



CRSWLK THE WALK

Dear Youth Leader,

Welcome to Season 2 of our series on *Belonging*. We will be looking at some of Jesus' most famous miracles. Most of the time, the miracle is special, but what is more important is what we are taught about belonging. Belonging is a key value at Crosswalk, and is especially important in youth ministry. We must be diligent in our intention to break up cliques, increase interaction, and show our youth group that the church is better when we include and love the other. Please share your stories and struggles with open hearts and encourage questions. Try to put yourself in their shoes (or ask them about it), because the work of creating a space of belonging begins with everyone's voice and story being welcome in our community.

I am praying for you as you prep your time with your youth group, and can't wait to hear how it went. Please reach out if you have any questions, ideas, or stories! I'm here to support you!

Mark Ricalde

Youth Pastor, Crosswalk Redlands

SERIES OUTLINE

Week 1 | John 6:1-15

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

Week 2 | Mark 4:35-41, John 6:16-21

Two Water Miracles

Week 3 | John 2:1-11

The Wedding at Cana

Week 4 | Matt 21:18-22, Mark 11:12-14

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

Week 5 | Romans 12

You Are the Miracle of Belonging

SUGGESTED FORMAT

Belonging | 25 - 30 min

Breakfast / Welcome

Sharing Activity

Experience | 25 - 30 min

Worship

Message / Discussion

Momentum | 5 - 10 min

Challenge / Application

Announcements / Visioning

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

PREPARATION

Read John 6:1-15

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any connections for your youth

Listen to the Series

listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast and the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with our pastors

Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where it felt like your resources were stretched

Activity Idea

- Make groups and give each group a donut and a knife. Tell the group to cut the donut into individual, uniform, slices. The group who makes the most servings wins. Have fun announcing the winner.

Icebreaker Questions

- Do you feel like you have enough resources to succeed in life, or not enough?
- Do you believe God always provide enough for our needs?

Message Main Points

- v1-4: Jesus can't seem to get away from the crowd. Even when he tries to teach his disciples, people show up. Jesus doesn't turn them away. Are you a person who brings people in who are nearby or are on the fringe? Or do you have subconscious barriers that keep you in a closer circle?
- v5-7: Jesus asks a crazy question to Philip "as a test." What is Jesus' goal here? Is there a challenge for you in this question?
- v8-9: Andrew finds a boy with food. It clearly will not provide the answer to the problem, but he mentions it anyway. Do you believe every contributor in a group is important? Why or why not? Our story suggests that every person can add to what Jesus is doing.
- v10-13: Do you believe in a God of abundance, or are you skeptical that God will make big things happen? What are proper expectations to have for how God will work?

Closing Questions

- What kind of people would you see at the feeding of the 5000? Make a list of as many different types of people.
- All these people in one place broke cultural and social barriers. Jesus bringing them together is probably the biggest miracle of all in this story.

Two Water Miracles

PREPARATION

Read Mark 4:35-41, John 6:16-21

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any connections for your youth

Listen to the Series

listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast and the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with our pastors

Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where you felt you were in a situation (storm) that you couldn't get out of no matter how hard you tried (paddled)

Story Sharing and Questions

- Split the youth into groups of 3-4, and have them share a story of a moment in their life when they were afraid. Bring the groups all together and have each group share one of the notable stories.
- Have you ever been in a storm that was so bad you thought you were in danger?
- Do you work harder when you feel overwhelmed, or get anxious and freeze up?

Jesus Walks on Water (John 6)

- This story shows the disciples and us, the reader, that Jesus had power over nature.
- Jesus sleeping through the storm (how did he stay dry when the boat was filling with water?) seems to indicate two opposing views on the seriousness of the situation. How is Jesus so calm?
- His question to the disciples, "Do you still have no faith?" gives us a clue into the place belonging plays. Jesus seems to be saying, "You're with me, don't worry, I've got you!"
- How do our actions and attitudes change when we understand that we belong to Jesus?

Jesus Calms the Storm (Mark 4)

- This story happens on the same sea of Galilee as our last story. A similar storm arises. The main difference is that this time, Jesus is not in the boat.
- Could it be that our sense of the closeness of God does not affect our belonging to God? The disciples are just as safe in the storm if Jesus is sleeping in the boat or walking towards them.
- In John's gospel, we have no mention of the storm stopping. Jesus getting in the boat and saying "I am" is enough for them to arrive at their destination immediately.
- Do we focus too much on results and not enough on the belonging that Jesus has in store for us? How do we change our perspective?

The Wedding at Cana

PREPARATION

Read John 2:1-11

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any connections for your youth

Listen to the Series

listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast and the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with our pastors

Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where someone pushed you to create a sense of belonging

Activity Idea

- Buy a variety of apple juice, from cheap to fancy (you can do this with anything). Pour a bit of each into separate cups. Bring up a volunteer (or do a few sets for more participation) and have them organise the cups from cheapest to most expensive.

Icebreaker Questions

- Why is having enough drinks at an event important? Why does food affect belonging?

Message Main Points

- This week, we have Jesus' first miracle, turning water into wine. It is one that it seems like his mother forced (or at least highly encouraged) him to do.
- Why do you think Jesus said "my time has not yet come"? Why did he do the miracle anyway?
- This interesting exchange seems to echo a theme we see in John, that Jesus comes to where we are at, to meet the current needs of where we are. Jesus might think his time is not yet, but the need to create a space of belonging trumps the inner timing.
- When God calls us to be agents of belonging, it is not usually at a time that is easy and convenient. How can we be ready for when that time comes for each of us?
- The master of ceremonies is shocked by the amazing wine, because he is used to events where it starts off strong, and then gets worse quality as the party goes on. This is often true of the communities we are a part of. They start off strong with great intentions, and then human dynamics, cliques, lack of resources, selfishness, etc. lead to less intention and belonging. With Jesus, belonging grows as time passes.
- When human nature drives us apart (just check the news), God's community is meant to be a counter cultural movement that grows more connected.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

PREPARATION

Read Matt 21:18-22, Mark 11:12-14
notice main ideas, points of tension,
and any connections for your youth

Listen to the Series

listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study*
podcast and the *Abide Daily* podcast
and sit in the texts with our pastors

Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where you
felt a lack of community

Learning Idea

- Fig trees would have been a common occurrence in the Bible, but something we have limited knowledge on today. Find an informative video on fig trees to play for the group.

Icebreaker Questions

- What did you learn from this video? What, if anything, does it help you understand about the context of the world of the Bible?
- Why is context study important?

Message Main Points

- These passages are problematic in a few ways:
 - Does Jesus have anger problems? Is he moody?
 - We have a unique story of Jesus, the life-giver, taking away life.
 - Jesus expects the figs to have fruit, but it is not in season (Mark's).
- How should we approach texts like this that don't make too much sense?
- What do you think of Matthew's words in Red, where Jesus talks about having faith to move mountains?
- Texts like this force us to think deeper, more meta, and make connections that could seem like a stretch. To do this well, we can't assume our ideas are right, but allow ourselves to creatively think, talk together, and pray for the Spirit to lead us.

Discussion Questions

- Are you someone who looks like a tree with fruit from far away, but on closer inspection has empty branches?
- In what ways does this story inform our thoughts on belonging? (Belonging can't be faked; it bears fruit, in and out of season.) (Even when a group is not fully ready to maximize belonging, it can still start today.)

You Are the Miracle of Belonging

PREPARATION

Read Romans 12

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any connections for your youth

Listen to the Series

listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast and the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with our pastors

Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where your gifts helped the group in a special and surprising way

Activity Idea

- Have everyone quickly do an online spiritual gifts assessment (try [giftstest.com](https://www.giftstest.com))
- Once everyone is finished, have the matching gifts group up. Have them read the verses related to their gifts, and have each group present.

Icebreaker Questions

- What makes community so hard in today's world? How do our spiritual gifts contribute to the community we are part of?

Message Main Points

- Romans 12 is a manifesto on living a life dedicated to God. And for Paul, that begins with measuring ourselves as incomplete. We know that God gives us all we need to be a part of a larger complete body. To be a part of Christ's body is to know "we all belong to each other" (v5).
- Besides using our spiritual gifts to encourage and help each other, certain non-negotiables allow us to "conquer evil by doing good" (v21).
 - v9: Because we belong to each other, we can't pretend to love and be good. We have to honour each other by being genuine.
 - v13: We need to be ready to help each other. To be prepared for hospitality means having enough time, attention, and resources to serve others. Even before we meet someone, we are preparing to have a moment with them and the resources to bring them in and make them feel a sense of belonging.
 - v15-16: Living together and facing real life go hand in hand. We laugh, work, play, and cry together. We listen to each other (because we don't know it all), and together we become a blessing and miracle to each other and the world.
- Have a prayer of commitment over the group, that the powerful ideas in Romans 12 can become actions and statements that are true of our group.



A Final Note,

Life gets crazy. Sometimes we walk into a room knowing we haven't prepped enough. A high-schooler might walk in with the weight of a hard week on their minds, and the last place they want to be is youth group. The teenage community you are leading will have cliques, crazy couples, and apathetic kids. All this to say that teaching in this scenario will rarely feel like you did a great job. Don't worry, you don't need to. **Jesus shows up.**

If every week you:

eat together,

pray together,

worship together,

and study the word together,

then you have faithfully structured the youth time for God to work.

Thank you for your effort and compassionate heart.

I'm a leader in the church because of influencers like you!

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