

AFTER YOU

WEEK 3

BIG IDEA

Living selflessly requires using your gifts.

BIBLE

I Corinthians 12v12-21; I Peter 4v10;
Romans 12v3-5

WHAT?

WE'RE BACK FOR WEEK 3 OF THIS SERIES

IMAGE: "Be Unique" Memes ▲

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Do a quick Google search and gather a handful of memes, products, or quotes about being unique or being different. Choose images that would resonate with your students—they could be funny, sincere, spoofs of your students' favorite pieces of pop culture, or really cheesy (like the Something-Your-Grandma-Would-Post kind of cheesy).*
- Have you ever noticed that people on the Internet have an obsession with being unique? I can't sign into Facebook or scroll Instagram without seeing someone post something about being different, standing out, embracing your weirdness—you get the idea.

QUESTION ▲

- Why do you think people are so driven to be unique?
- *Let a few students respond.*

WE ALL WANT TO FEEL UNIQUE ▲

- Maybe this "be unique" thing is a little overdone on my timelines, but that doesn't make it any less real. Deep down, we all have a desire to feel like we're different, unique, and special.
- Our desire to feel unique and special isn't a mistake. We really are unique! Each of us were created by God on purpose, for a purpose. God crafted each of us uniquely and with love.
- Like we read from the book of Psalms 139, God created you as a wonderfully complex person, made in God's image, unique, and treasured.

STORY: Talk about a time you wanted to be or feel unique. ▲

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story (or have another adult or student tell a story) about a time when, as a middle schooler or high schooler, you wanted to feel unique when compared to your peers. Maybe you had a quirky interest or skill you took a lot of pride in, or you tried to set yourself apart by being the best at something, or you tried out a new fashion trend that none of your friends were into. Just be careful not to make this story about trying to be the center of attention, since not every student will be able to relate to that—this story should be about wanting to feel unique, but not necessarily about wanting to be noticed.*
- Maybe you can relate. I'm guessing you can, because this desire to be and feel unique is universal. Even when we're trying desperate to fit in, there's still something within us that makes us want to stand out.
- But why is that? Did God make us unique just so we could feel good about ourselves? Is our uniqueness designed to simply benefit us, or is it possible that our uniquenesses, quirks, interests, and talents have a greater purpose?

SO WHAT?

OUR UNIQUENESSES CAN HELP OTHERS

TALK ▲

- For the last couple of weeks, we've been talking about what it means to

live an "after you" (not a "me first") kind of life—a life that's modeled after Jesus. So far, we've said that living selflessly starts with noticing the needs of others (like Jesus did) and then opening our hands to make ourselves available to others and to God.

- Today I want to keep that conversation going by getting a little more personal and specific. And I want to do that by talking about what makes you unique.

SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 12v12-21 ▲

- There's a guy named Paul who wrote a lot of what we now know as the New Testament—the part of the Bible that was written after Jesus showed up. Paul had a lot to say about what it looks like to follow Jesus and he even had some things to say about you, your unique gifts, and why it's so important that you know God made you unique and with a purpose.
- Part of Paul's ministry was writing letters. Maybe that sounds weird but, back then, Paul didn't have access to Twitter or YouTube or Facebook Live to get his message out into the world. Instead, he had to write a lot of letters.
- One of the letters Paul wrote was to a group of Jesus-followers in the ancient city of Corinth. These believers were struggling for a number of reasons, but here was a big one: they couldn't figure out how all of their unique personalities, talents, and gifts were supposed to work together.
- Some of them were jealous about other people's gifts and abilities. Others were arguing about whose gifts and abilities were the most important. As a result, this group of believers found themselves struggling to be healthy and impactful in the world around them.
- Paul knew he needed to set the record straight, so here's what he had to say . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Corinthians 12v12-17.*
- Paul is telling this group of believers that every single one of them has a unique role to play in the Body of Christ, the church. If even one of them is missing, Paul says, the Body would be incomplete. Do you see what that means for you and me? It means God has given each of us a unique gift and purpose. And you're needed.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Corinthians 12v18-21.*
- Paul told these Christians that, because they were created by God, they were created with a purpose—and each of them had a unique and

important role to play. Just like every part of your body, from your knees, to your kidneys, to your ears, has a unique role to play, each member of the Body of Christ has their own unique role to play too.

- But even though our roles are all unique, we have to work together, don't we? You can't have your ear or your kidney or your knee trying to take off and do its own thing.
- So if we, the Body of Christ, want to make a difference in the world around us, Paul is making it clear that we need to do a few things:
- **KNOW OUR ROLES.** You were made for a unique purpose, with unique gifts. You need to know what they are.
- **FULLFILL OUR ROLES.** Once you understand the unique gifts God has given you, it's your responsibility to use them.
- **SUPPORT EACH OTHER'S ROLES.** When you know what your unique gifts are, it's easier to honor someone else's gifts, without getting jealous or critical.

QUESTION

- But what does this have to do with living an "after you" kind of life? How does this passage help us better notice and meet the needs of others? What do you think?
- *Let a few students respond.*

SCRIPTURE: I Peter 4v10

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask someone to read I Peter 4v10.*
- God didn't make you unique just so you could feel good about yourself. Your uniqueness is not designed to simply benefit you. Your uniquenesses, quirks, interests, and talents have a greater purpose, and that purpose is to serve and love others with the love of Jesus.

STORY: Talk about a time you used your unique gifts to serve someone

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story (or have another adult or student tell a story) about a time when you first began to realize your uniquenesses could be used to serve God or others. If possible, try to tell a story from when you*

were in middle school or high school. If you don't have one from that phase of your life, at least choose a subject matter that is relatable.

- I already knew God wanted me to live an "after you" (and not a "me first") kind of life, but this was the first time I really understood that **living selflessly requires using your gifts.**

NOW WHAT?

YOU'RE CALLED TO LIVE SELFLESSLY

TALK

- When I realized that my unique gifts were directly related to my ability to serve others and make a difference in the world, it changed everything for me. And I think it could change a lot of things for you too.
- When you know and use your gifts to serve God and others, everyone benefits. But first, there are a couple of things you'll need to discover.
- **DISCOVER YOUR GIFTS.** Are you an encourager? Do you love to teach? Are you great at organizing things or leading people? Maybe you love to bake or cook or host parties. Maybe you're a gifted musician, or photographer, or writer. Maybe you're really funny, or know how to make awesome videos, or are great at a sport. All of these things are examples of gifts that could be unique to you, and there are countless more I'll probably never even think of. There is so much variety in the Body of Christ –and that's beautiful.
- **DISCOVER HOW TO USE YOUR GIFTS.** Once we begin to discover how God has wired us, our next step is to use those gifts to serve others. Maybe that's something you do here at church, or at school, or in your community. You might decide to mentor someone younger than you, or offer to plan a big fundraiser, or help man the church social media accounts. There are so many things you can do with your gifts. And do you know what's really cool? The more you step out and start using your gifts, the more gifts you'll develop or discover.
- When you head to Small Groups, you're going to spend some time helping each other discover the gifts that are unique to you. But as we wrap up,

here's what I want to leave you with.

- I know it's easier to blend in than stand out. When you embrace the things about you that are special and unique, you sometimes run the risk of being seen as different or weird. I know that's especially hard in middle school and high school. I get it. But I've also seen that living the extraordinary life God has uniquely designed for you is so much better than living a life that is small, average, or ordinary. God has more in store for you, and for the world around you, than what you'll get by simply blending in.
- So, this week, what do you think could happen if you made it a point to discover and use your unique gifts? What would happen if you chose to notice the needs of others, open your hands, and then use your gifts to meet their needs? This week, I hope you'll do something to use your uniquenesses to serve God and others. It will change your life and the lives of others too. Because **living selflessly requires using your gifts.**