

## WEEK 3 TEACHING GUIDE

## PLOT TWIST

### BIG IDEA

When sin brings death,  
Jesus gives life.

### BIBLE

John 19:1-30, 20:1-18;  
Psalm 51:9-10

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

### POLL | Plot Twist Live-React

- Welcome back to *Plot Twist*, where we're exploring some shocking twists, both in movies and in real life. When we experience a plot twist in real life, it can leave us feeling all sorts of things – I guess it just depends on what kind of plot twist we're talking about.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print or draw a few common reaction emojis on poster board: thumbs up, thumbs down, heart, exclamation points, and question marks. If you'd like this poll to require movement, place the poster board in different parts of the room and have students run toward the emoji they're voting for. If you'd like a more subdued poll, assign each emoji a movement students can do at their seats, like thumbs up, thumbs down, making a heart shape with their fingers, gasping with their hands on either side of their faces, or scratching their heads in confusion. Present a few "plot twist" scenarios and have them react.*
- **How would you live-react to these plot twists?**
  - You wake up to learn your phone didn't charge overnight.
  - You find \$5.00.
  - Your parents tell you you're moving.
  - Your dog learns to talk and tells you your breath stinks.
  - Your crush likes your most recent post.
  - You turn on the news and see your friend getting interviewed.
  - You win free tickets to a show you've always wanted to see.
  - You win free tickets to a show you've never heard of.
  - You find out you're allergic to your favorite food.
  - Your best friend tells you they're sick of you.
  - Your friend gives his magical time stone to the most dangerous villain in the universe.

### VIDEO | A Clip from *Avengers: Infinity War*

- Okay, that last one probably isn't going to happen in real life, but when it happened in a Marvel movie, it was a pretty mind-blowing plot twist. This storyline is old news now, but if you were in the theater when this happened . . . well, nobody could believe what they were seeing.

- If you've seen *Avengers: Infinity War*, you know the villain, Thanos, had been trying to collect six infinity stones that would give him the power to destroy half of all life in the universe.
- Thanos had successfully gathered the first four, but the fifth stone seemed well protected by Doctor Strange. The only way Thanos could get the stone would be for Doctor Strange to willingly hand it over. But we all knew our hero would never let that happen . . . right?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip [like this one](#) (0:52-2:34) from *Avengers: Infinity War*, where Doctor Strange surrenders one of the infinity stones to Thanos. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- Earth's mightiest warriors, and a few of their alien buddies, had a chance to prevent the universe's greatest threat from accomplishing his evil plans. But then this guy just *handed over* the power in order to save his friend! What?

### OBJECT LESSON | Ashes

- If you've seen *Avengers: Infinity War*, you know Thanos did in fact get all six stones and destroyed half of all life in the universe. The last several minutes of this movie show many of our favorite characters simply disappearing into clouds of ashes.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program begins, collect some ashes in a transparent container. You could collect them from a fireplace or purchase ashes [like these](#). Hold them as you teach.*
- Sometimes, like at the end of this movie, a plot twist leaves us feeling like we've run out of options — like things are ruined beyond repair, like these ashes. Once, these ashes were a living tree. But then it was cut down, chopped up to make firewood, and then burned down into ashes. That once-living tree is now dead and gone.
- Maybe you've experienced plot twists like this, like when . . .
  - You worked so hard to achieve a goal, but still failed.
  - You watched a relationship fall apart, no matter how hard you tried to salvage it.
  - Someone you love passed away and you realized you'd never see them again.
  - You made a huge mistake and are still dealing with the consequences.
  - You learned new information that made you realize the world is a lot more broken than you thought.
- Sometimes we'll face plot twists that leave things (or us) seemingly broken beyond repair. So when things feel hopeless, is that the end of the story? Or could there be hope for something more?

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

### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups!*
  - **What's one happy "plot twist" you've experienced in your life recently?**
  - **What's one not-so-happy "plot twist" you've experienced recently? How did you react when it happened?**

### STORY | **Talk about a time sin damaged things.**

- Throughout Scripture, you hear the word "sin" a lot, but it's not a word you hear very often outside of church. "Sin" just means anything that goes against what God wants for us and the world. It's the thing responsible for so much of the hopelessness and brokenness we see and experience.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life where sin (either yours or someone else's) damaged things seemingly beyond repair. You might talk about experiencing the consequences of your own sin, or being the victim of someone else's sin, or becoming aware of the way sin contributes to violence and injustice on a more global scale. Share what became broken because of sin and how impossible it seemed to fix or heal it.*

- Sin can be something we choose to do, but it can also be something we do accidentally. But either way, sin always causes damage – to us, to others, and to our closeness with God.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups!*
  - **What are some situations that could leave a person feeling broken or hopeless? What do you think "sin" has to do with each of those situations?**
  - **How would you explain "sin" to someone who had never heard of it before?**

## SCRIPTURE | John 19:1-30

- Last time, we saw some of the ways sin can create death and damage, both spiritually and physically, when Jesus was betrayed by the people who used to love and follow him.
  - Some of the people who betrayed Jesus were strangers, but at least one of them was one of his best friends.
  - As a result of those betrayals, Jesus was arrested, charges were invented against him, and he was unjustly sentenced to death.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize John 19:1-30.*
- What happened to Jesus was horrifying. Jesus wasn't a criminal. He wasn't violent. He had never harmed anyone – but his message had intimidated the people who were in power, so they were eager to see him killed. As a result, Jesus was . . .
  - Beaten.
  - Made to wear a crown made of thorns.
  - Mocked by soldiers and the crowd.
  - Forced to carry his own heavy execution device.
  - Murdered in a public place where crowds could watch for entertainment.
- Jesus suffered and so did his friends and followers. They knew Jesus as someone who healed the broken, set free those in bondage, and redeemed what was lost. But now he was being killed and there didn't seem to be anything anyone could do about it.
  - Death is the final chapter in every human life and everyone in this city on that day watched Jesus take his final breath.
  - The story seemed to be over. Jesus' enemies seemed to have won. Sin seemed to have won. Jesus seemed to have lost.
  - But while everyone saw death seemingly having the last word, Jesus saw a plot twist coming no one else predicted.

## SCRIPTURE | John 20:1-18

- Days after Jesus' public execution, Mary, one of Jesus' closest disciples, went to visit Jesus' tomb. She didn't show up expecting a new chapter in the Jesus story. She was there to mourn the story she thought had just ended. Jesus' followers were grieving the loss of . . .
  - Their friend.
  - Their hope.
  - Their identity.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize John 20:1-18.*
- When they found out Jesus' body was missing, this wasn't immediately good news. It seemed like one more sick plot twist in the after-the-credits scene of a tragic movie. They didn't think, "Maybe he's alive," because that would be impossible . . . right?

- The Easter season is the time we celebrate the real plot twist we now know was waiting for the disciples on this Sunday morning so many years ago. Jesus was, and is, very much alive. Death and sin didn't have the last word after all.
- But this plot twist wasn't just for Jesus' friends back then. It's for us today too, because Jesus is still alive and still defeating sin and death.
- In the midst of death, grief, and hopelessness, Jesus has the power to change the story by bringing life and hope into dead and hopeless places.
- When sin leads to destruction and brokenness, it doesn't always seem like there is hope for change or redemption. But with Jesus, there's always one more plot twist in the works. What happened on that first Easter Sunday is proof that **when sin brings death, Jesus gives life.**

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

#### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups! If you have fewer than 15 students, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - ★ **What do you think Jesus' death and resurrection tell us about sin and its effects?**
  - ★ **What do you think Jesus' death and resurrection tell us about what God is like?**

#### VIDEO | A Clip from *Avengers: Endgame*

- If you're a Marvel fan, you know that moment when Doctor Strange gives Thanos the infinity stone isn't the end of their story either. At the time, it may have seemed like the Avengers lost to Thanos. They were defeated, half of them faded into ashes, and the story was over and beyond repair . . . but Doctor Strange saw the possibility of one more plot twist.
  - Before he surrendered the time stone, Doctor Strange told his team there was only one possible scenario in which the Avengers could defeat Thanos.
  - After they lost the first battle, we all assumed they failed to find that one possibility. But one three-hour movie later, we learned what he really meant.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip [like this one](#) (1:38-2:42) from *Avengers: Endgame*, where Iron Man defeats Thanos. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- It may have seemed like Doctor Strange was surrendering to defeat, but his surrender was actually strategic. With his sacrifice, he saw a plot twist coming that no one, including their enemy, could've imagined.

#### REFLECTION | Death and Life

- The Easter story is not about everything turning out exactly the way we would expect or want it to, but it is about realizing broken things are not doomed to stay broken forever.
  - We don't have to stay broken.
  - Our relationships with God don't have to stay broken.
  - Our world doesn't have to stay broken.
- Because of Jesus, there is now hope and life when there used to only be death and hopelessness. But how? And what can we do to help make that a reality?
  - **GRIEVE WHAT'S BROKEN.** Sometimes, the Easter season can feel a little bit like "toxic positivity." Jesus-followers can sometimes be so excited to focus on the joy and hope of Jesus' victory over sin that we fail to acknowledge all the pain sin has caused. While we certainly have reasons to celebrate, it doesn't erase sin or all the pain and brokenness it causes. It's good to grieve . . .

- **OUR PAIN:** When someone we love is hurting or we lose someone or something important to us, it's normal to feel all sorts of feelings. Jesus isn't asking you to pretend to be happy when life is painful. We can grieve the things that bring us pain.
- **OUR SIN:** When we realize we have caused harm by falling short of what God wants for us, it's not only *normal* to experience grief — it's actually *helpful*. We can and should grieve the mistakes we've made and the pain we've caused. Then we need to let that grief push us to make things right.
- **INJUSTICE:** When the world is violent, unfair, and full of suffering, it's evidence that sin is still at work in the world. God invites us to not just ignore or go numb to that kind of injustice, but to see and grieve it.
- **ASK GOD TO RESTORE WHAT HAS BROKEN.** When we let ourselves see and grieve the things that are broken in and around us, it can sometimes feel a little scary or overwhelming. But remember, there is hope and a solution. Take those things to Jesus and ask him to bring new life into the things that are broken — including you, your world, and the whole world.
- **JOIN GOD IN RESTORING WHAT IS BROKEN.** Only Jesus can conquer sin and death. Only he can transform us. Only he can bring new life to things that are broken. But here's what's amazing — he invites us to join him in that process.
  - When we've messed up, we can take action to help make things right.
  - When we notice someone in pain, we can reach out in love.
  - When we see the world is broken, we can be part of the solution.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 3 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen. Invite students to write on the left where they see sin and death (in themselves, in their lives, or in the world). On the right, invite them to write what "plot twist" they want to see God create in those areas.*

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups! If you have fewer than 15 students, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - ✪ **Why do you think it's so important to take time to grieve the things that are broken, like Mary did?**
  - ✪ **How do you think God might be inviting you to spend more time grieving what is damaged . . .**
    - In the world?
    - In your life?
    - In your faith?
    - In you?
  - **Read Psalm 51:9-10. What's one way Jesus has already done this for you or one way you'd like him to?**
  - **This week, what's one way you want to see Jesus transform death into life? Does it have to do with:**
    - Your mistakes?
    - Your relationship with God?
    - Your life?
    - The world?

### MUSIC | Easter Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Close with your favorite song celebrating Jesus' resurrection.*
- The hope of the resurrection means that even when things seem hopeless and we're grieving, we can look for signs of life. This week . . .
  - **LOOK FOR HEALING.** Where did you once only see pain, but can now see peace? Where can you see things already changing and being transformed?
  - **LOOK FOR HOPE.** How has God come through for you in the past? If Jesus could defeat death, what might he be able to do in the situation you're facing now?
  - **LOOK FOR GOD'S INVITATIONS.** There is no situation where Jesus cannot bring healing, but where might he want you to join him? How might he be inviting you to right wrongs or bring life into someone else's pain?
- Easter Sunday isn't about wishful thinking that everything will be okay. It's not about ignoring what's wrong. It's about trusting that Jesus can take what seems beyond repair and make it brand new. Because **when sin brings death, Jesus gives life.**