thirsty and has a volunteer come to the front of the class. They take a long drink of the purified drinking water and describe the feeling/result. Then they take a long drink of the other bottle and describe the feeling/result as well. They can take the bottle of purified drinking water to their seat and perhaps a candy for being such a good sport (and to get the bad taste out of their mouth!).

Leader points out that both drinking options looked so similar in appearance, but upon further examination and experience, the two were vastly different. One was refreshing, hydrating and healthy. The other was unpleasant, dehydrating and unhealthy. Leader explains that in the same way there were two drinking options, similar in appearance, but very different in experience, there are two options for how one relates to self-love. One is God-honoring, life giving, and healthy on all levels. The other is the exact opposite.

Learning (5 min.): Participants will write “Loving Yourself vs. Lover of Self” as the title in their Workbook on the first page of this lesson. Participants are going to use a Bible study method call C.O.M.A. to learn from two portions of God’s Word that explain these concepts. They should refer to the two C.O.M.A. pages in their Workbook. The class should talk through the process to make sure participants understand the tool before they begin.

Guided Practice (40 min): The participants should be divided into groups and complete the C.O.M.A. process for Part I, 2 Timothy 3:1-5 and Part II, Matthew 22:36-40. Everyone comes back together as a class to share answers. Leader should affirm correct answers and gently rephrase incorrect answers as to make sure all of the information below is highlighted.

C.O.M.A. Bible Study Part I **"Lover of Self"**

Key Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1-5

Leader will explain that a simple method that is commonly used to begin Bible reading and study is a method called **C.O.M.A.** These 4 simple words provide an outline for how to read the text. Leader will lead a class discussion and explain the elements of C.O.M.A. to the participants as follows:

Step 1: Choose the text

Step 2: Read the text together (possibly more than once)

Now, apply **C.O.M.A.**

CONTEXT

What is the context of this passage? Find this out by asking a few questions.

- Who wrote this scripture? *The Apostle Paul*
- Who were they writing to? *Timothy*
- Why did they write this? *Paul misses Timothy. He wants to continue to encourage and exhort him, and he has instructions for churches/The Church that he was passing on through Timothy. It is also worth noting this is the last letter Paul wrote, and it was written from a prison in Rome.*

OBSERVATION

What are some of the things that can be observed about the writing? One could look for some of these things:

- Are there any phrases or words that stand out or are repeated? *There are a lot of adjectives describing people that don't truly follow Christ. The word "lovers" is repeated four times. The term "lovers of self" is the first adjective in the long list.*
- What are the main points the text is making? *That people with these qualities are not true followers of Christ and should be avoided. Being a "lover of self" is somehow related to all these other terrible attributes.*

MEANING

What does the text mean? It's pointless to read scripture if one doesn't wrestle with what it actually means. All of scripture is written to reveal who God is, so that He may be known and enjoyed

- What does this passage teach about God? *That He wants each person to be a lover of Him; that He is often the exact opposite of the worst human traits (i.e., one can be boastful and arrogant, He is humble; one can be unholy and unloving, He is utterly holy and the essence of love).*
- What does this passage teach a person about his/her self? *That even people that claim to be "spiritual" can lack the love and power of God; that one does not want to be a lover of self.*
- What does this passage teach about having a close relationship with God? *That one cannot be a lover of self, money and pleasure as well as a lover of God.*

APPLICATION

- What is a personal response to this passage?

Just like in lesson 4, a person needs to be aware of the people they are spending time with and who is allowed to influence them. He/she is grateful that through Jesus, God has forgiven them and has set them free from every one of the sins listed in this passage of Scripture. Gratefulness that, if they do struggle with one of the sins listed in this passage, they can find renewed hope in the power of the Holy Spirit. Being a "lover of self" is NOT a quality they want to possess.

C.O.M.A. Bible Study Part II **"Loving Yourself"**

Key Scripture: Matthew 22:36-40

Leader will explain that a simple method that is commonly used to begin Bible reading and study is a method called **C.O.M.A.** These 4 simple words provide an outline for how to read the text. Leader will lead a class discussion and explain the elements of C.O.M.A. to the participants as follows:

Step 1: Choose the text

Step 2: Read the text together (possibly more than once)

Now, apply **C.O.M.A.**

CONTEXT

What is the context of this passage? Find this out by asking a few questions.

- Who wrote this scripture? *Matthew, a disciple of Jesus*
- Who were they writing to? *Initially to Jews, eventually for the whole world*
- Why did they write this? *To record the life of Jesus and to confirm that He is the Messiah.*

OBSERVATION

What are some of the things that can be observed about the writing? One could look for some of these things:

- Are there any phrases or words that stand out or are repeated? *"You shall"-a directive is being given; the word "love" is repeated; the superlative "greatest" gets one's attention.*
- What are the main points the text is making? *Loving God and loving others sums up all that God wants one to do.*

MEANING

What does the text mean? It's pointless to read scripture if one doesn't wrestle with what it actually means. All of scripture is written to reveal who God is, so that He may be known and enjoyed.

- What does this passage teach about God? *He's relational; more than anything else He wants each person's love; He's wise, God knows that, if one loves Him, obedience in all other areas will stem from that love; He created each person to enjoy relationship with Him and with one another.*

What does this passage teach a person about his/her self? *That love is one's primary purpose; that it is good and right for a person to love themselves.*

- What does this passage teach about having a close relationship with God?
That He wants that even more than any person does!

APPLICATION

- What is a personal response to this passage?

One wants to follow this directive of loving God and loving others, as well as the implied directive to love oneself.

The leader concludes by asking which option between being a "lover of self" and "loving yourself" is the God-honoring, life-giving and healthy way to relate to oneself?

More Bible Study (20 min.): The leader explains, "The Greatest Commandment is one of the most referenced portions of scripture. However, we see that an expanded view is needed to appreciate all that God is trying to teach us through this exchange between Jesus and the lawyer. Most people only process two things that Jesus is telling them to do (loving God and loving others), when really there are three instructions to follow (love God, love yourself, love others). In knowing that, we become clear on WHAT to do, but not on HOW to do it."

Leader continues by telling participants to ask God for wisdom in the following ways:

1. God, where can I get this love that you have commanded me to offer you, others and myself?
2. God, what does it look like for me to love myself?

Leader states, "Thankfully the first question is answered quite easily as you read 1 John 4:7 (see verses 7-21 for more context). We are able to love God because he loves us. It's NOT a chicken and egg scenario where you wonder what comes first. God loves us, and only then are we able to love. God has deposited in us/given us what He requires of us."

The leader further explains, "The second question can be a bit more challenging. If loving others is essentially treating them the way we would like to be treated, perhaps loving yourself is similar to how God would have you love others."

Leader will ask participants the following questions:

To love someone do you need to put him or her at the center of your universe?

To love someone do you have their needs and desires take precedent over all the needs and desires of others around you?

To love someone, do his or her feelings need to set the tone of your day?

Leader makes sure participants know the answers are no, no, no.

Leader instructs, "Loving yourself is NOT about putting yourself at the center of the universe (that's God's place!). Neither is loving yourself about meeting your needs at the expense of others or about over-emphasizing your emotions."

The leader continues, "So often we are told to treat others as you want to be treated (the essence of loving others as you love yourself). However, some of us tend to treat others with way more kindness, graciousness, and health than we treat ourselves. In this case, maybe a reversal of the adage is needed: treat yourself as you would treat others!"

Prayer: Participants are instructed to spend time praying that they would not follow in the world's way of being a lover of self, but that they would experience joy and glory for God as each of them loves him/herself with the love He provides!

Closing: The leader closes by saying, "We have two clear options, one God-honoring and life giving, the other the exact opposite. God calls us to love Him first, and out of that love, to love others as we love ourselves. There are three recipients of love. We cannot fully love others unless we have a healthy and holy love for ourselves."



Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!



Be Yourself! (BY!) Bible Study Workbook

"Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!"

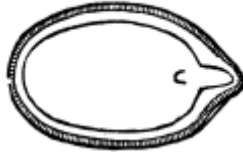
Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!

Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!

Be Yourself!

Name: _____ Date _____

"Be yourself, everyone else is already taken" ~ Oscar Wilde
(Use this page to illustrate your garden.)



Lesson 1

Key Scripture: Key Scripture: Psalm 139:13-16: *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

Be sure to read If Only I Had a Green Nose by Max Lucado.
Bible Study:

How do we know that we are unique and valued?

What we **believe** about our worth should be founded in the truth of God's Word as written in the Bible and revealed to us through His Holy Spirit. If we are to **act** according to what is God's good and pleasing will for us, we must know and believe what that is. Our beliefs determine our attitudes and feelings, which in turn lead to our actions. Beliefs lead to attitudes, attitudes to feelings, and feelings to actions. So, let's begin with our foundational beliefs. **Draw four stacked bricks in this space and label them "Beliefs", "Attitudes", "Feelings", "Actions".**

We are uniquely created.

Genesis 1:26-27

*Then God said, "**Let us make man in our image, in our likeness**, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

This passage forms a foundational truth of Christianity. Upon it we base our understanding of the natural and essential value of all human life. While God loves his creation and appears to delight in the smallest creatures and the largest planets, only mankind is made in God's "image" and "likeness" and given the incredible responsibility of dominion over all of God's creation.

Using a dictionary, define “image” or “likeness” as it is used in **Genesis 1:26**:

Copy the verse here:

What responsibility do you think you have to God knowing you are made in His likeness?

While all mankind is created in the likeness of God and shares some characteristics with Him, we are each created **unique**. Like the flower at the beginning of the lesson, we are the same but different. Perhaps the picture of the Trinity gives a deeper understanding of being the same but different. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit are all One, a truth that is hard for most of us to fully grasp. Yet, accepting this, we understand that each Person of the Trinity is also unique. The Father and the Son are one and the same (**John 10:30**), yet the Son submitted to the Father’s will and gave his life on the cross. The Holy Spirit comes from the Father and bears witness here on earth to Jesus (**John 15:26**). All three **uniquely** testify to God and His Kingdom. In the same way, we are each **uniquely** created to testify to God with our lives. Each of us was created to be a **unique** expression of God’s beauty and wonder.

Write out these verses:

John 10:30

John 15:26

“I am created to be a unique expression of God’s character, beauty, and wonder.”

David wrote,

Psalms 139: 13-16

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

If God knit you together in your mother's womb, list some of your God-given qualities:

How are you the same as your family members?

How are you different?

Read Psalm 139 again. It describes a God who knows us intimately, who participates in our very formation within the womb, and who knows our **unique** destiny. Is it possible that God, the Creator of everything, could know and care about each one of us so personally? It's hard to believe, but it is true.

We are valued.

Write Matthew 10:29-31 here:

This passage show us how tenderly God cares for us, and how much we are **valued**. What do you do with **valuable** things? You take care of them, right? The higher the **value**, the better the care because they are precious.

What is your **value** to God?

There *is* a price tag on your head.

The **value** put on you is a ransom price that has been paid by someone else. You were held hostage to sin, but Jesus paid IN FULL your ransom price. In God's mind you are very **valuable**!

Draw a price tag here and write out the verse **1 Peter 1:18-21** on the tag.

Write **John 3:16**:

Define the meaning of "the world" used in this verse:

Do you think God *loves you* but may not love other people? Why or why not?

Do you think God loves *other people* but may not love you? Why or why not?

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still _____ (fill in the blank), Christ died for us.

Is there any one for whom Christ did not die?

Do you believe that God knows every hair on your head? Now state that:

I believe _____

Do you believe that you are worth more than many sparrows? Now state that:

I believe _____

Do you believe that God sent His Son to die for you personally? Now state that:

I believe _____

Do you believe that you are uniquely created by God and valued? Now state that:

I believe _____

Believe it or not, it is true. Wouldn't it be wise to believe the truth instead of a falsehood? Who wants to believe a lie anyway? This is why it is important to base your beliefs on what the Bible says about you and not on what others say.

God knows us completely. He knows that we need our mind renewed in our thinking so we can live His good and perfect will. He has given us his Scriptures to teach us this.

Write **Romans 12: 2:**

Write **2 Timothy 3:16:**

Prayer:

Take a minute in quiet prayer and before God confess and **turn from** any false beliefs you have held about yourself that are contrary to these Scriptures, and **turn back to God** asking Him to open your heart and spirit to believe His truth about you: that you are **unique** and **valuable**.

And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

John 8:32

In closing:

"Can we trust God and really be who we are? The Bible tells us God is love! (**1 John 4:8**). This is an amazing statement and another foundational building block of Christian faith. God loves humanity enough to make the greatest sacrifice He could make in order to see His children free and restored back to a wholesome, loving relationship with Him - **back to our true identity**. He gave his one and ONLY Son, and He did this for people in all times and places on earth."

"Furthermore, our capacity to know God and love others begins with His love for us. In fact, the reason we have the capacity to love at all is because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). What a special relationship mankind has with God." "It is upon this very simple yet profound truth of God's love for mankind that we can extend love and acceptance to everyone without discrimination. He created each of us as **unique and valuable**."

Write out these verses:

1 John 4:8

1 John 4:19

Lesson 2

Key Scripture: Romans 12:2 *Do not be conformed to this world^(a) but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*



Notes from the Opening Exercise: Jot down some notes about the influences on you as you made your decision about how many candies are in the jar.

In order to “become a better self,” you must understand some influences that affect your choices. Define these terms as you discuss them in class:

Pressure

Peer

Peer pressure

Positive peer pressure

Negative peer pressure

Now fill in the blanks below with the correct terms from above:

_____ is the feeling that you are being pushed toward making a certain choice - good or bad.

_____ is someone in your own age group.

_____ is the feeling that someone your own age is pushing you toward making a certain choice, good or bad.

_____ is when you are being pushed to do something worthwhile, have healthy values, positive attitudes, and positive actions. It uses encouraging words and expressions.

_____ is when someone is pushed to do something that may be harmful, gets someone in trouble, causes bad attitudes, or alienates other kids.

Refer back to If Only I Had a Green Nose and come up with examples of positive and negative peer pressure. Write examples here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

(For previous YAS program participants, remember some of the peer pressures in You Are Special that Punchinello faced such as Lucia being a positive influence but the stars and dots given out as negative pressure.)

Understanding the content of the story:

We see from the opening exercise the natural tendency is to “conform” to what others say, especially in a group of peers. Sometimes this is good, sometimes it is bad, and sometimes it’s neutral and not good or bad.

Give an example of a situation where it would be good to conform to the group’s will and not just your own.

Give an example of a situation where it is NOT good to conform to what the group says.

Give an example of a situation where it doesn’t really matter if you conform to the group or not.

Recognize negative peer pressure:

In the story If Only I Had a Green Nose, we see that Punchinello was pressured by his friends and his community to conform to having a green nose. Several types of “peer pressure” were used. Take a few minutes to go back through the story and see if you can point out examples of each of these negative pressures from the list on the next page and discuss with the group.

Types of Peer Pressure:

Rejection - Threatening to leave someone out or end a friendship

The Put Down - Insulting or calling names to make someone feel bad

Reasoning - Giving reasons to do something or why it would be OK to do it

The Huddle - A group standing together talking or laughing with their backs out to others

The Look - Kids thinking they're cool giving a look that means, "We're cool and you're not."

The Example - Popular kids simply buying, wearing, or doing something, and others wanting to follow because of the popular kids' example

Now, **below each type of negative pressure, give an example** from your own life. Give either examples of your own experience of being pressured or having applied this type of pressure to others.

Bible Study:

Write Romans 12:2-3:

Regardless of how old or young, how rich or poor, each of us experiences relentless pressure to conform to another image. It may be pressure to have something we think we want, to do something we think we should do, or to be like someone else. It seems the world is designed to bombard us with messages that would have us conform to images that are not necessarily our true self. Just like Punchinello in the story, sometimes we give in to these pressures, and we are taken farther away from our God-given identity.

List some pressures to be like someone else that you may experience in your life:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

4.

5.

Put a ★ star next to the one to which you feel especially worried about giving in.

Being a believer in Jesus doesn't make you free from outside pressures. However, it can and should strengthen you in your faith so you can love and accept who you are, just as you are, and trust God for what you need and want.

It is important to base your love of yourself on what the Bible says about you and not what the world says about you. The world sees only ordinary human experience without true spiritual insight.

Write 1 Corinthians 2:14:

God sees what the world does not.

Write 1 Samuel 16:7:

Look at some examples of negative peer pressure in the Bible:

How was Jesus REJECTED in John 1:11?

What were some examples of REASONING that Satan used with Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4?

What kind of PUT DOWN did Jesus experience in Mark 15:16-20?

What HUDDLE experience did Jesus encounter in Luke 15:2?

Who probably gave "THE LOOK" to Jesus and under what circumstances in Luke 13:13-14?

What EXAMPLE did Jesus not follow in Matthew 21:13?

We see that even Jesus was exposed to pressure to conform. He experienced all that we have experienced, yet without sin.

What about positive peer pressure?

Can you think of an example in your life of positive peer pressure?

Where in the story did Punchinello experience positive peer pressure to have a green nose?

If it's felt as *pressure*, is it good? Why or why not?

Be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Write Romans 12:2-3:

Here are actions we need to take:

*Do not **conform**.* Define *conform*: _____

*Be **transformed**.* Define *transform*: _____

*You will **test**.* Define *test*: _____

*and **approve**.* Define *approve*: _____

Using your own words, rewrite this passage from Romans 12:2-3 in the space here:

According to this passage, what three words describe God's will for you?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If God's will for you is described as so positive, why do you think you resist and try to conform to another image? Write your answer here:

Prayer:

If you have applied negative pressure to others, now is a good time to ask God for forgiveness, and/or, if you have given in to negative peer pressure and recognize your error, take a minute to **confess** this to God, **turn back** to him, and he is faithful to forgive. Receive his forgiveness and move on to new behavior.

In Closing:

Temptations are real. We are all tempted to conform to another image, especially if we have weaknesses, and everyone has weaknesses. Take comfort from this Scripture:

Write out **Hebrews 4:15**

It is important to know that Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses. Not only that, but he gives us a way out.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Verse 14 goes on to say, "*Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.*"

"Idolatry" from a biblical perspective is "The worship of manmade objects," or "putting anything above God."

When we put someone else's idea of who we should be above God's idea, then we have created an idol - a false god. We certainly do not want to worship things created by man and that includes false images of our self.

In the next lesson we will look at **motives** for giving in to pressure.

Lesson 3

Key Scripture: 1 John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

Notes from Opening Exercise:



Remember what you learned in the previous lesson about negative and positive pressures. Turn to a neighbor and define "peer pressure." Spend a few minutes listing some reasons **"Why People Give in to Negative Pressures":**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Refer to If Only I Had a Green Nose and come up with reasons that Punchinello had his nose painted green:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Learning:

How important do you think fashion is in determining one's self worth?

Advertisers get people to buy their product by using words like “greatest”, “best”, will “make you popular”, will “make you cool”, and by getting celebrities to endorse their products, etc. These techniques are all a type of peer pressure.

Next we will look at the things that motivate us to give in to peer pressure.

Bible Study:

Read 1 John 2:15-17.

The passage talks about “lusts.” We define lust as a passionate and overwhelming desire. To have desires or wants is not necessarily bad. In fact, there are many good desires to have like the desire to succeed, the desire to have friends, the desire to be married, etc. Nor is it bad to be passionate about something; for example, being passionate about doing the right thing, passionate about God, etc. But lust in this passage is an *overwhelming hunger* for something the world offers, overwhelming to the point of being willing to give up and compromise your true self for it. For example, in the story of Jacob and Esau, Esau was willing to give up his birthright, his inheritance as the first-born son, just for a bowl of warm porridge.

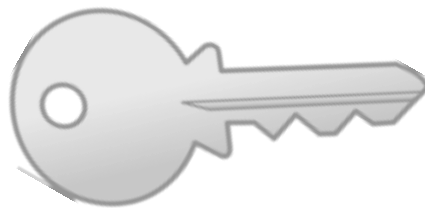
READ Genesis 25: 29-34.

Esau let his physical hunger compromise his whole future (read **Hebrews 12:16-17**). It’s a pretty frightening thought that we could do the same for something so ordinary as cereal, but each time we give in to negative pressure and compromise our true self, we do just that, give up the real inheritance that God has for us.

In **Matthew 4**, Jesus gives us the best example of living out this directive above in 1 John 2. In the story Satan confronts Jesus with very real and earthly temptations.

READ Matthew 4.

Jesus shows us in this chapter how he resisted pressure when confronted with temptation. Even though he was God, he was fully human and still had to wrestle with fleshly needs. In his response to Satan we see the keys to overcoming temptations. The Keys are...



Jesus

- knew who he was
- knew the Word of God
- knew his mission was to glorify God the Father

Because of this, he could resist the pressure to satisfy his real and natural needs as well as resist Satan’s offer of power and dominion.

In the same way, we resist temptation to be other than whom God created us to be when we:

- know who we are
- know our value as stated in the Word of God
- know what is our mission or purpose

Use this space to draw 3 keys and label them Acceptance, Value, Purpose. Leave room for notes next to each key.

1.

2.

3.

Knowing who we are:

Usually the reason for giving in to pressure has to do with one of three needs: the need for **acceptance**, the need for **value**, or the need for **purpose**. These three qualities make up a void or empty place in our heart that can only be filled by God. If we don't feel fully *accepted* by God, we will seek acceptance in all the wrong places, through the wrong things, or with the wrong people in the wrong relationships. As one songwriter wrote, we will be "looking for love in all the wrong places." If we don't feel *valued*, we may constantly strive for perfection, or operate with false pride, or depend on material wealth to give us value, all of which can crumble in one quick moment. If we have no *purpose*, we can fall into depression and hopelessness, or grow angry and bitter, and separate ourselves from people who love us. It is common to be vulnerable in any or all of these areas because they are real needs that should be filled. The problem comes with how we choose to fill them.

Advertisers are especially good at identifying and targeting these areas of human weakness. Advertisements are some of the most obvious forms of manipulation that apply both seen and unseen pressures to conform to the world's standard of success, wealth, beauty, happiness, etc. Young people are especially vulnerable to these pressures as they begin to form their values and identity separate from their parents and within the context of their peers and their culture.

For that reason, it is wise to honestly examine the kinds of pressures and your motives for giving in to them. Which one of these three - needing **acceptance**, being **valued**, or having a **purpose** - do you think is your greatest weak spot?

Can you identify a brand name or company that attempts to fill this particular need for young people through their ads?

To address this issue, let's go back to our beliefs about God and about who we are to Him. Remember: **Beliefs lead to attitudes; attitudes lead to feelings; feelings lead to actions.**

In Lesson 1 we see that God made mankind in his image. From this we understand the intrinsic value of all human beings. We also know from Scripture that God formed us in our mother's womb and knows every day of our life before we lived one (Psalm 139). But does that mean we are righteous, clean, holy, and ready to stand before God? No. To be cleansed of our sins we must first believe that Jesus came to save us and receive him as Lord. When we invite him to be Lord of our life we take on a new life (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

And this is where the road to our true IDENTITY and self takes a turn from the world's definition of self. Once we are His, we are a totally new creation. The old has passed away. Who we are is totally defined by us now living in and for Christ.

Key 1-We are ACCEPTED:

Yes, God loves everyone, and he desires that no one should perish and that all should be saved from the destruction of sin (2 Peter 3:9). In fact, this is why Jesus came to earth - for the purpose of taking upon himself the full punishment for sin and purchasing all for eternal life (John 3:16). He did this in order that mankind could live free to enjoy full fellowship with God just as Adam and Eve did in the Garden. And he did this EVEN though we were sinners.

Write Romans 3:23-24:

Take a minute and think or discuss with a group. Can you name an ad or brand that appeals to the need to be **accepted**?

Write John 1:12-13



Jesus **accepts** us! And we are made new. When we are created new, we have a new identity.

Key 2- We are VALUED:

If we fully understand Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross, we must accept that God VALUED us enough to give His one and only Son in exchange for our life.

Write 2 Corinthians 5:21:

According to this passage, for whose sake was Jesus made to be sin?
What was the gift he purchased for us?



If a price tag could be put on Jesus' life, what would it be? Fill in the price.

If the Father's will was to exchange Jesus' life for yours, how valuable are you?

Stop and think or **discuss with a group.**

Can you name an ad or brand that appeals to the need to feel **valuable**?

Read 1Peter 1:18-21:

For you know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

We cannot emphasize this enough. Your **value** is not based on your good works, your good deeds, what you earn, or how important you are. Your **value** is based on **God's love of you just as you are.**

Key 3-We have a PURPOSE:

What about purpose? So many people today are seeking real purpose in their lives. Purpose is defined as the "reason something is done, or created or exists." Why were we created; why do we exist? To have a God-defined purpose is an aching cry in the human heart (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**).

Without this, we attempt to satisfy our hearts with all kinds of meaningless things. Can a new phone or computer give us purpose? Will having a husband or wife or even having children satisfy your need for purpose? Be careful! While relationships are important, without God in the mix, relationships will only temporarily satisfy. All things that appear shiny at first will eventually tarnish and fade away unless God has brought life and purpose to them.

Can you name an ad or a brand that tries to appeal to the need for **purpose**?

Through Christ we are restored back to God's household just like the son in the Parable of the Lost Son (**Luke 15**). In being restored back into the Family of God, we are given an inheritance to all the Father's promises (**1 John 3:1-2; Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4**).

Look up these verses and briefly write the promises mentioned in them:

2 Peter 1:4 _____
Philippians 4:19 _____
1 John 3:1 _____
Psalm 84:11 _____

If all of these promises *and more* are yours in Christ, how could that affect your response to peer pressure? Take some time to write your response.

Prayer:

If you have an unmet need for acceptance, to be valued, or to have purpose, you are not alone. But if you think one of these or all of these needs are pushing you to do something that you know is unhealthy, unwholesome, dangerous, or even illegal, STOP now and pray. Pray for God to reveal his TRUTH to you that **you are accepted, valued, and have purpose**. Ask God to help you see, and believe, and turn away from these things.

In Closing:

We want to examine our motives, to see whether we are in the faith. Do we have a real and living relationship with Jesus (**2 Corinthians 13:5**)?

Otherwise, we will constantly be looking for approval from other sources and be vulnerable to pressures of the world to conform to false images.

God has a plan for you. This is really exciting. He has known you since before time, and he has something for you to do.

Write Ephesians 2:10:

He made each of us for a purpose that he prepared in advance.

In BIG letters write out the 3 things that Jesus knew and that we need to know about ourselves:

1.

2.

3.

Now you can resist peer pressure just as Jesus did in the wilderness.

Write Ephesians 1:7-10:

Lesson 4

Key Scripture: Galatians 6:7 *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

Read the fable:



Once upon a time there was a farmer who needed to sell his ox. The ox was a strong and healthy ox so he knew anyone would be lucky to get this ox. A neighboring farmer owned three oxen but wanted a fourth to pull his large wagon and plow. He went to look at the oxen for sale. He asked the farmer if he could take the ox to his farm for a week before he decided. The farmer selling the ox thought that was a strange request since his ox was obviously strong and healthy, but he agreed. The next week the neighboring farmer returned with the ox and said, "I am sorry but I cannot buy your ox. He is not a good ox." The selling farmer didn't understand and asked for an explanation. "Well," said the neighboring farmer, "I have three oxen already. Two of them are well behaved but one of them tries to push the others out and takes their food. He can be stubborn. When I put your ox in the pen with the oxen, he immediately went to be with my ox that causes trouble. He stayed close to this ox the whole week and ignored the two well-behaved oxen."

Write out the moral of this fable:

Choices lead to consequences. Good choices result in good consequences, and bad choices result in bad consequences.

Reread Green Nose story to find examples of consequences that Punchinello and the Wemmicks faced by going along with having their noses painted. Write them down in the space below and be prepared to **discuss in groups**.

Punchinello asks Eli, "Does a green nose make them smarter? Does a green nose make them stronger? Does it make them faster? **Write Eli's answer here:**

Giving in to negative pressure can cause many problems socially, academically, legally, physically, and emotionally.

Exercise: For "Better or For Worse?"

Complete the handout, "For Better or Worse?" found at the end of this lesson. You may mark both positive and negative for some.

Bible Study:
Write 1 Corinthians 15:33:

We are not expected to live in isolation from everyone who is not a Christian. In fact, how will anyone ever learn of Jesus unless we fellowship with people who have not yet heard about him? However, it is wise to examine what kind of influences rub off on you when you are around people who have a different focus in life. Bad influences can corrupt good character. The reverse is true also. But be aware! To have the influence go the right direction, you need to be strong in what you believe.

The law of "sowing and reaping" (Galatians 6:7) applies to life choices, too. Choices have consequences, and bad choices lead to death in some form or another, whether great or small. This is because each time we make a "bad" choice, one contrary to God's will, our heart becomes a little more closed, a little bit more calloused and hard. If we continue to make bad choices, we will not feel our true selves any longer. Yes, we have a wonderful gift of free choice, and God has given us great freedom, but God always advocates for us to choose life as he gives us that freedom to choose (Deuteronomy 30:19; John 10:10). He has outlined those life choices in the Bible. **DRAW a HARD HEART here:**

Write out Deuteronomy 30:19 under the heart.

God will reward every life-giving choice we make. This is God's law of sowing and reaping.

Read Galatians 6:7: *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*

The books of Psalms and Proverbs are especially full of wisdom on how to make wise choices.

According to **Psalms 111:10** wisdom comes from_____.

Even non-believers can possess some wisdom when they live in reverence and respect of the One True God (Acts 10:1). In addition, God has given every person a conscience (Romans 2:15), and through the conscience, we appeal to all people to "do the right thing" believing that their conscience knows what that is.

Write Psalm 1:1-2:

Explain, "walk in step with the wicked":

Explain, "stand in the way that sinners take":

Explain, "sit in the company of mockers":

Write down any real-life examples you can think of for the three definitions above:

What were some of the consequences?

Don't be fooled; bad influence is hard to resist unless you are strong in your faith.

There are numerous Biblical examples of people who appeared strong at first but who gave in to worldly pressures.

Take notes in each column from the lesson as it pertains to each person here:

Peter (Mark 14)	Solomon (1 Kings 11)	David (1Chronicles 21)

Discuss in groups:

How did Peter's denial affect him and others?

How did Solomon's choice affect him and others?

How did David's choice affect him and others?

In every case, we see strong men of faith cave in to pressures with devastating results that affected more than just their own lives; it affected future generations as well.

Notice however, Peter and David later repented and became godly examples showing us that, even when we make mistakes, God can redeem them.

Fill in each column with the **GOOD** choices and consequences you find for these Biblical characters from the passages below:

Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (Dan. 3:10-30)	Rahab (Joshua 4:1-7; 6:17; 22-23; Mat.1:5)	Ananias (Acts 9:1-9)
Good Choices	Good Choices	Good Choices
Consequences	Consequences	Consequences

We see from all of these examples of both good and bad choices that choices have consequences beyond us. Negative peer pressure is not a meaningless thing. It can have serious effects on our health, our home, and our future. Be wise as it says in **Proverbs 13:20**, *Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.*

Prayer:

Now is the time to pray for release from negative pressures. God came to give us life and life abundantly (John 10:10). Take a minute now and ask God for the strength to turn from negative pressures and to find the grace to make life-giving choices.

In Closing:

Receive these words, not just as a challenge, but also as an encouragement. Galatians 6:7-9 *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

Read 3 John 1:11:

Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.

We become like that which we admire and that to which we give our attention.

Read Philippians 4: 8-9:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

God has a different way of defining or measuring wisdom or success. When we do right and good, we have peace with God. Knowing that, peace is a precious promise available to all believers; however, that peace is found in God and not in the world.

Read Proverbs 13:20 which is so beautiful:

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.



Look to God to satisfy your needs and make healthy choices.

For Better or Worse

Decide if the following decisions would have positive or negative consequences. Some might have both.

Decisions	Positive	Negative
Eat healthy		
Wear only brand name clothes		
Exercise		
Not study for a test		
Play video games		
Tease		
Spread rumors		
Listen to music		
Skip school		
Drink alcohol		
Smoke cigarettes		
Be kind to a new participant		
Enjoy a hobby		
Choose friends who get in trouble		
Do something so you'll be popular		
Desire to be "cool"		
Play on a sports team		
Take painting lessons		
Judge yourself based on what you own		
Attend a party		
Share the message from <i>Green Nose</i>		
Learn a foreign language		
Buy a new outfit		
Cheat on a test		
Walk away from dangerous situations		
Be Yourself		

Be prepared to discuss your answers with the group.

Lesson 5

Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

Notes from Activity: Game of "Ways to Say No Bingo."



Discuss: Why didn't Lucia give in to pressure? Write down some reasons here:

Perhaps Punchinello could have avoided his negative consequences if he had used some **refusal skills and knew the Biblical foundation for them.**

Bible Study: Refusal Skills

As you read through the verses under each refusal skill, pick one of the verses that especially appeals to you. If you are working in a group, have each group member take a verse to read out loud and then pick the one that most appeals to you. Write the verse out under that skill. You will have the truth of God to support your reason for refusing peer pressure.

Exercise Control-Know the reasons you don't want to give in and remain confident. *Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 6:14-18; Psalm 139:13-14; Proverbs 25:28; Psalm 34:12-14; Proverbs 14:30; Romans 15:13*

Stay Surrounded by Positive People-Surround yourself with positive friends and people who respect your choices. *Psalm: 1; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Hebrews 6:12; Proverbs 13:20; Ephesians 5:8-11; Proverbs 13:14*

Walk Away-You owe no explanation. Remove yourself from the situation. *Proverbs 29:8; Proverbs 13:20; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 3:34-35; Proverbs 3:5-6; Proverbs 29:11; John 8:36*

Think Ahead-Practice some refusal words or what you would do when faced with a negative pressure. *Proverbs 15:28; 2 Timothy 1:7; Proverbs 12:18; Proverbs 17:28; Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 16:24; Proverbs 15:4; 1 Corinthians 13:5*

Be Your Own Cheerleader-Speak positively and encouragingly to yourself. *Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 2:16-17; 1 Samuel 16:7; James 1:12; Psalm 37:4; James 4:1-3; 1 John 4:18*

Make Another Choice-Think of something else you can do. *James 3:16-18; James 1:12; James 4:1-2; James 4:6-7; Luke 6:37-38; Proverbs 3:35*

Be Assertive-Stand straight, make eye contact, and say how you feel. *2 Timothy 1:7; Philippians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:24-25; Matthew 7:12; Ephesians 4:32*

Do you have any other favorite Scriptures that give you strength? Share them here:

In small groups, read through the points in “How to Appreciate Yourself” at the end of this lesson and discuss each. Read all the verses later as part of your own personal devotional time.

Prayer:

Take a moment and pray with someone in your group. Allow yourself to share where you really need prayer in light of these lessons. If you are on your own, pray through each of the points in the “How to Appreciate Yourself” section. Confess, turn back to God, and receive forgiveness and insight into new ways to do things.

In Closing:

In this last lesson you have discussed ways to resist negative peer pressure and ways to appreciate yourself. It is important to be able to do these two things so you can stand strong and be yourself! Remember from lesson 3:

We resist negative peer pressure when we:

- **know who we are**...*that comes from knowing God more intimately*
- **know the Word of God**...*by being in the Word regularly*
- **know what is your mission or purpose**...*by drawing close to God and waiting on him*

We must believe we are loved, accepted, valued, and have purpose. The Bible is clear. Now we must make a choice about what to believe. Will we believe the world around us or will we believe God? The answer is clear, but because it is clear does not mean it's easy. Believing God takes knowledge, courage, and strength. But be encouraged; God is for you!

Write Psalm 118: 6 here:

Rejoice in who you are;
Befriend people who can rejoice with you;
Be Yourself!

"How to Appreciate Yourself"

(You can use these points as a prayer focus as well.)

1. Be careful about comparing yourself to other people. Sometimes that can make you feel good or even inspire you to improve in some way, but sometimes it can make you overlook what's truly good about yourself and cause you to feel bad. Psalm 139:13-14; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Timothy 4:12; Galatians 1:10; Romans 12:3
2. Think about times when you've done something good. Include those times when you've made a difference to somebody else by being helpful, kind, or thoughtful. Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 16:24; Proverbs 15:4; 1 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Proverbs 25:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:11
3. Take part in activities that make you feel good such as hobbies, reading, sports, or spending time with good friends. Proverbs 18:24; Philippians 4:8-9; Luke 16:10-12; 1 Corinthians 10:31
4. Don't be so afraid of failing that you are not willing to try something new. New experiences can help you grow and discover wonderful new things about yourself. 1 John 1:9-10; 1 Peter 4:8; James 1:2-4; Philippians 4:13; Philippians 2:13; Psalm 37:4-5
5. When you do fail at something, don't get down on yourself. Think about what you can learn from the experience and how you can do better next time. Romans 8:28-30; Proverbs 3:6; 1 Peter 5:6-7; Romans 8:1; John 3:17; Romans 8:34
6. Think about things you do well. Take pride in your successes. Psalm 37:4; James 4:10; Proverbs 16:3; Luke 16:10-11; Jeremiah 29:11; 2 Timothy 3:17; Proverbs 3:1-4; Philippians 4:13
7. Remember, the most important thing about people is what we're like inside, not what we own or what we've accomplished. Proverbs 20:5; Proverbs 4:23; Colossians 3:10; 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 7:1-5; Proverbs 31:30; Colossians 3:17

Bonus Bible Study Lesson

(Title)_____

Key Scripture: Matthew 22:39

And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Listen carefully to the directions for completing this Bible Study.

C.O.M.A. Bible Study Part I "Lover of Self"

Key Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1-5

A simple method that is commonly used to begin Bible reading and study is a method called **C.O.M.A.** These 4 simple words give you an outline for how to read the text.

Step 1: Choose the text.

Step 2: Read the text together (possibly more than once).

Now, apply **C.O.M.A.**

CONTEXT

What is the context of this passage? You can find this out by asking a few questions.

- Who wrote this scripture?
- Who were they writing to?
- Why did they write this?

OBSERVATION

What are some of the things you can observe about the writing? You could look for some of these things:

- Are there any phrases or words that stand out or are repeated?
- What are the main points the text is making?

MEANING

Now it's time to figure out what this text means! It's pointless to read scripture if you don't wrestle with what it actually means. All of scripture is written to reveal to us who God is, so that we may know him and enjoy Him.

- What does this passage teach you about God?
- What does this passage teach you about yourself?
- What does this passage teach you about having a close relationship with God?

APPLICATION

- What is your response to this passage?

C.O.M.A. Bible Study Part II **"Loving Yourself"**

Key Scripture Matthew 22:36-40

A simple method that is commonly used to begin Bible reading and study is a method called **C.O.M.A.** These 4 simple words give you an outline for how to read the text.

Step 1: Choose the text.

Step 2: Read the text together (possibly more than once).

Now, apply **C.O.M.A.**

CONTEXT

What is the context of this passage? You can find this out by asking a few questions.

- Who wrote this scripture?

- Who were they writing to?
-
- Why did they write this?
-

OBSERVATION

What are some of the things you can observe about the writing? You could look for some of these things:

- Are there any phrases or words that stand out or are repeated?
- What are the main points the text is making?

MEANING

Now it's time to figure out what this text means! It's pointless to read scripture if you don't wrestle with what it actually means. All of scripture is written to reveal to us who God is, so that we may know him and enjoy Him.

- What does this passage teach you about God?
- What does this passage teach you about yourself?

- What does this passage teach you about having a close relationship with God?

APPLICATION

- What is your response to this passage?

C.O.M.A. Conclusion: Which option between being a “lover of self” and “loving yourself” is the God-honoring, life-giving, and healthy way to relate to oneself?

Bible Study Continued: The Greatest Commandment is one of the most referenced portions of scripture. However, we see that an expanded view is needed to appreciate all that God is trying to teach us through this exchange between Jesus and the lawyer. Most people only process two things that Jesus is telling them to do (loving God and loving others), when really there are three instructions to follow (love God, love yourself, love others). In knowing that, we become clear on WHAT to do, but not on HOW to do it. That leaves us asking God for wisdom in the following ways:

1. God, where can I get this love that you have commanded me to offer you, others, and myself?
2. God, what does it look like for me to love myself?

Thankfully the first question is answered quite easily as you read 1 John 4:7 (see verses 7-21 for more context). We are able to love God because he loves us. It's NOT a chicken and egg scenario where you wonder what comes first. God loves us, and only then are we able to love. God has deposited in us/given us what He requires of us.

The second question can be a bit more challenging. If loving others is essentially treating them the way we would like to be treated, perhaps loving yourself is similar to how God would have you love others.

To love someone do you need to put him or her at the center of your universe?

To love someone do you have their needs and desires take precedent over all the needs and desires of others around you?

To love someone, do his or her feelings need to set the tone of your day?

The answers are no, no, no.

Loving yourself is NOT about putting yourself at the center of the universe. (That's God's place!) Neither is loving yourself about meeting your needs at the expense of others or about over-emphasizing your emotions.

So often we are told to treat others as you want to be treated (the essence of loving others as you love yourself). However, some of us tend to treat others with way more kindness, graciousness, and health than we treat ourselves. In this case, maybe a reversal of the adage is needed: treat yourself as you would treat others!

Prayer: Spend time praying that you would not follow in the world's way of being a lover of self but that you would experience joy and glory for God as you love yourself with the love He provides!

In Closing: We have two clear options, one God-honoring and life giving, the other the exact opposite. God calls us to love Him first and out of that love, to love others as we love ourselves. There are three recipients of love. We cannot fully love others unless we have a healthy and holy love for ourselves.



Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!

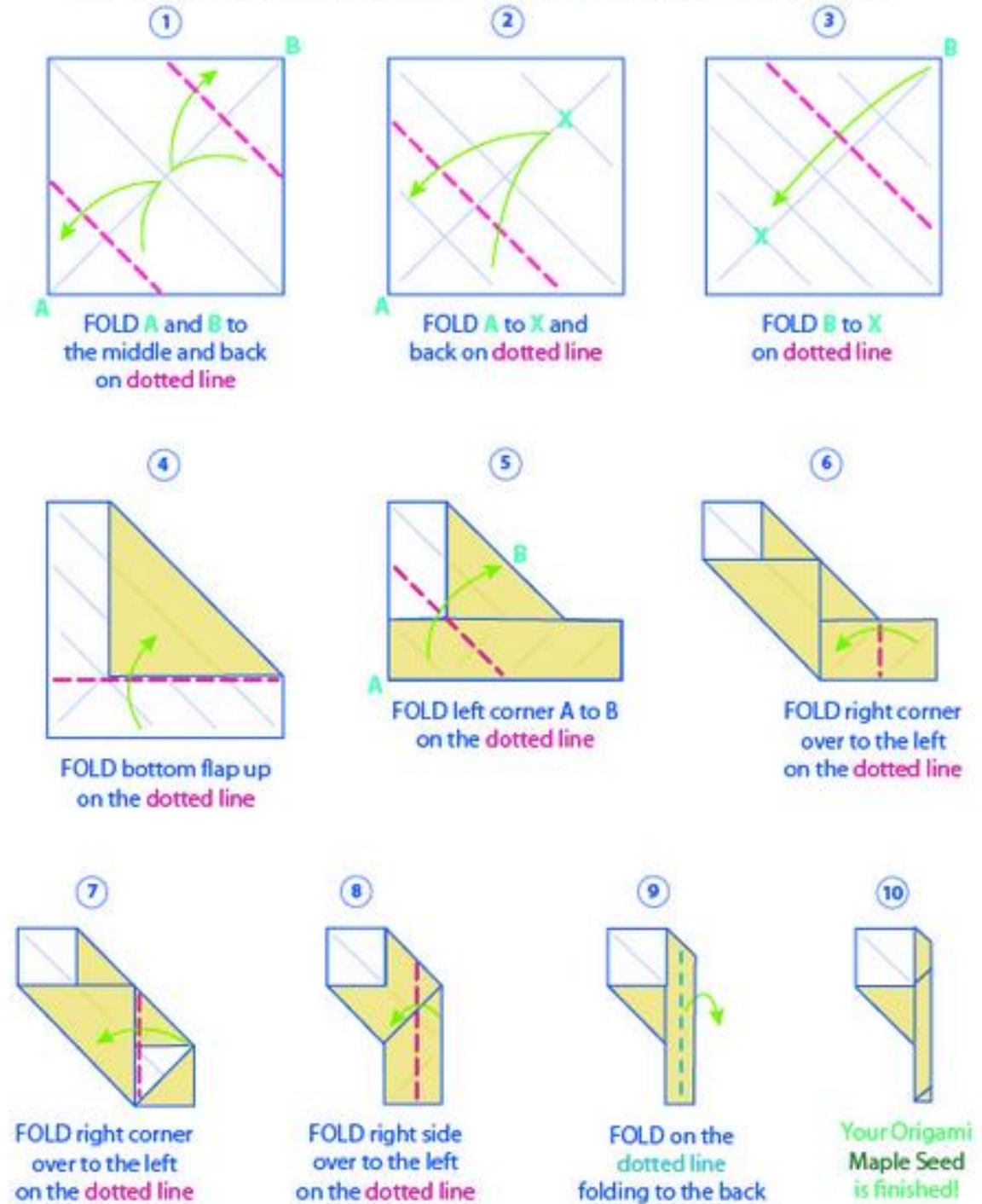
Appendix

Origami Maple Seed Directions

START with a square piece of origami paper.

FOLD it twice in half - corner to corner - to create an X fold in the center.

— Light blue lines indicate folded lines. - - - Bright pink lines indicate where to fold.



Ways to Say "No"

La - Arabic

Bu - Chinese

Ne - Dutch

No - English

Hindi - Filipino

Non - French

Nein - German

Den - Greek

Ni - Irish

Tidak - Indonesian

Lo - Hebrew

Nahi - Hindi

Niet - Russian

Yok - Turkish

Na - Persian (Farsi)

Nai - Japanese

Nie - Polish

Nu - Romanian

Aniyo - Korean

Hakuna - Swahili

(Could add more or come up with 16 different ways to say no in the participant's native language.)

Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!

Refusal Skills Posters

EXERCISE CONTROL

(Know the reasons you don't want to give in and remain confident.)

Stay Surrounded by Positive People

(Surround yourself with positive friends and people who respect your choices.)

Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!

Walk Away

(You owe no explanation. Remove yourself from the situation.)

Think Ahead

(Practice some refusal words or what you would do when faced with a negative pressure.)

Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!

Be Your Own Cheerleader

(Speak positively and encouragingly to yourself.)

Make Another Choice

(Think of something else you can do.)

Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!

Be Assertive

(Stand straight, make eye contact, and say how you feel.)

Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!

Additional Biblical Resource

"A Biblical View of Human Worth" (English)

The purpose of this document is to communicate the Christian view of the worth of all people. This document has three major sections. Section 1 discusses the worth of all people, including those who are not Christians and have had no opportunity to hear the gospel. Section 2 asks how one can find a common basis to uphold the value of human life with those who do not hold a Christian worldview. This section is particularly written for Christians who work together with non-religious organizations. Section 3 shares the Biblical teaching on the worth of the Christian. The following are the major headings of this document:

Section 1: A Christian view of the worth of all people

Section 2: Advocating the worth of all people with those who do not accept a Christian world view

Section 3: The worth of the Christian

Part A: Where does their worth come from?

Part B: Moving God's truth from the mind to the spirit

Part C: But isn't the self sinful, wicked, and worthless?

Section 1: A Christian view of the worth of all people

The Bible teaches the great value of all people, regardless of their relationship to God or their awareness of the gospel. God deems all people to be of great worth primarily because He has created them in His image.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God repeatedly states how deeply He loves all people, regardless of their awareness of Him.

Jonah 4:11 But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?

Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

God expresses love for those who are in the midst of rebellion against him.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is...patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!

Luke 23:34 Jesus said of those who were crucifying him, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

All peoples of the world are so valuable to God the Father that he would allow His Son Jesus to die on their behalf.

John 3:16 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.

While God will execute judgment on all who do not know Christ, this judgment is not something that brings him joy.

Ezekiel 33:11 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is...patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God values all people regardless of their gender, age, wealth, race, talent, and exposure to His church and His Word. God loves children.

Matthew 18:10 See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

Matthew 19:14 Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

God loves women as well as men.

John 11:5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

God equally loves people of all races.

Acts 10:34-35 God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Revelation 5:9 You were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

God loves the poor as well as the rich.

Luke 6:20 Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

What has been shared so far indicates the great worth God places on the life of each person. However, a holistic view of mankind requires that one also understands how deeply sin has touched each person. One must understand the judgment of God that resides upon all people because of sin.

Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men.

This in no way keeps the Christian from acting in loving ways toward all men, even those who do not know God. God Himself acts in loving ways toward non-Christians and commands that Christians do the same.

Matthew 5:44-45 Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Section 2: Advocating the worth of all people with those who do not accept a Christian world view

Many Christians work in corporate, academic, and non-profit entities that do not hold to a Christian worldview. People at these organizations or in government may not have a belief in God, the Bible, or even the immortal souls of men. The Christian passionately says to everyone, "You are loved and valuable," based on a biblical worldview. How can a Christian advocate the worth of all people to those who do not accept Christian teaching as an authority?

There are ways a Christian can advocate the worth of all people and they have more to do with experience and emotion than with propositional logic. Everyone has an innate sense that all people have significance. That innate sense is not equally strong in everyone. People are all conditioned by their cultures, families of origin, experiences, and sin. As a result, some people struggle to find worth with certain ethnic groups, children, women, the physically disabled, the poor, perceived enemies,

and so on. Yet there is a sense that, even for an ethnic group that is perceived as an enemy, their own families and countrymen will find value in them.

Christians can appeal to this innate sense of value by sharing their own love for those perceived to be of little worth. Pictures and videos are tools that can evoke positive emotional responses. Sometimes those who have little in the way of emotional attachment to people have developed a strong bond with a pet. They understand their animal has accomplished nothing in the way of education, work, or personal attainment; yet, they have developed a strong emotional bond with their pet. Love for God's creation at any level can become a springboard that leads to love for people.

Sometimes the goal of a Christian organization is to receive permission or funding to do a particular charitable work. Some parties involved may not see the value of human life, but there may be political or economic advantages for them to allow the charitable work to happen. Many governments and businesses realize that caring for the needy gives them a good public image. While this is not all that the Christian hopes for, such passive acknowledgment of human significance may be enough to allow them to accomplish their intended ministries.

One powerful way to proclaim the value of human life is charitable works by Christians. When Christian people voluntarily serve complete strangers that have nothing to offer them, they send a powerful message to non-Christians who are watching. Their generosity does not fit inside the mindset of anyone whose life values are materialism or power. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." The selfless love of Christians for undesirable people raises a huge question mark in the hearts of onlookers. They will naturally wonder the reason for the generosity, which then leaves the door open for the believer to share about the unconditional love of God.

Section 3: The worth of the Christian

The Bible speaks of the worth of all people, which was addressed in Section 1. Because of the Fall and the entrance of sin into the world, mankind has fallen under the judgment of God. The image of God is still a part of all people, but it has been marred by sin. All people have great worth in the eyes of God, but all people also are under the judgment of God because of sin.

This is not true for the Christian who has been forgiven and made new in Christ. The Bible has far more to say about the worth of the Christian than it has to say about the worth of mankind in general. There is abundant reason, based on biblical truth, for every Christian to understand their worth before God and to have a healthy self-concept.

Because this section is longer, it is divided into three parts. **Part A** asks where one's sense of worth ought to come from. **Part B** discusses how one can transform

these truths into personal experience. **Part C** asks, "Isn't the self evil and sinful? Shouldn't one put the self to death instead of discussing its worth?"

Part A: Where does one's worth come from?

Everyone searches for worth and meaning in life based on something. What they choose to value will determine whether they are able to attain a sense of worth. If they believe that human worth is determined by beauty, intelligence, wealth, or status, they will believe they have worth to the extent they have those things. To the extent they do not have those things, they will feel worthless and insignificant.

The battleground for significance is in the *mind*. What one *believes* determines what they *value*, and what they *value* determines what they *feel* about themselves and others. The Bible stresses that a person's beliefs determine their values:

John 8:32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Romans 12:2-3 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

To truly understand one's worth, a person must value the things God values. They must see themselves through his eyes.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 This is what the LORD says, "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

1 Samuel 16:7 The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

2 Corinthians 10:12 We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

Having an understanding of one's significance in Christ does not result in pride. Rather, one learns that fellow Christians are as loved and valued by God as they are. God's goal is not that one becomes lifted up in pride or that one despises himself. His goal is that one loves oneself the same as they love others.

Matthew 23:39 Love your neighbor as yourself.

Ephesians 5:28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

The Christian should not believe that they are more important than others or that others are more important than them. Jesus commands everyone to love others *as* they love themselves. Understanding one's significance in Christ helps one to understand the value of others' lives as well as their own.

Part B: Moving God's truth from the mind to the spirit

One does not need to be a Christian very long to know that God loves them. The Bible repeatedly confirms God's vast love for Christians. No Christian would dispute this love. Yet many Christians do not have a sense of feeling loved by God. Some Christians have hearts filled with guilt and shame because of their sins and failures. Others see God the Father as a great philanthropist who generously gives eternal life but may not particularly *like* them. One may be ready to acknowledge the love of God in their minds but may not have come to the point where it creates a sense of feeling loved in their hearts.

God *wants* the Christian to be deeply aware of his passionate emotional love for them. In Ephesians 3:16-19, Paul prayed:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Paul is writing to a group of people who are already believers. Paul wants the Ephesians—and all the saints—to grasp the love of Christ in a manner that surpasses head knowledge. God wants all Christians everywhere to experience God's love in their hearts. The Apostle John expresses the same thing:

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

When many Christians think of entering into God's presence, they do not imagine joyfully coming before a loving Father. They have hearts full of fear, shame, and inadequacy. Why? John says these Christians have not been made perfect in love. It has already been clarified that these Christians are completely forgiven, adopted into the family of God, and passionately loved by the Father. Yet their hearts are dominated by fear, not by joy and peace.

Why are many Christians full of fear and shame? Because they are more emotionally in touch with their own flaws than they are the truth of whom they are

in Christ. God wants Christians to experience His love in a way that surpasses their experiences of pain and loss.

God tells Christians His intensely passionate love for them is not something they will experience once they improve themselves, but something they will experience just as they are today. God was speaking about the Prodigal Son, not the compliant brother, when He said in Luke 15:20 and 15:10:

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.... there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

This is how God and His angels feel about someone who has made a complete mess of his life. God's passionate love is not earned by the diligent work of the obedient Christian; it is the birthright of every child of God.

So how can one take the truths that are in their mind and move them 18 inches south into their heart? Jesus said in John 15:9, "Abide in My love." If one's Christian experience is only composed of hard work, they will only experience God's love on a rational level. Warmth and compassion in marriage is maintained by regular, consistent expression of affection for one another. Maintaining the warmth of that relationship requires time and affection from both persons. God extends his passionate love to Christians every day. Christians must make it a priority to abide in Christ's love. This means inviting the love of God to fill those areas of life where the deepest hurt and loss are felt. Experiencing God's love in one's heart is not a one-time event. Like a healthy marriage, it is something that is able to grow in stages over time.

Part C: But isn't the self sinful, wicked, and worthless?

Some object to an emphasis on the worth of the Christian because of what the Bible teaches about the sinfulness of human nature. There are passages that can be mistaken to say that human beings are worthless because of their rebellion against God. Some have concluded that it is the duty of the Christian to eradicate the self, not to find the value of the self. The following are some passages that speak clearly about the wickedness of the human heart:

Romans 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.

Romans 7:23-25 I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Mark 10:18 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.”

Mark 8:35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature.

Some Christians misunderstand passages like these to say that their self is by nature valueless and needs to be eradicated. They believe that somehow God and themselves (or possibly just God alone) work together to destroy “me” so that a new, Christ-centered being can come into existence.

It feels awkward to embrace the worth of the believer while at the same time comprehending the wickedness of human nature as taught by the verses above. It feels as if both cannot be true.

It is helpful to understand four chronological stages of human nature. First is the **innocent** self, the way God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Second is the **fallen** self. This refers to the condition of mankind after the Fall and continues to describe all non-Christians today. Third is the **redeemed** self. This refers to all born-again Christians in this life. Christians have a reborn, transformed nature yet still struggle with that fallen side of themselves that still lives within. Fourth is the **glorified** self, the Christian in heaven who is perfected and no longer has any inclination toward sin. The following will look at each of these one by one:

1. The innocent self: This refers to the way Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Despite the Fall, the image of God remains in all people. This leads Christians to affirm the value of all human life, as was discussed in Section One.

2. The *fallen self*: The sin of Adam and Eve brought corruption and death to all of their descendants. Mankind stands separated from God because of sin and its effects.

Ephesians 4:17-18 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Romans 3:9-10 What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one."

Because of the Fall, all people have hearts that are inclined away from God. They are not able to please God. This fallen self is at war with God, and this self must be put to death to enter into a right relationship with God.

Romans 8:7-9 The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

3. The *redeemed self*: When a person comes to faith in Christ, he is reborn—born again. God gives birth to a new nature that did not exist prior to salvation. The qualities of a believer, listed below, are true of every redeemed person whether they have been believers for days or years, whether they are living in or out of fellowship with God.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Romans 6:2-4 We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

The redeemed self is no longer controlled by sin, Satan, and death. However, in this life the redeemed Christian still has the evil desires of the fallen self within. There is a lifelong battle against the sinful desires of the evil nature and the godly desires of the redeemed nature. This results in Christians being torn between two passions and two allegiances. It feels like an internal civil war.

Galatians 5:17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Romans 7:18-19 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

When one affirms the worth of the Christian, they are referring to the *redeemed* self. It is very correct to say that the *fallen* self is in rebellion against God and must be put to death. As a result, one must hold to two complementary views of the nature of the Christian. On the one hand, every Christian has a *redeemed* nature that is of great value. At the same time, every Christian also has a *fallen* nature that is in opposition to God and must be resisted, as was just seen.

Many hold to an imbalanced view of the believer that emphasizes one part of his nature over the other. Those who de-emphasize the *fallen* nature can hold to a view of Christianity that does not compel the Christian to righteous living. Those who de-emphasize the *redeemed* nature can have a self-loathing faith that sees Christian growth as a constant process of hating and eradicating one's self. A healthy, holistic view of the Christian is acutely aware of both sides of his nature.

Part 4: The *glorified* self: This will be the state of every Christian in heaven. Upon death, God will finally eradicate the fallen nature. Not only will one not sin any more, but also they will not be capable of being tempted.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

1 John 2:16-17 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Hebrews 12:23 You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect.