



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

No Matter What / Week 3

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SERIES SUMMARY

A 3-week series about Easter.

WEEK 1: Easter reminds us we're loved no matter what.

WEEK 2: Easter reminds us we're important no matter what.

WEEK 3: Easter reminds us we're forgiven no matter what.

SCRIPTURE

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

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

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- Tell a personal story about one of your favorite things about celebrating Easter.
- Easter is worth celebrating, not just for the traditions, candy, and food, but also because it reminds us of something amazing God did to show us His love, no matter what.

TENSION

- At Easter, we celebrate Jesus' resurrection; when He died and came back to life.

- The resurrection is worth celebrating because it's incredible! It means death is defeated, and it shows us that nothing can separate us from God's love.
- Because of the resurrection, we know we're loved, accepted, and forgiven by God, no matter what.
- Sometimes it's hard to believe that God forgives us no matter what because . . .
 - We feel far from God because we made bad choices.
 - We feel guilty, so we hide from God.
 - We feel like God's mad at us or disappointed in us because of our choices.
- Jesus' resurrection makes a way for us to be close to God forever and believing this for ourselves has a lot of power in our lives.

TRUTH

- When we think about how Peter left his career and life to follow Jesus and became one of the leaders of the early church, we may think that he made all the right decisions. But Peter was far from perfect and made some pretty big mistakes!
- Even though Peter promised to stand by Jesus no matter what, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times after He was arrested.
- After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were in a boat when Jesus called to them from the shore. Even though Peter had denied knowing Jesus, Peter dove into the water and swam to Jesus to see Him.
- Jesus gave Peter three chances to right his wrongs and be forgiven; this was the same number of times Peter betrayed Jesus (John 21:15-17). And Jesus wanted Peter to continue to have a place in God's story: to take care of Jesus' followers and help lead the early church.
- Our mistakes and failures don't keep us from God's love. He still wants to use us to do important things in the world.
- Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we're forgiven. And Easter reminds us we're forgiven no matter what.

APPLICATION

- God moves toward us in the middle of our mistakes, offering us forgiveness and a chance to start again.
- Think about what you feel is keeping you from God's love and forgiveness, and remember that it doesn't have the power to separate you from God's love.
- Make a choice to step toward God. That could be praying, learning more about God, listening to worship music, asking for forgiveness, or showing up to church.
- Easter reminds us we're forgiven no matter what.

LANDING

- Sharing with your Small Group could be a step you can take toward God.
- How does it feel to know you are forgiven no matter what?

THINK ABOUT THIS

Don't be afraid to sit in the silence! Sometimes we tend to rush past the pause in conversation, but remember that the pause can mean a lot of different things. For some students, it may mean they've checked out or stopped engaging. But for other students, it may mean they're processing the question or thought and thinking about what it means to them. That's when a pause in conversation can be helpful! After all, we want students to really think about what they feel and are experiencing rather than simply taking in what we tell them they're supposed to feel

or experience. Giving them a moment to sit in silence and process allows them to do just that. As they think on forgiveness this week, keep in mind that some of your students may be dealing with major hurts or wrongs that have been done to them. Follow up with any students who open up about something that may need further attention or intervention.

INTERACTIVE 1: CANDY SHOWER

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll throw handfuls of an Easter candy of your choosing into the audience to help celebrate the season.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Easter candy of your choice (You'll need enough to throw handfuls into the crowd.)

INTERACTIVE 2: STORY CUT-OUTS

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll use large cardboard cut-outs of people from Scripture to help tell and personalize the Easter story.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- The cut-outs from Weeks 1 and 2.
- If you didn't complete the Interactives from previous weeks, this is what you'll need:
- 3 different large cardboard cut-outs of fictional or non-fictional characters/people that will represent the following individuals from Scripture: John, Mary Magdalene, and Peter. These can be fun and don't have to be serious or realistic-looking cut-outs.
- 3 letter-size pieces of paper
- A bold marker
- Tape

HOW-TO

- If you did the Interactives from Weeks 1 and 2, the prep work is already done! If you didn't complete those Interactives, do the following:
 - Using the paper and marker, create a name tag for each cut-out.
 - Tape the name tags onto the cardboard cut-outs and place them on stage.
 - Note: These three cut-outs will remain on stage for the entire Easter series.
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TEACHING SCRIPT

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BOTTOM LINE

EASTER REMINDS US WE'RE FORGIVEN NO MATTER WHAT.

INTRODUCTION

3 MINUTES

Happy Easter everybody!

INTERACTIVE: Easter Candy Shower

This is where you'll throw handfuls of an Easter candy of your choosing into the audience to help celebrate the season.

I don't know about you, but this is one of my favorite holidays to celebrate together. In fact, it's one of my favorite holidays to celebrate no matter what!

TELL A PERSONAL STORY

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

- Talk about one of your favorite things about celebrating Easter.
- This could be the annual family Easter egg hunt, a meal your grandma always made growing up, or something you do as an adult now to celebrate.
- If you can, include a picture, prop, or visual representation of what you're talking about to help students better connect and engage with your story.
- The goal is simply to set up that Easter is something worth celebrating.

See what I mean? Easter is awesome! And not just because of the candy, and the games, and the good food, and the time with family. Easter is something worth celebrating because it's a day that reminds us of something amazing God did to show us that He loves us and wants to be in relationship with us, no matter what.

TENSION

3 MINUTES

What exactly am I talking about? Well, at Easter we celebrate **the resurrection of Jesus**. That word “resurrection” means that Jesus died and came back to life. And that’s something worth celebrating because . . .

1. Well, it’s just cool. How often does someone die and then come back to life?
2. It means that death is defeated!
3. It means that nothing can separate us from God’s love. No sin, no mistake, no misstep, no decision. Because of Jesus and what He did for us at Easter, we can know we are loved, accepted, and forgiven by God, no matter what!

Now maybe you’re like, *“Cool story and all, but I don’t see how Jesus coming back to life has anything to do with me or my life. I mean, how is it even possible for God to love me no matter what?”*

If that’s how you feel, then I’d say that I totally understand. I’ve felt that way before, too! And honestly, sometimes I still do! Even though I believe in God and know how much He loves me, I also know I’m not perfect. I’ve made a lot of mistakes. And because of that, **it can be hard to feel like I really am loved, accepted, and forgiven by God . . . no matter what!**

I think that happens for a lot of reasons!

When we make bad choices, it’s easy to feel like God’s far away. After all, He knows that we cheated on our test, or lied to that adult, or looked at those pictures online, or posted that mean thing about our friend on social media. There’s no way He’d want to be close to us, right?

Sometimes we feel guilty about the things we’ve done, and because of that, we hide from God. We stop spending time with Him, or talking to Him, or showing up at church or Small Group because we feel like we don’t deserve to be there. After what we did? Well, it just seems like there’s no way God would want much to do with us! And besides, we already feel bad enough about our mistakes. Do we really need God to remind us that what we did was wrong?

Or sometimes, when we mess up, we feel like God’s mad at us. After all, it seems like God wants us to live really good and almost perfect lives, right? It’s easy to feel like He’s mad when we make mistakes. Or that He’s disappointed because, not only have we messed up, but we keep messing up. We just can’t seem to stop making some of our bad choices, and because of that, we feel like God is mad, or frustrated, or maybe even done with us completely.

Big or small, our mistakes have a way of making us feel like, after what we’ve done, no one could actually love and accept us. Nobody could truly forgive us. Especially not God! But the good news is, that’s where Easter comes in. All that stuff about Jesus dying for our sins and offering us forgiveness? His resurrection making a way for us to be close to God forever? Well, it’s true! And believing this for ourselves has the power to change everything!

TRUTH

5 MINUTES

INTERACTIVE: Easter Story Cut-Outs

This is where you’ll use large cardboard cut-outs of people from Scripture to help tell and personalize the Easter story.

To help us see what I'm talking about, let's look at an encounter Jesus had in the New Testament, the part of the Bible that was written after He came to Earth. The encounter was with a guy named **Peter**, one of Jesus' closest friends and followers during His ministry. *[Display at the front of the stage the cut-out that you choose to represent Peter. Interact with it and motion to it throughout the Truth section of your talk.]*

Peter was a fisherman who completely left his life and career to follow Jesus. He eventually became one of the leaders in the early church and shared the message and hope of Jesus with others. So, you'd probably look at a guy like Peter and think he pretty much had it together. No mistakes, no mess ups, nothing to keep him from feeling loved, accepted, and forgiven by God, right?

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

As Jesus was nearing the end of His life, He knew what was coming. He knew that He was going to be captured and killed on a cross. And He knew that this meant a lot of potential pain and danger for His disciples, including Peter. After all, they had dedicated their lives to following Jesus. They were closer to Him than anyone! So when Jesus, their leader, was arrested and taken to be killed, of course they'd be in danger of being taken with Him. To prepare them for what was ahead, Jesus warned His disciples of the events about to take place. And Peter? Well, he promised to stand by Jesus to the death.

But when it came down to it and Jesus actually was arrested, what did Peter do? He denied even knowing Jesus! Not once, not twice, but three different times that night! Ouch. Talk about messing up. I can't imagine coming back from that.

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

After Jesus' resurrection, His friends actually went back to their old lives. So, Peter went back to being a fisherman. One night when the disciples were out fishing with no luck, someone from the shore called to them. To the disciples' surprise, it was Jesus. Peter actually dove right into the water and swam to the shore just to see Him again.

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

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

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

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jesus gave Peter a chance to right his wrongs. How many times did Peter deny knowing Jesus? Three! And how many times did Jesus give Peter the chance to show that he loved Him? Three! That right there is pretty incredible. I think Jesus knew the guilt Peter must have been carrying around. I think He knew that Peter probably felt like his failures kept him from God's love or

forgiveness. But here, Jesus extended not one, not two, but three chances for Peter to make it right. To be forgiven.

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

And I want you to know that the same is true for you! **Your mistakes and mess-ups don't disqualify you from God's love.** They don't keep you from being close to Him or even being used to do great things for Him. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection that we celebrate at Easter, you are forgiven. You are free to be loved by God no matter what. And that's something to celebrate!

Easter reminds us we're forgiven no matter what.

APPLICATION

1 MINUTE

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

So today and during this Easter season, I want you to think about what you feel is keeping you from God's love and forgiveness. Is it one bad choice? A series of mistakes? A secret that nobody knows about? Whatever it is, I want you to know that because of Jesus, that thing in your life doesn't have the power to separate you from God's love. It can't keep you from Him. Why? Because of Easter! **Easter reminds us we're forgiven no matter what.**

And because you're forgiven, you don't have to worry about being separated from God. So today, **make a choice to take one step toward God.** Maybe for you that's simply saying a prayer or committing to learn more about Him by reading the Bible. Maybe it's listening to worship music and thinking about what the lyrics mean to you. Maybe it's asking for His forgiveness and help to start over. Or maybe it's just showing up at church or Small Group next week to keep figuring out what you think about faith. Whatever it looks like for you, I want you to try to take a step toward God in your life this week, knowing that there is nothing that can separate you from Him.

Why? Because **Easter reminds us we're forgiven no matter what.**

LANDING

1 MINUTE

INTERACTIVE: Easter Story Cut-Outs (Continued)

This is where you'll use large cardboard cut-outs of people from Scripture to help tell and personalize the Easter story.

Over the past three weeks, we've been talking a lot about the Easter season and what Jesus' ultimate sacrifice meant not only thousands of years ago, but for all of us right now as well. These three people [*motion to the cut-outs on stage*] saw and experienced the resurrection of Jesus with their own eyes. We can believe it's true because they shared about it with us. Through John's story [*motion to the John cut-out*], we're reminded that we're loved no matter what. The task of spreading the word of Jesus' resurrection was given to Mary Magdalene [*motion to the Mary cut-out*], showing us that we're important no matter what. And we just learned through Peter's experience with Jesus [*motion to the Peter cut-out*] that we're forgiven no matter what. Because Jesus died and came back to life for all of us, we're loved, important, and forgiven, no matter what. Nothing can change that! I think that's something to celebrate!

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

So as you head to Small Group today, I want you to think about this question: **How does it feel to know you are forgiven no matter what?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
