



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

How To See God / Week 2

SERIES OVERVIEW

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

A series about the fruit of the Spirit.

WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: You can see God.

WEEK 2: Practice helps you progress.

WEEK 3: Pay attention to what has your attention.

WEEK 4: Look for God every day.

SCRIPTURE

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” (Mark 1:35-37 NIV).

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23a NLT).

NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

THINK ABOUT THIS

This week’s conversation focuses on the value of putting in the work—the practice of our faith—to see more of God at work in our everyday lives. In short, you’re encouraging your middle schoolers to see the value in developing regular spiritual habits. It’s important to remember that this conversation isn’t designed to encourage students toward a works-based faith. We don’t want them to leave thinking that they’re required to do anything in order to be loved by God. That’s not true at all! Rather, we want them to understand that spiritual habits—things like reading the Bible, showing up to Small Group, listening to worship music, praying—can help them get to know and connect with God in new ways. It’s not about doing anything to earn God’s love or approval; it’s simply about seeing God through these practices as part of their everyday faith.

NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

Be aware of the temptation to over-spiritualize or under-spiritualize the practice of looking for God. The last thing we want to do is conflate or confuse God with superstition or an alternative, counterfeit version of spirituality. At this age and phase of life, middle schoolers are trying to figure out so much about who they are, and a big part of that includes their faith and how to find God in their everyday lives. Putting too much pressure on or being too prescriptive about “seeing God” could become manipulative or harmful or just plain frustrating if it seems to not work. Be encouraging and lead with practical ways to see God.

INTERACTIVE: PRACTICE MAKES PROGRESS

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll show a video clip of an athlete, artist, musician, or anyone who excels at a skill practicing to perfect their craft.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A video clip of someone perfecting a skill (This could be a chef, musician, athlete, video gamer, artist, or anyone else who has to practice to progress in their craft.)
- A way to show the clip to your audience

PREP

- Find, review, and prepare the video clip to show to your group. Have it ready to show when prompted in the Introduction of your talk.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- We're in the middle of our series that's about learning how to see God at work in our lives, the lives of others, and the world around us.
- Have you ever wanted to get really good at something but realized it would take a lot of work to get there? *[Give relevant examples.]*
- *[INTERACTIVE: Practice Makes Progress: This is where you'll show a video clip of an athlete, artist, musician, or anyone who excels at a skill practicing to perfect their craft.]*
- If we want to get better at something, we have to put in the practice.

TENSION

- A lot of us don't like practice. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- So, we know that practice isn't always our favorite thing, but we also all know that practice is ultimately what gets us the results we want.
- It's what helps us develop better skills, achieve more of what we want in life, and get the results we're hoping for.
- And believe it or not, the same is true for our faith.
- I'm not saying that the more you pray, the more you read the Bible, the more you show up to church, or the more you do the things you think a follower of Jesus should do, God will love you more.
- What I am saying is that if we want to see more of God in our everyday lives, we have to practice looking for God in our everyday lives.
- The idea of having to practice looking for and connecting with God doesn't always sound that exciting because...
 - You're already busy doing other things.
 - It sounds boring.
 - You just don't know where to start.
 - You aren't even sure about God in the first place.
- What if, at the end of the day, the practice of looking for God in our everyday lives is the key to strengthening our relationship and connection to God?

TRUTH

- This whole idea of putting in the practice with our faith goes back to the very beginning of the Christian faith.

- The big reason we practice spending time in God's presence through things like prayer, worship, Scripture, and other habits is because Jesus did.
- Today, we're going to look at what one of Jesus' friends named Mark wrote about just that.
 - *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" (Mark 1:35-37 NIV).*
- All throughout the books in the New Testament that share about Jesus' life—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—we see Jesus set an example of spiritual practices, and we see Him equipped to serve others, connect with God, and do all that God had called Him to do because of it.
- We see the fruit of God's Spirit at work in Jesus.
- One way we can see God at work is by paying attention to the fruit, or evidence, of God's Spirit around us—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- That's what we see in Jesus' life and ministry. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- All this stuff we see in Jesus is evidence of the practice Jesus put in to see progress in His faith.
- We have to practice looking for God and the fruit of God's Spirit.
- Practice helps you progress.
- The more we practice connecting with God and becoming like Jesus, the more we'll build a habit of seeing God at work.
- Think about it in the same way we think about athletes. They've put in the practice, and now, they're seeing the progress!
- When we spend time following Jesus' example, then seeing God's Spirit at work becomes an easier.
- Remember, practice doesn't make perfect; practice helps you progress.

APPLICATION

- Here are four steps you can take to start putting in some practice and looking for God as you do!
 - Pick a fruit.
 - *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23a NLT).*
 - Decide what you'll do.
 - Take note of what you see.
 - Be kind to yourself along the way.
- Remember, this kind of practice isn't about perfection; this kind of practice helps you progress.

LANDING

- This week, I encourage you to give practice a try.
- Practice hearing from God by...
 - Reading the Bible.
 - Praying to God.
 - Talking with others about God.
 - Living for God by following Jesus' example.
- Because practice helps you progress.
- What is one way you can practice looking for God this week?

TEACHING SLIDES

All bolded words and phrases in the Teaching Script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier subscribers.



TEACHING SCRIPT

How To See God / Week 2

BOTTOM LINE

PRACTICE HELPS YOU PROGRESS.

INTRODUCTION

4 ½ MINUTES

Hi everybody! We're in the middle of our series called *How To See God*. What's it about? Just that: learning how to see God at work in our lives, the lives of others, and the world around us.

Pretty cool, right?

Before we get started, let me ask you a question: Have you ever wanted to get really good at something but realized it would take a lot of work to get there?

Maybe you want to be the best at sports, or art, or music. Or maybe you want to be good at cooking, or playing chess, or training your dog. Regardless of what it is, when you're learning a skill, it takes practice! I think the person we're about to watch knows exactly what that's like!

INTERACTIVE: Practice Makes Progress

This is where you'll show a video clip of an athlete, artist, musician, or anyone who excels at a skill practicing to perfect their craft.

I can really relate to *[name of person you featured in the Interactive]*.

TELL A PERSONAL STORY

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

- Talk about a time (preferably in middle or high school) when you wanted to get better at a skill or talent.
- Maybe you were trying to get better at shooting free throws, or master a skill in dance class, or learn how to cook for your family.
- Whatever it is, focus on the fact that you had to practice doing it, but you struggled to make yourself put in the work to see the progress.

No matter who you are or what you're working on, the truth is the same for all of us:

If we want to get better at something, we have to put in the practice.

TENSION

2 ½ MINUTES

Here's the problem:

A lot of us don't like practice.

- We don't always want to do extra training at the end of baseball practice.
- It feels like such a pain to review the study guide before the big test.
- We wonder if it's really worth the extra lessons to master the saxophone for marching band.
- And we'd much rather sleep than get up early to get in extra warm-up time before dance class.

So, we know that practice isn't always our favorite thing. But we also all know that practice is ultimately what gets us the results we want. It's what helps us develop better skills, achieve more of what we want in life, and get the results we're hoping for. When you look at an athlete like Simone Biles, or LeBron James, or Lionel Messi, what you're seeing is the result of the thousands of hours they put in behind the scenes to help them get as good as they are right now.

And believe it or not, the same is true for our faith. Now, let me be clear here: I'm not saying that the more you pray, the more you read the Bible, the more you show up to church, or the more you do the things you think a follower of Jesus should do, that God will love you more. That's not how this faith thing works at all!

What I am saying is that **if we want to see more of God in our everyday lives, we have to practice looking for God in our everyday lives**. Just like any other skill, becoming more aware of how God is working in your life, other people, and the world around you takes practice.

Now, can I just be honest with you for a second? To me, the idea of having to practice looking for and connecting with God in my everyday life doesn't always sound that exciting. Maybe you agree!

Maybe for you, the idea of putting in the practice to see God in your life sounds like a lot of work. You're too busy, too distracted, too consumed with other things to add this kind of practice to your list.

Or maybe it sounds boring. You can think of about a million other things you'd rather work on than this, right?

Maybe it's something you want to try, but you just don't know where to start. It definitely doesn't sound like something you could do on your own! So, you show up to church, participate in Small Group, read the Bible—you do all the things you think you should, but it doesn't feel like it's working.

Or maybe you aren't even sure about God in the first place. Why put in the practice to look for or get to know God when you're not even sure what you believe in?

No matter what our reasons might be for skipping the practice, I want us all to consider that maybe there's a reason God wants us to put in some practice. There's a reason to develop some habits that help us look for God.

What if, at the end of the day, the practice of looking for God in our everyday lives is the key to strengthening our relationship and connection to God?

Then, the work might be worth it, right?

TRUTH

3 ½ MINUTES

Here's what's cool: This whole idea of putting in the practice with our faith goes back to the very beginning of the Christian faith. In fact, the big reason we practice spending time in God's presence

through things like prayer, worship, Scripture, and other habits is because Jesus did. We know because His friends and followers recorded the way they saw Jesus practice His faith while they were with Him on Earth. Today, we're going to look at what one of Jesus' friends named Mark wrote about just that.

Let's start reading:

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" (Mark 1:35-37 NIV).

This seemed to be a pretty regular habit for Jesus. All throughout the books in the New Testament that share about Jesus' life—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—we see Jesus waking up early to pray, hiking up a mountain to spend some time with God, or escaping from massive crowds to spend some time alone in prayer.

Over and over again, we see **Jesus set an example of spiritual practices**. And over and over again, we see Him equipped to serve others, connect with God, and do all that God had called Him to do because of it.

In other words, **we see the fruit of God's Spirit at work in Jesus**.

Remember, we're talking about how to see God at work in our everyday lives. And we said that one way we can do that is by paying attention to the fruit, or evidence, of God's Spirit around us. We look for examples of things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in us, in others, and in the world. And when we see that fruit, we can be confident that we're seeing God.

That's what we see in Jesus' life and ministry.

His love for us on display.
His joy at serving others.
His peace in stepping into all God sent Him to do.
His patience and kindness to those who didn't understand His ways.
His goodness to heal and care for the sick.
His faithfulness to finish the work set before Him.
His goodness to die for our sins.
His self-control to pause and pray when He was in need.

All this stuff we see in Jesus is the fruit of God's Spirit at work in Him. It's evidence of the practice Jesus put in to see progress in His faith.

And the same can be true for us! If we want to see God at work in our everyday lives, we have to start practicing the habits that help us see God. We have to practice looking for God and the fruit of God's Spirit. Because...

Practice helps you progress.

The more we practice connecting with God and becoming like Jesus, the more we'll build a habit of seeing God at work. The more fruit we'll see from God's Spirit in us!

Think about it in the same way we think about athletes. We all know that professional athletes swim laps, lift weights, shoot free throws, and run the same plays endlessly to build the skills they need to perform. They've practiced the skills necessary to succeed thousands of times, and that makes nailing the medal-

winning performance so much easier for them. They've put in the practice, and now, they're seeing the progress!

Sometimes, I wonder if seeing God might work the same way.

When we spend time following Jesus' example—when we put in the practice with habits like prayer, hearing from God in the Bible, talking with others about God, and living for God in our lives—then seeing God's Spirit at work becomes an easier.

Will we ever perfect spiritual practices to the point that we never miss a day, never get bored, or never have questions? Of course not! That isn't the point. See, if we want to grow our skill of seeing God at work in our lives, other people, and the world around us, we have to understand that practice doesn't make perfect. **Practice helps you progress.**

And little by little, over time, that progress will help you grow in faith and connection to God.

APPLICATION

1 ½ MINUTES

So, where do we even begin?

Here are four steps you can take to start putting in some practice and looking for God as you do!

1. **Pick a fruit.** If one of the easiest ways to see God at work in our lives, others, and the world is to look for the fruit of the Spirit, let's start there. As a reminder, this is the evidence of God's Spirit in us:

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23a NLT).

To start, pick just one thing on that list—one fruit of God's Spirit you want to practice looking for this week.

2. **Decide what you'll do.** We can see God in so many ways, but one of the best is through the spiritual habits we put into practice in our everyday lives. So, decide what you'll do this week to connect with God and look for the fruit of the Spirit as you do. Maybe it's a prayer walk. Maybe it's worship music while you write in a journal. Maybe it's praying on your way to school. For now, just start simple with whatever practice helps you see God more clearly.
3. **Take note of what you see.** Pray that God will open your eyes to the fruit of God's Spirit this week. And then, pay attention! Write down how you see the fruit you're looking for (and maybe even some others) as you practice connecting with God this week.
4. **Be kind to yourself along the way.** It's easy to feel guilty if your new practice doesn't go exactly as planned. No need to be hard on yourself about this. Life happens! Just let the moment pass and pick another time in the day or the next day to come back to the practice you've decided to do.

Remember, this kind of practice isn't about perfection. This kind of **practice helps you progress.**

LANDING

1 MINUTE

This week, I encourage you to give practice a try. Practice hearing from God by reading the Bible, praying to God, talking with others about God, and living for God by following Jesus' example. Whatever this looks like for you, practice connecting with God to see God in your life every day.

Because **practice helps you progress** when it comes to building the skill of looking for God daily. Practice helps you see God!

So, when you head to Small Group, I want you to think about your answer to this question:

What is one way you can practice looking for God this week?



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
