

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.



**You Are Special
Bible Study Workbook**

(A companion to the YAS Master Curriculum Guide)

"You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose."

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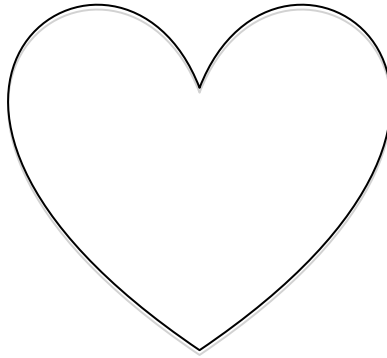
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You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

You Are Special Bible Study Workbook

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

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Lesson 0

Objective: To see the relationship between esteeming God and understanding his/her self-worth as well as hear the salvation message

Key Scripture:

Psalm 96:2: *Sing to the LORD, praise his name; tell of his salvation day after day.*

Bible Study:

Refer to these phrases:

“High self-esteem”

“Low self-esteem”

Some people might think this study would be about building self-esteem, but the Bible doesn't actually teach about self-esteem. It does, however, have a lot to say about esteeming God! Only when you esteem God and understand His great worth are you able to properly understand your self worth.

For what do we esteem God?

For who He is

For the gifts He gives

List some of your favorite qualities about God:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Write out 2 Samuel 7:22:

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I. Esteeming God for Who He is

Write down or draw the pairs of characteristics as they are explained.

Skit #1 (Revelation 5:5; John 1:29)	Skit #2 (Psalm 50:6; Romans 5:9)
Skit #3 (Psalm 47:7; Mark 10:45a)	Skit #4 (1 John 3:1; John 15:15)

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II. Esteeming God for the Gifts He Gives

What are some of your favorite gifts God has given you?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Write out **James 1:17**:

SALVATION is the greatest gift of all because:

1. No other gift can compare! Write out Philippians 3:8:

2. It's a gift you get to enjoy now and for all eternity! Write out Ephesians 1:13-14:

So many people think salvation is nothing more than a **ticket** to heaven. If that's true, then what enjoyment would there be in the here and now? It would kind of be like getting a "hongbao" (Chinese gift envelope) that your mom said you couldn't open until you were 76 years old. Where is the joy in that? It's true that heaven will be more amazing than anything we can imagine (**1 Corinthians 2:9**), but there is a lot to enjoy about salvation the very moment you put your faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.

As the class leader gives you a red envelope full of tickets, take a look at what's inside.

Yes, one of the "salvation tickets" is for heaven, but the others are for all Christians to enjoy here and now. It's true that some parts of salvation take time and energy to enjoy. Could a toddler as well as a computer engineer enjoy an iPad? Sure, just at different degrees of sophistication. In a similar way, mature believers as well as brand new Christians have access to all aspects of the great gift of salvation.

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Paste your Salvation Tickets here in the squares.

ENTRANCE INTO HEAVEN	POWER OVER SIN
THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT	FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD
EFFECTIVE PRAYER	SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING
1 NEW CREATION	1 LOVING HEART

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No one mentioned math as one of his or her favorite gifts from God. ☺ Math is actually a fascinating gift from God, and we are going to end our lesson learning the best math equation of all time.

Write the "Salvation Equation" below as the leader writes it on the board:

SALVATION EQUATION

_____ + Nothing = SALVATION

Just like in this math equation (write in the equation):

$$\underline{\quad\quad} + \underline{\quad\quad} = \underline{\quad\quad}$$

What happens if you substitute another number for zero?

The equation no longer works. The only numeric value that fits the equation is zero.

The same is true with the Salvation Equation. Good works, attending church, tithing, Bible reading, etc. are all wonderful activities. However, they don't contribute to salvation and cannot be added to the equation. Salvation is entirely based on faith in the finished work of Christ.

If you have put your faith in the finished work of Christ, you are about to enjoy an incredible journey learning about how special you are! God created all people special, but only the Christian can truly understand and experience the full measure of their self worth.

If you are unsure about your salvation, please let your Bible Study leader know. They would be delighted to, not only teach you about how special you are, but to also lead you into an everlasting relationship with Jesus. (Leader, take this activity time to talk and pray with any student seeking to know more about salvation.)

Matching Exercise:

Below are the five statements of the "You Are Special" Program Biblical Framework. Look up the verses on the right-hand side and draw a line to the matching statement on the left:

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Everyone is special.	Romans 10:14-15
Everyone is special because they are made by God.	1 John 4:10
Everyone is special because they are made by God, because they are loved by God.	Genesis 1:26-27
Everyone is special because they are made by God, because they are loved by God, so that they can be secure in God.	Psalms 139:13-24
Everyone is special because they are made by God, because they are loved by God, so that they can be secure in God and share this message with others.	John 10:28-29

In Closing: Esteeming God for who He is and what He has done for us is the best place to start in order to understand self-worth. Salvation is the greatest gift He gives us and affirms the great worth of all people. The Bible has a lot to say about our worth and in this Bible study we are going to have an incredibly memorable time learning that we are special!

Leader closes with a prayer.

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Lesson 1

Objective: To understand the theme of the book, You Are Special

Key Scripture:

Mark 10:13-16

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Learning: Read the book and understand the content of the story.

Some questions for you to think about and discuss:

- Did you like the story? What part of the story was most moving for you? Why?
- What do you think is the message of the story?
- Which character in the story did you like most? Why?
- How can the story relate to our everyday lives?
- Which characters in the story do you most relate with? Why?
- What do you think is the theme of the story?

Write the theme of the story here in BIG LETTERS:

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Bible Study:

Write out Romans 10:17:

On what basis are we special? What does "special" mean? In the coming lessons you will explore those terms and the basis for our uniqueness in Creation. Let's look at the story again and explore a little more. Take a minute and write your thoughts about the following questions. Be prepared to discuss in the large group:

- Is Eli like anyone you know? Who and how?
- How are our parents or friends like Eli?
- How are our parents and friends NOT like Eli?
- **Who does Eli represent in this parable?**
- How is Eli like God?
- How is Eli NOT like God?
- Do you think Eli loves Punchinello? Why?
- Do you think God loves you? Why? Or Why not?

Who does God love?

Read through these Scripture verses and discuss the following statements:

- God loves those who never heard of him: Jonah 4:11 and Matthew 9:36-37.
- God loves those who sin against him: Romans 5:8 and Luke 23:34.
- God loves children and adults: Matthew 18:10 and 19:14.
- God loves the disabled and ill as much as the healthy: Luke 14:13 and Revelation 21:4.
- God loves women as much as men: John 4:27 and Galatians 3:28.
- God loves people of all races: Acts 10:34 and Revelation 5:9.
- God loves the poor as much as the rich: Luke 6:20 and Luke 4:18.
- God loves the entire world: John 3:16.

Can you add any more examples? Add them here:

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Fill in the blanks from the verses below:

John 15:13

Greater _____ has no one than this, that someone _____
_____ his life for his _____.

1 John 4:10

In this is love, _____ that we have loved God but that he _____
_____ and sent _____ to be the propitiation for _____ sins.

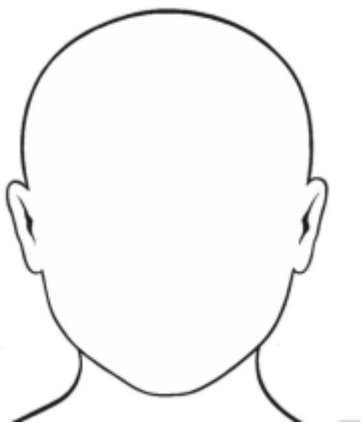
1 John 4:7

Beloved, let us _____ one another, for _____ is from God, and
whoever _____ - has been born of God and _____ God.

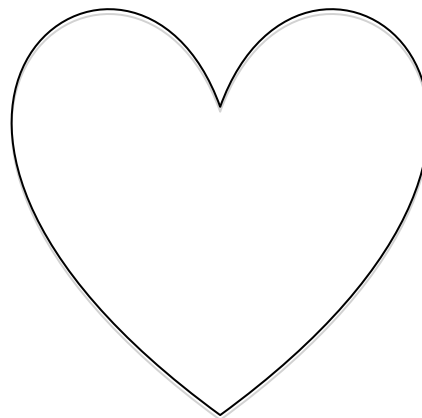
Just like Jesus used simple stories to tell deeper kingdom truths, the author of this book, Max Lucado, used Eli, the carpenter creator of all the Wemmicks, as a simple picture of God who created us and loves us.

Head and Heart Activity:

Draw a line between the head and the heart. Write "God loves me" within both the head and the heart images.



We **KNOW** with our head
our heart



We **BELIEVE** with

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Trace over the verse **1 John 4:16** below:

*So we have come to **KNOW** and to **BELIEVE** the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

In Closing: You have begun the journey of discovering that “Eli” is a representation of God, and God’s love for you is great. Going back to Lesson 0, whether you have accepted the message of salvation or not, God loves you. If you are having a hard time believing that God loves you, we hope that these next lessons will show you differently. His love can change and transform you for all eternity! Small group members should turn to one another and say, “God is love and God loves you.”

Leader closes with a prayer.

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Lesson 2

Objective: To comprehend the meaning of the word *special* and to understand how God sees us

Key Scripture: Genesis 1:27 *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Lesson Summary: The meaning of "SPECIAL"

Draw	Write
The Great Wall	
A symbol for New Years	
A clock	

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Learning: Reread pages 25-31 and also pages 9-11 in the book. Think about these questions:

- What makes people special in Eli's eyes?
- What makes people special in the Wemmicks' eyes?
- Are the ways the Wemmicks determine someone's worth the same or different as people do today? Explain.
- Did Punchinello see himself as special?
- Did the other Wemmicks see themselves as special?
- Did Eli think Punchinello was special? Does God think of you as special?

Small group discussion: Can you remember the definition of *special* from the Opening Activity? Write the three parts of special here:

1.)

2.)

3.)

Bible Study:

Read Genesis 1:26-31.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

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Let's explore what the Bible says about being special.

I. You are unique! Reread Genesis 1:26.

A. We are unique among God's creation. We are uniquely different from the animal kingdom.

- We are made to **Rule** over God's Creation. (Below, write out the rest of the letters spelling Rule after the first "R".)
- We are made to be in **Relationship** with God and with others. (Below, write out the rest of the letters spelling Relationship after the second "R".)

R

R

B. Complete this pattern below:

##\$##\$## __ ##\$##\$# __ \$

In the story of Creation we also see a pattern. God spoke, it happened, and God declared it to be good. God spoke, it happened, and God declared it to be good. This happens over and over again for everything God creates until he creates humans. Read Genesis 1:31 to fill in the blank below as to how the pattern changed:

Creation of Humans:

- 1.) God spoke.
- 2.) It happened.
- 3.) God declared it to be _____ good.

What was the change in the pattern? Look again at Genesis 1:26-27.

All the rest of creation was declared good. Human creation was **VERY** good. God was pleased to fashion a creation that could reflect His image and His character.

C. Furthermore, we humans are created unique from one another.

Read Psalm 139:13-16 and fill in the blanks in your Workbook.

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God knew you before you were born, and He made you to be like no one else. In your Workbook:

- List some ways you are like your family members. (Include physical features and talents or personality, too.)

- List some ways you are different from these same family members.

- List some ways you think you are truly unique. Do you think this is good or bad?

No two people are alike. Yes, we share many traits with other people, especially family members. However, science reveals that some things about us are unique, like fingerprints, eyes, heel prints, and our biological DNA. That's why so many sophisticated electronic devices have biometric security like fingerprint recognition. **God made you that way**, and no one on earth is exactly like you!

Place your unique **fingerprints** from your right or left hand in the spaces provided here using a watercolor marker for ink. Be careful not to smear the prints. Later, compare with others in the class.

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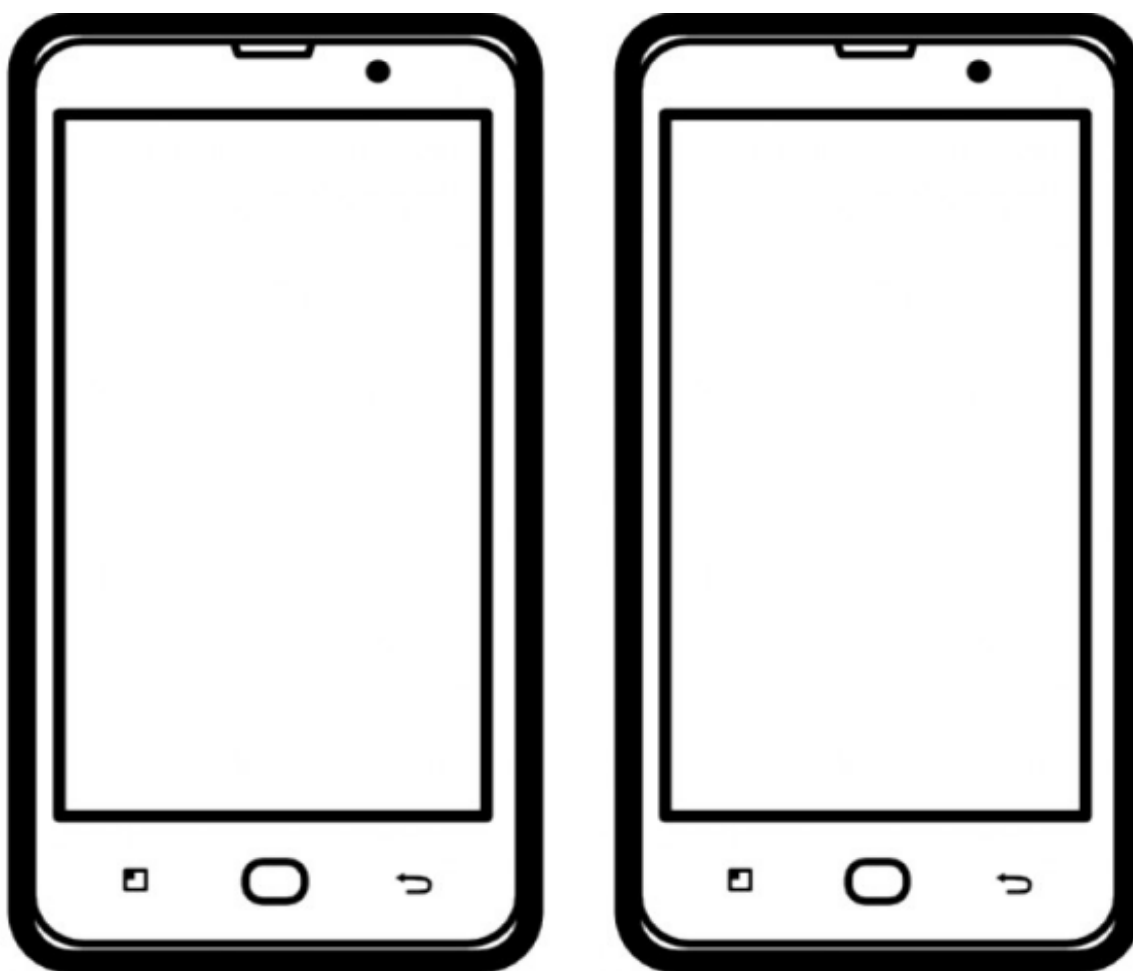
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II. You are of great importance.

A. One reason for our great importance is based on the fact that humans reflect God's image.

All mankind is made in God's image and has the capacity to reflect His character and qualities. However, until people come to receive Jesus as their Savior, that image of God can be distorted. (Remember the phone images distorted from the app?)

All people are of great importance because they are made to reflect God's image. But it's an awesome thing when, through Christ, we reflect that image without the distortions of sin. (Do the drawing exercise in your Workbook.)



Draw an accurate image of you here.

Draw a distorted image of you here.

B. Our importance is confirmed through the price God was willing to pay for us. What's the most expensive thing you or your parents have ever bought? Why did you or they spend so much money on this item? It's because in some way that item is important to you or them.

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Read **John 3:16** to see the price God was willing to pay for us.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

III. You are made for a particular purpose.

Read Genesis 1:28

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

What does it mean to be "fruitful"?

It does not mean you are to act like a banana. Fruitful means producing good or helpful results. Bible fruitfulness means producing God's character and qualities through Christ.

Can you name some ways a young person can be fruitful?

If one of the ways you thought of being fruitful was the Fruit of the Spirit, you would be right, too. List the fruits in your Workbook as someone reads them from **Galatians 5:22-23**. Put a star next to the one you really want to see more of in your life.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

What does it mean to multiply? I'm not talking about 4 x 4. Multiply means to increase in number. Multiplication in the Bible refers to many kinds of increase, most importantly, an increase in the number of people that know and love Jesus.

Can you name some ways a young person can multiply?

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(Fill in the blank from your leader's statement.)

"Young people can "multiply" by

and bringing them into the knowledge of Christ."

What's so amazing is that God will use each of you in different and creative ways to bring about this multiplication. You were made for the particular purpose of participating in God's Kingdom plan, but the specifics of what that looks like will be especially tailored by God for you.

Fill in the blanks of Ephesians 2:10:

For we are God's _____ [His poem], created in Christ Jesus to do _____ which God prepared _____ for us to do.

In Closing: We are special because God created us in His image and for His purpose. In the entire world there is no one exactly like us. We are special because God placed a high value on us when He sent his Son, Jesus, to pay the price for our lives. He desires for us to be fruitful, displaying the Fruit of the Spirit, and to multiply by sharing the good news with others. **We are unique, of great importance, and created for a particular purpose.**

Leader closes with a prayer.

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Lesson 3

Objective: To recognize yourself and others as special through seeing similarities and appreciating differences and understanding how God views us

Key Scripture:

1 Samuel 16:7b

"For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

Lesson Summary:

Like people, Wemmicks come in all sizes and shapes. Some have big noses, some have large eyes, some are tall, some are short, some wear hats and some wear coats. "But all are made by the same carver and all lived in the village." In this lesson you will share differences and similarities with a partner through the use of a Venn diagram. You may find it amazing to see similarities where you may have not expected any.

Learning: After doing the Venn diagram as a class, how you are different from Punchinello and how you are similar?

Do the Venn diagram with your assigned partner in the space provided in your Workbook. Beforehand, decide who is Partner #1 and Partner #2.

1. The left-hand side will have characteristics about Partner #1 (write in their name) that Partner #2 does not have.
2. The right-hand side will have characteristics of Partner #2 (write in their name) that Partner #1 does not have.
3. The middle section will have shared characteristics. Make it big enough so there is space to write.

You can compare physical appearance, preferences, personality types, family background, etc. After you have completed the exercise, think about these questions:

- Were there more similarities or more differences?
- Were there any surprises?
- What did you learn from this exercise?
- How many of your attributes were just physical appearance?

It is hoped that this activity helped you connect on more of a heart level than just surface or appearance, the most common way that people compare and contrast themselves to others.

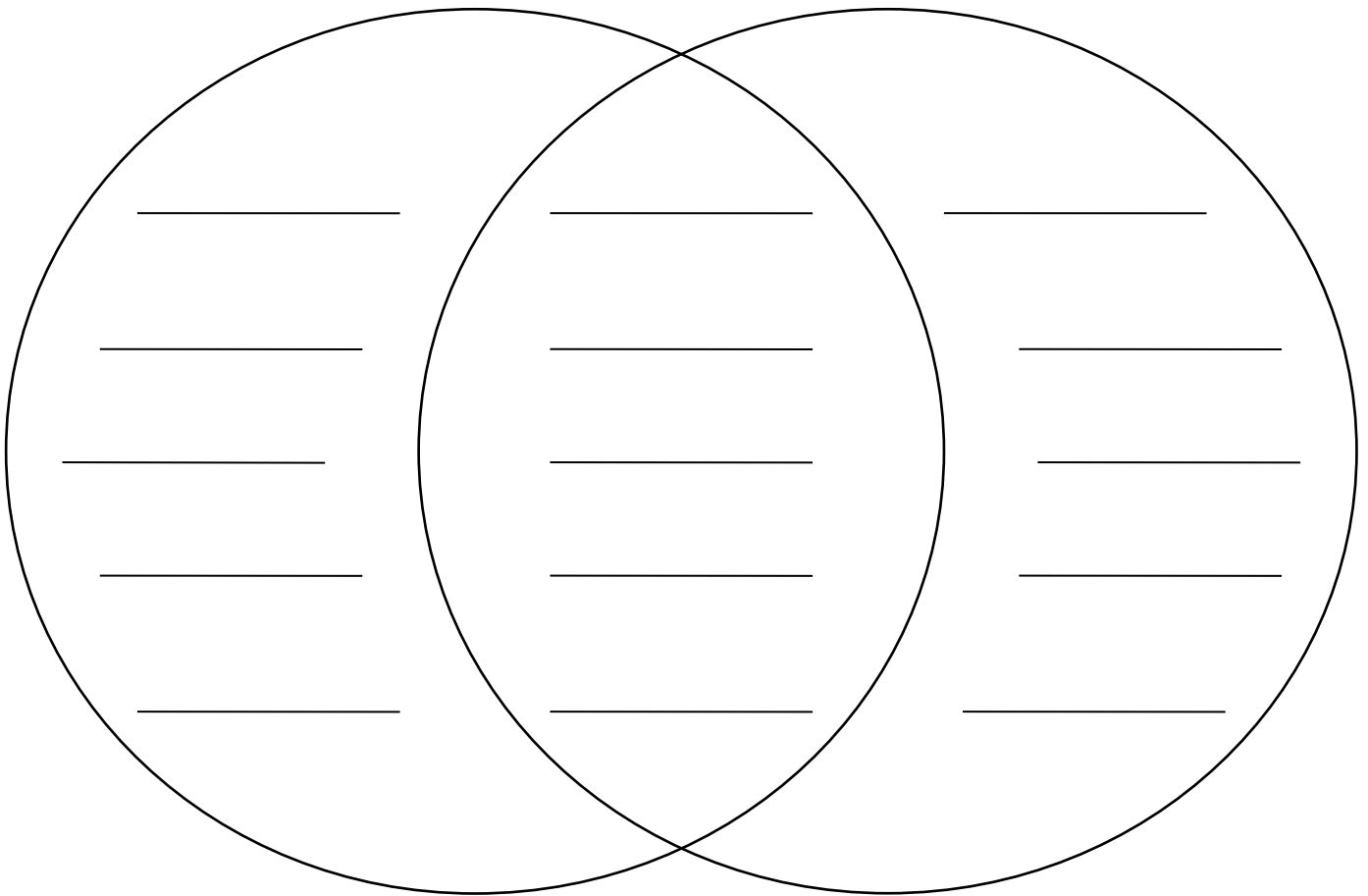
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Name: _____

Date: _____

_____ is special, because we have similarities;
_____ is special, because we have differences.

_____ 's characteristics Our Similarities _____ 's characteristic



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Bible Study:

Activity - Don't Judge by the Outside

People tend to judge something by how the outside looks like books, gifts, or even other people. Have you ever been surprised by something that you thought was going to be bad from the way it looked, but it was really nice? Like Darian fruit! The outside doesn't necessarily match what's on the inside. We want God's "eyesight" as we look at others.

Read 1 Samuel 16:7b.



But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

How many of you have ever had an eye exam?

After the Eye Exam Activity, take a minute to write out the translation of **2 Corinthians 5:16** in your Workbook here:

Follow the leader's instructions to fill out the following chart. If you want, you can color in the glasses as is appropriate.

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 God's Vision	 World's Vision
<i>UNIQUE</i>	
<i>IMPORTANT</i>	
<i>CREATED FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE</i>	

In Closing:

We have the opportunity through Christ to see with God's eyesight. When we do, we can recognize others and ourselves as special through acknowledging similarities and appreciating differences. We don't focus on outward appearance, but look at others as God does, and affirm that they are unique, of great importance, and made for Kingdom purposes.

As one Pastor said, "When God sees any person, He sees himself reflected in them. If we revere the Lord, we must also respect people, because they are made to be like Him."

Leader closes with a prayer.

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Lesson 4

Objective: To know you are special because you are *made* that way

Scripture Reference: **Ephesians 2:10** *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

In this lesson you will explore your uniqueness.

Opening activity: As you look at the pictures of athletes such as Liu Xiang (or any other famous athlete), think about their body design. Liu Xiang has won so many hurdle competitions because of practice, hard work, and the way his body is made. His body build is excellent for a hurdler. You can think of animal examples, too. A bee is designed perfectly for what he is supposed to do. An ox doesn't need wings. It has strong muscles. Share ideas about how certain animals are made for exactly what they are supposed to do. Though the fallenness of the world leaves people with disability and disease, those individuals are still unique, of great importance, and made for a purpose. What the enemy intends for evil God can use for good (Genesis 50:20). Think about how a blind person has a heightened sense of touch or hearing. (Refer to the famous painter, Joni Eareckson Tada, who uses her teeth to draw and paint because she is a quadriplegic and can't use her arms or legs, or Nic Vujicic who was born with no arms or legs, but God made him a powerful public speaker and witness for Christ. No matter what shortcomings or struggles you have, you are still God's glorious creation.

Learning: Read the middle of p. 31 in the storybook. Punchinello was made by Eli exactly the way he was supposed to be. What, if anything, do you know about cells?

A cell is "the basic structural and functional unit of all living things."

Guess how many cells make up the human body.

Write the answer here:

_____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

Your fingerprints are uniquely yours. Even though there are over 7 billion (7,000,000,000) people in the entire world, and China alone has 1.35 billion (1,350,000,000), nobody has a fingerprint like yours. You are uniquely created by the Ultimate Creator. No two people are identical.

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Bible Study:

I. God the Ultimate Creator

Refer to Ephesians 2:10 at the beginning of this lesson.

Just like Punchinello was Eli's workmanship, we are God's workmanship.

Think about a time when you "created" something like a painting, or a meal, or poem, etc. In your Workbook, write out all the steps you followed in making this thing (Including how you gathered the materials needed).

The steps I took to make (fill in what you made) _____:

1.

2.

3.

4.

In reflecting God's image we are also creators. That's part of His plan. However, ONLY God can make something from nothing (Genesis 1:2), which makes Him the Ultimate Creator.

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All people are special and all people are creators because they are made by God. However, all the ways God made us special can only be unlocked through belief and acceptance of Jesus as our Lord and Savior. One of the most significant ways He makes us special is through spiritual gifts.

II. Spiritual Gifts in Believers

Our Creator God imparts gifts to His children that are meant to spread His Kingdom truth. They are unlocked as we come to know who we are truly created to be. Take this survey to see in what areas your giftings might be. Remember, everyone has some gifts, and God's gifts can develop and change as we grow in Him, so don't limit yourself to thinking you have none, or the ones you have are not helpful. God knows what He is doing as He gives gifts to His children.

Here is an activity to help you see some of your gifts:

Name My Gift! Activity

Read Romans 12:6a.

As a class discuss:

- Do we each have the same gifts and abilities?
- Who gives these gifts and abilities to us?
- What are some of the gifts and abilities God gives to us?

Here are some of the gifts you will encounter in this activity:

- ❖ Affectionate - I like to show love.
- ❖ Giver - I like to share.
- ❖ Server - I like to help others.
- ❖ Leader - When there is a job to do, I take charge.
- ❖ Mercy Shower - I feel sorry for people who are sad, sick, or in need.
- ❖ Teacher - I like to help others learn how to do things.
- ❖ Patient - I can wait without getting upset.
- ❖ Humorous - I make people laugh by things I say and do.
- ❖ Hard worker - I don't quit until the job is done.
- ❖ Dependable - You can depend on me to do what you ask.
- ❖ Friend - I am kind and willing to be a friend.
- ❖ Honest - I tell the truth.

Activity: As instructed, sit in a circle with your small group. Each group will be given a set of cards. On each card has been written a gift or ability and its definition from above. One at a time, a person is to pick a gift card from the bag and read the definition. If you feel you have that gift, you may keep the card. If not, you may give it to the next person in the circle who feels they have that gift. Some will share some of the same gifts. Don't worry. You will have a chance to share what gift you think you have.

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Discussion after the "Name My Gift" activity:

- Was there a gift you hadn't realized you had until doing this activity?
- Why do you think you never recognized this gift before?
- How did you feel when someone described a gift and you knew that you had that gift?
- Was there a gift or ability that you don't have but would like to have? What could you do to develop that gift or ability?
- Is there a gift you think you have that is not mentioned here?
- Why do you think God has given you certain abilities?

III. Made for Something Bigger

As believers, we are part of a bigger community. The Bible sometimes calls this the Body of Believers. Just like a physical body, the Body of Believers has many parts, all of which are really important even though their functions are different.

Read out loud 1 Corinthians 12:14-18.

We see from these verses that every person is important to God's plan, just like every part of the body is important to the whole. What would happen if your lungs stopped working? Within a few minutes you would die. The same is true for your heart, brain, liver, and many other organs. Most of us know little about these organs of our body, and yet we could not survive without them. You could live without your eyes, ears, hands, and legs, but your life would be challenging. Just think of Nic V. or Joni Ericson Tada.

Imagine if the whole body were an ear.
Draw a picture of a body that consists only of an ear.



Imagine if the parts of the body were not arranged properly.
Draw a body with its parts all mixed up.

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We would be pretty funny looking and not that useful if we looked like either of these images.

The Bible uses many kinds of pictures to describe God's people (His community of believers). In small groups, look up each passage and tell about the picture that is used to describe the community of God:

1. 1 Corinthians 12:14-18

2. 1 Timothy 3:15; Romans 8:16-18; Matthew 12:50

3. Ephesians 6:10-18

4. Revelation 19:7; Ephesians 5:32

Be prepared to share your findings with the whole class.

In Closing: God is the Ultimate Creator and has made all people special. Spiritual gifts are unlocked through belief and acceptance of Jesus as our Lord and Savior. As believers, we are part of a much bigger community, and we all have a unique part to play in accomplishing God's plan and purpose.

Leader closes with a prayer.

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Lesson 5

Objective: To explain the symbolism of stars and dots

Key Scripture:

Matthew 7:1 *Do not judge others, and you will not be judged.*





Opening activity: Give examples of symbols and what they represent. A symbol is defined as "something that stands for something else." Can you think of any symbols in You Are Special? What could they mean?

Learning: After brainstorming what stars and dots symbolize, write what the leader puts on the board for the following:

A star means

A dot means

Take time to fill in this table:

 Dots I have received	 Dots I have given
 Stars I have received	 Stars I have given

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Discuss:

What's the problem with giving dots? and receiving dots?

What's the problem with giving stars? and receiving stars?

In Lesson 6 of the Bible Study we will explore how you can be free from dots and stars and other people's judgments just like Lucia. But first...

Bible Study: The Log in Your Eye

Read Matthew 7:1-5.

Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. ²For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. ³And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? ⁴How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye?⁵ Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.



After reading the story, most people want to be stickerless like Lucia. Before you try to be stickerless, you need to change your habit of giving stickers. Are you ready to stop judging others? Are you ready to stop sticking stickers?

I. What do you do if you have given dots and/or stars in the past?

Repent! Repentance means to admit your sin, turn away from it, and turn to God.

1. **Admit** that giving dots and stars is unloving and a sin. Review the chart you made in your Workbook with the dots and stars you have **given**.
2. **Repent and turn.** Leader has the class form a circle. Participants count off and remember their number. Leader then calls out a number. The participant that has the called number then turns 180 degrees to face the outside of the circle. That participants then calls another number and the new person then does a 180 degree turn to face the outside of the circle. This pattern is repeated until everyone in the circle is facing the outside. Leader reinforces the definition of repentance as "to turn away from our sin and turn back to God".

Write out 1 John 1:9 here:

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II. What do I do instead of giving dots and stars?

The Biblical approach is to communicate truthfully, communicate lovingly, and communicate while remembering that we are all on a journey to become more like Jesus.

As a class you will discuss these sample situations:

- A new student comes to class and they smell super bad (dot).
- Someone lives in a big expensive villa (star).
- Someone on your sports team messes up a play and the team loses (dot).
- A student in the class always gets an "A" on every test (star).
- There's a talent show and a participant's singing is awful (dot).

Think of some more loving, but still truthful, ways to speak to the above people and situations.

Practice: Refer to your chart with dots and stars you have **given** and pick one dot and one star. With a partner, practice following the Biblical model to relate *truthfully* and *lovingly* while remembering that we *are all on a journey* to be more like Christ. Remember, this may include not mentioning the offensive issue at all.

Write out Ephesians 4:15 here:

For discussion:

- Which is more important, obtaining more gold stars, or being free from the judgments of others?
- What is the difference between receiving gold stars from people and receiving approval from God?
- Is giving someone a compliment the same thing as giving him or her a star?
- Is telling someone that you don't like what he or she is doing the same as giving him or her a dot?
- Can you be truthful and loving at the same time?
- Can you think of a situation when it's most loving not to say or do anything?

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In Closing:

In the story the symbols of dots and stars represent two types of judgment people place on one another. The dots represent disapproval, and it can be quite painful to receive dots. Stars represent approval, and while this can feel good at the moment, it can puff up someone's pride. Neither one is best because both dots and stars can cover up who we really are. Like Punchinello, we want to value God's words about us more than people's words. In the next lesson we will talk about how Lucia kept dots and stars from sticking on her.

Leader closes with a prayer.

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Lesson 6

Objective: To understand that it is a choice to accept stars and dots, and the best choice is to accept neither.

Key Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

Opening Activity: Discuss the word "choice". Brainstorm ten choices that you have to make on a daily basis (clothes to wear, food to eat, etc.).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Learning: In the story, who had no stickers? (Write the answer) _____.

Bible Study:

- Are you ready to trust more in God's love than in the grey dots you have received?
- Are you ready to care more about God's approval of you through Christ than in the gold stars people want to stick on you?
- If you said "yes", what would need to change about your daily life?

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

I. Spending Time with God

A. Fearing God:

In the story, Eli represents God. Punchinello finally went to Eli.

- At first, why did Punchinello not want to go to Eli?
- Why do you think some people hesitate to want to get to know God?
- Should we fear God?

B. Finding God:

- Where was Eli to be found?
- Where is God to be found?
- What was Punchinello's experience with Eli?
- Do you think Punch will go back?
- Why does Lucia always suggest a visit with Eli when Punchinello has a problem?
- How did a visit with Eli help Punchinello with all of his dots and having NO stars?

C. Time with God: We can "visit" with God anytime we want.

Here are a few ideas about enjoying alone time with God:

- Some people use a devotional book or a Bible reading plan they get from their Pastor or Sunday school teacher. Ask your Sunday school teacher for one.
- Every Sunday at church write down a Bible verse you hear and like. Spend 5 minutes every day the following week reading it, asking God to help you understand it, and trying to memorize it. Get a new verse the next Sunday.
- Every night before you go to bed talk to Him about 3 things you were thankful for from your day and 3 things where you need His help.
- Every day at breakfast review one page from this Bible Study, talking to God about it, until you've gone through the entire study.

Remember:

1. God talks to you through His Word.
2. You talk to Him through prayer.
3. The Holy Spirit will help you understand the Bible and guide you as you pray.

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Write out 2 Corinthians 3:18 here:

As we spend time with God daily, experiencing His love and glory, we reflect His image more clearly through the work done in us by the Holy Spirit. Of course, stars and dots don't stick on God. So, as we become more like Him, stars and dots don't stick on us. Instead of the judgments of people, we are secure in God's love and approval.

II. The Strength to Make Better Choices

You will learn the "**4 Tricks for No Stick**" method to make better choices in resisting labels (dots and stars).

"4 Tricks for No Stick" Method: **1) Remind, 2) Decide 3) Ask 4) Act:**

1. REMIND yourself through reading God's Word that you are special.

Fill in the blanks:

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man _____, after our _____. And let them have dominion over the _____ of the sea and over the _____ of the heavens and over the _____ and over all the _____ and over every _____ thing that creeps on the earth."

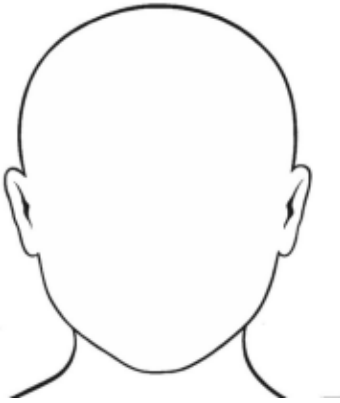
Zephaniah 3:17 The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take _____ in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will _____."

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his _____ created in Christ Jesus for _____, which God prepared _____, that we should walk in them.

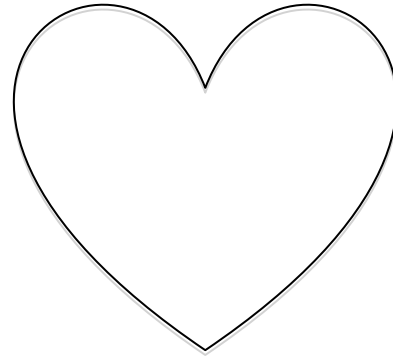
1 John 3:1a See what great love the Father has _____ on us, that we should be called _____!
And that is what we are!

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2. DECIDE your value based on God's Word, not on the judgment of others.
Write KNOW in the head image and BELIEVE in the heart:



We **KNOW** with our head.
our heart.



We BELIEVE with

Write over the words below from 1 John 4:16:

*So we have come to **KNOW** and to **BELIEVE** the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

It's not enough to just **know** the Scriptures in the sections above that tell you that you are special. It's important to **believe** God's Word that tells you are special.

A paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 4:3-4 (Look up the verse in your Bible.)

As for me, it doesn't matter if I am judged by you or any human authority...It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.

3. Ask, "What is true?"

God will use every circumstance in your life for good, to bring forth His best in you. That includes if someone tries to stick a star or dot on you. When and if that happens, it is important to take an honest look at yourself, and with God's help, ask some deeper questions:

- Is there any truth to the star or dot?
- What can I learn?
- What should I do next?

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4. ACT

What do you do with the star or dot? Write the answers to these questions below:

- What or who do I need to forgive?

- What do I need to forget?

- To whom do I need to apologize?

- For what do I need to repent?

- Where do I need to take some other action?

After you answer the questions above, review the "4 Tricks" steps here. Then read the examples that follow.



- 1) When someone tries to give me a star or dot, I **REMINDE** myself of God's Word that says I am special; that I am unique, of great importance, and made for a particular purpose.
- 2) When someone tries to give me a star or dot, I **DECIDE** to believe God about my value and not let the judgment of others determine it.
- 3) When someone tries to give me a star or dot, I have the courage to **ASK** God to reveal to me:
 - a. What is true about this star/dot?
 - b. What can I learn from this star/dot?
 - c. What should I do with this star?
- 4) When someone tries to give me a star or dot, I rely on God to help me take any **ACTION** that I need to take in order for this star/dot not to stick.

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Example: Star could be, "You're so perfect."

- 1) God **reminds** me that there is no one without fault [Ecc.7:20].
- 2) I **decide** to believe that God began a good work in me and he will complete it, but he's not done yet [Philippians 1:6].
- 3) I **ask** God to help me see myself in a healthy way and point out any way I may be puffed up in pride [Psalm 139:23].
- 4) I ask God to change me so I **act** more lovingly toward others, always considering others as I would want to be considered.

Example: Dot could be, "You're terrible at this game!"

- 1) God **reminds** me that I can do all things through Christ, and I can get better at the game with His help.
- 2) I decide to **believe** God and call on His skill and strength [Philippians 4:13].
- 3) I **ask** God to help me humbly admit any weakness and lack of skill so I can learn to be better [James 4:6].
- 4) I will ask God for any **action** I need to take to forgive the dot-giver and to trust Him to turn the situation around to my good [Romans 8:28].

In Closing: After spending time with Eli, Punch was changed from within, and as he left Eli's presence, a dot fell off of him. In a similar way, when we spend time with God and in His Word, we are also changed from within. We discover just how much God truly loves us and how His thoughts of us are far more important than the judgment of others. People will probably always try to give us dots and stars, but we have a choice. We can accept them or not. **Reminding** myself about what God says about me, **Deciding** to believe Him over the judgments of others, **Asking** for Him to show me what to do, and then **Acting** on His guidance, I can be free from other people's marks!

Leader closes with a prayer.


You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

"4 Tricks for No Stick" Method from MCG



Remind-Decide-Question-Act

- 1) **Remind:** Everyday you should remind yourself that you are special; that you are unique, of great importance, and made for a particular purpose.
- 2) **Decide:** Everyday you should decide that you will determine your value and not let the judgment of others determine it.
- 3) **Ask:** When people try to give you stars or dots you should ask yourself the following three questions:
 - ▪ What is true about this star/dot?
 - ▪ What can I learn from this star/dot?
 - ▪ What should I do with this star/dot?
- 4.) **Act:** Decide if there is any additional action you need to take in order for the star or dot not to stick.

"Question" Exercise



Star or Dot (Personal, Real- Life)	Question 1 What is true about this star/dot?	Question 2 What can I learn from this star/dot?	Question 3 What should I do with this star/dot?



You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Lesson 7

Objective: To demonstrate the importance of sharing the good news of the YAS message to help others know they are special

Key Scripture: Romans 10:14

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

Opening Activity:

Do you have any good news you can't wait to share? Write it here.

Learning: Reread the ending of the book. Discuss a sequel for the story or what you think Punchinello will do next.

Bible Study:

The Bible has good news, too.

WHY do we need good news? **WHAT** is the Good News of the Bible? **HOW** do we share this news?

I. WHY do we need good news?

You have probably noticed that the world is not perfect. More often than not, news headlines report bad things that happen all the time. Why is there so much bad in the world? Sin! Sin literally means to "miss the target". We were made in God's image to reflect His character and love. Anything less than that is sin, and sin is the source of everything bad and wrong with the world. Sin entered the world with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when they disobeyed God's one, protective command and they ate the fruit they were commanded not to eat. (Remember they had an entire garden of other delicious food to enjoy!) As a result, everyone born after Adam and Eve (that's all people!) were born into sin. It has been impossible to get free from sin and its very bad results. As sin takes hold, worse and worse things happen. Nothing we do in our own strength can break sin's hold on us, our loved ones, all humanity, or all creation. That's REALLY BAD news!! HELP! How will we ever break free from this terrible sin?

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Write out **Romans 3:23** here:

Write out **Romans 5:12** here:

Write out **Romans 6:23a** here:

In the story, Punchinello suffered from sin in two ways: 1.) Other's sinfulness directed at him when people judged him and did not value who he was created to be, and 2.) His own sinfulness in believing the judgments of the town's people rather than believing Eli, his creator.

People give us grey dots (sin) and Satan takes those dots and lies to us about our lack of worth all the time; he never lets up. We cannot define our worth by the judgment of others (sin). Instead, we must believe in God's love and what He has to say about our worth and value.

II. WHAT is this good news?

What is the "good news" exactly, and why do we need to share it?

Hopefully by now you have learned that everyone is special, and that includes you! That is good news! You can share this good news with your friends and family by reading your storybook to them, telling them about these lessons, or sharing one of your favorite Bible verses about this topic.

However, Jesus did more than make each one of us special.

The word "gospel" means "good news." **The gospel of Jesus is the best good news you'll ever hear.**

Jesus said this about the gospel:

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim **good news** to the poor.*

Isaiah 61: 1-2a

Keep reading on through verse 1 and 2a and fill in the blanks:

*He has sent me to _____ the brokenhearted, to
proclaim _____ for the captives _____ for
prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's _____.*

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

III. HOW do we share the good news?

It's natural to want to share good news with your friends and neighbors. After all, news that can save them from death and offer life in all the wonderful ways we discussed is good news indeed! But, knowing HOW to share may seem confusing or intimidating.

Matthew 28: 18-20 is called the Great Commission. Jesus told his disciples, his followers, what to do next:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Who gives you authority to share the gospel? _____

Who is with you when you share the gospel? _____

On a more practical level, there are many tools you can use to share the gospel. Can anyone share some examples (a tract, Evangecube, etc.)? One of the most powerful tools to share the gospel is through your personal testimony. **Complete the "My Testimony" section in your Workbook.**

"My Testimony"

Where to begin?

It's so wonderful and useful to take the time to write down your story of how you came to know Jesus (also called your testimony). You will use this guide to lead you to write out your unique experience. Try not to compare with others as you write out your testimony. Everybody's story is different because everybody is unique. Just go through the questions and answer them honestly. Don't worry if yours sounds totally different. You will have a whole page to write on each section below.

A. My life B. J. (Before Jesus): Can you describe a little of what you were like before you knew Jesus? Do you recognize ways that you needed him even before you knew him? Tell us.

B. Coming to Jesus: Who first told you about Jesus? If you know the specifics of when and where you accepted Jesus as your Savior, share that here. If you don't know or remember, share a few reasons why you believe Jesus is the Savior.

C. The Difference: What has changed in your life since you committed to Jesus? Really take some time to think about this. Are you different in any ways? Do you treat people differently as a result? Has anything inside you changed for the better? Have some things changed in importance to you since your decision?

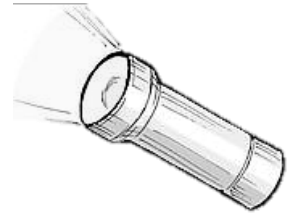
You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Once you have finished answering the questions, on a separate piece of paper use the answers to write out your entire testimony like a story with a beginning (Before Jesus), middle (Coming to Jesus) and end (the Difference).

Finally, practice sharing it with a family member or friend who knows you. As you practice, it will become more natural to you. In the meantime, think about with whom you could share your story, someone who needs to hear some good news. Pray for God to lead you into the opportunity to share.

Read Matthew 5:16. *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

In Closing: Can you think of news that was so great you immediately wanted to share it with friends? God has given us really great news to share, too. In fact, it is the most important and life-changing news there is; He loves us so much and considers us so special that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to save us from sin. Do you think there are people in your life that may need to hear that they are special in God's eyes? Sharing the message of You Are Special can be as easy as sharing the book with friends or family because this simple story can be an encouragement for others. And if they ask you, "Who loves you unconditionally like Eli loves Punch?" you can share with them your unique testimony of God's love toward you as demonstrated in Jesus. That is good news!



Leader closes with a prayer.

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Lesson 8

Objective: To celebrate your specialness and the specialness of others.

Key Scripture: Romans 12:10 *Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*



Opening Activity: Take a few minutes to review each of the 7 prior lessons. What do you remember about them?

Lesson 1: What is the theme of the book?

Lesson 2: What is the three-part definition of "special"?

- A.
- B.
- C.

Lesson 3: What tool did you use to see that all people have similarities and differences and all are special?

Lesson 4: How did people become special?

Lesson 5: What is the symbolism of the dots and stars?

Lesson 6: What choice do we have regarding labels?

Lesson 7: List some reasons for sharing the YAS message.

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Prepare for Open Mic:

Pick an idea from this list, and using a blank page in your Workbook, jot down some key points you want to share with the class:

:

- The testimony you wrote from the last lesson
- Which YAS lesson was your favorite and why?
- What most impacted you from the program and why?

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

In Closing:

These past days (and weeks), we have gone on a journey learning about God's love and purpose for us. First, we saw how a children's book can convey a deep eternal truth, that each of us is special. We learned that special means "unique, important, and created for a purpose." While we are all unique, we saw with the Venn diagram that we also share many traits. That's because we are from the same family, the family of God, and we are all His beloved children. He commands us to love one another as He loves us. Therefore, we must learn to treat one another with respect, not giving disapproving dots or flattering stars to people, but instead, learn ways to speak the truth in love. This includes applying the same truth to ourselves. We learned that the best way to avoid accepting either dots or stars is to be secure in our relationship with God, and we do that by spending time with Him daily, learning, *and believing* what He says about us. As we practice that, we become more like Him, and people will notice the change! Sharing what you have learned in this program can be a life changing experience with eternal consequences for your friends. We hope you will see great fruit as you do.

Leader closes with a prayer.

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.



You Are Unique
The world will be more beautiful because of you
Nobody is like you
You are precious in our eyes
And you are unique in the world

Oh you are so special
In our eyes
Nobody can replace you (*2)



You Are Unique
The world will be more beautiful because of you
Nobody is like you
You are precious in our eyes
And you are unique in the world

Oh you are so special
In our eyes
Nobody can replace you (*2)

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Appendix

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

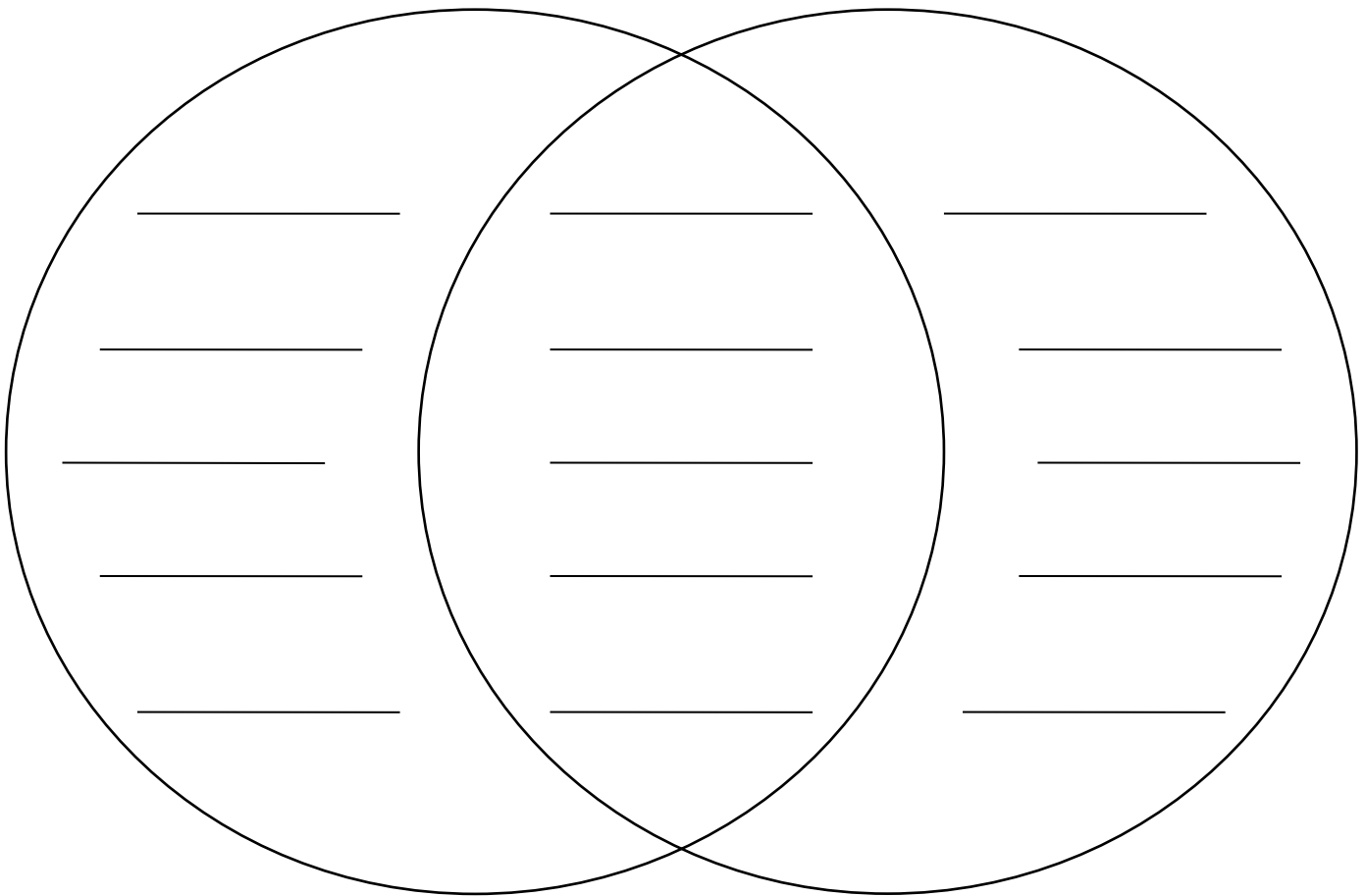
Venn Diagram

Name: _____

Date: _____

_____ is special, because we have similarities;
_____ is special, because we have differences.

_____’s characteristics Our Similarities _____’s characteristics



You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Name: _____

Date: _



My Hand



WOW!

30,000,000,000,000

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

Spiritual Gift Survey for Kids¹

This check list is created to help elementary age children discover their spiritual gifts as presented in Romans 12: 6-8 of God's Word. Read the following 49 questions to your child and answer by choosing one of the five following responses:

Never (1), Seldom (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), and Always (5)

1. I see things as being either right or wrong, good or evil.	
2. I love to work with my hands, and I'm good at it.	
3. I find great joy in learning.	
4. I love to talk almost all the time.	
5. Giving to others makes me joyful.	
6. I get great joy from accomplishing something.	
7. I get sad and angry when bad things happen to people.	
8. I am frank and outspoken.	
9. I find great joy in helping others.	
10. I love teaching people about things.	
11. I am very happy and have a balanced personality.	
12. I do everything with all my heart.	
13. I thrive on competition; I always want to be 1st or best.	
14. I look for the good in people and ignore the bad.	
15. I tend to be a little negative.	
16. I am usually shy and easily embarrassed.	
17. It's easy for me to speak and to express my thoughts clearly.	
18. I like to tell people "good job".	
19. I am very imaginative.	
20. It's very important that my friends are loyal to me.	
21. I find great joy in showing love to someone who is hurting.	
22. I feel that I am right most of the time.	
23. I like helping others before I help myself.	
24. I have strong convictions and opinions.	
25. I have a very positive outlook on life.	
26. I do not have a lot of friends, just a few best friends.	
27. I enjoy leading and telling others what to do.	
28. I am eager to please and be obedient.	
29. I get angry when people break the rules and get away with it.	
30. I like to keep my room tidy and neat.	
31. I love explaining the whole story to people.	
32. I notice what people can do well and I tell them.	
33. I like to save money rather than spend it.	

¹ Can be downloaded free: nckkidz.com/.../2015/07/92739299-youth-spiritual-gifts-test-1.pdf

You are special: unique, important, and created for a purpose.

34. I'm good at expressing myself; I love to speak in class.	
35. I enjoy peace and try to avoid conflict.	
36. I tend to be strong willed and stubborn.	
37. It's hard for me to say no when people ask for my help.	
38. I am very independent.	
39. I love helping people know how to solve their problems.	
40. I am good at making money.	
41. I am confident and enthusiastic.	
42. I find it hard to stand up and defend myself.	
43. I want to be obedient and feel guilty when I'm disobedient.	
44. I like doing really nice projects for people.	
45. I think I know more than many of my friends.	
46. I get along well with my parents, neighbors, and friends.	
47. I quickly help when I see a need.	
48. I love leading and organizing when I'm in a group.	
49. I prefer playing in non-competitive sports.	

To determine which gift(s) you might have, add up the following numbers under each gift below and calculate your results. The gift(s) with the largest number may indicate your particular spiritual gift.

Prophecy (Perceiver)

Characteristics – **Discerning, judging, sensitive**

Add the totals for question 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, 36, 43 **total=** _____

Serving

Characteristics – **Practical, observant, detailed**

Add the totals for question 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 37, 44 **total=** _____

Teaching

Characteristics – **Logical, systematic, factual**

Add the totals for question 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 38, 45 **total=** _____

Exhortation (Encouragement)

Characteristics – **Edifying, positive, expectant**

Add the totals for question 4, 11, 18, 25, 32, 39, 46 **total=** _____

Giving

Characteristics – **Generous, hospitable, resourceful**

Add the totals for question 5, 12, 19, 26, 33, 40, 47 **total=** _____

Leadership (Administration)

Characteristics – **Thorough, organized, responsible**

Add the totals for question 6, 13, 20, 27, 34, 41, 48 **total=** _____

Mercy (Compassion)

Characteristics – **Emotional, personal, joyful**

Add the totals for question 7, 14, 21, 28, 35, 42, 49 **total=** _____

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"4 Tricks for No Stick" Method from YAS MCG
Remind-Decide-Ask-Act

1) Remind

Everyday you should **remind** yourself that you are special; that you are unique, of great importance, and made for a particular purpose.

2) Decide

Everyday you should **decide** that you will determine your value and not let the judgment of others determine it.

3) Ask


When people try to give you stars or dots, you should **ask** yourself the following three *questions*:

- What is true about this star/dot?
- What can I learn from this star/dot?
- What should I do with this star/dot?



4) Act

Decide if there is any additional **action** you need to take in order for the star or dot not to stick.

"Question" Exercise



Star or Dot (Real-Life)	Question 1 What is true about this star/dot?	Question 2 What can I learn from this star/dot?	Question 3 What should I do with this star/dot?



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Additional Biblical Resource

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"A Biblical View of Human Worth"

The purpose of this document is to communicate the Christian view of the worth of all people. This document has three major sections. Section 1 discusses the worth of all people, including those who are not Christians and have had no opportunity to hear the gospel. Section 2 asks how one can find a common basis to uphold the value of human life with those who do not hold a Christian worldview. This section is particularly written for Christians who work together with non-religious organizations. Section 3 shares the Biblical teaching on the worth of the Christian. The following are the major headings of this document:

Section 1: A Christian view of the worth of all people

Section 2: Advocating the worth of all people with those who do not accept a Christian world view

Section 3: The worth of the Christian

Part A: Where does their worth come from?

Part B: Moving God's truth from the mind to the spirit

Part C: But isn't the self sinful, wicked, and worthless?

Section 1: A Christian view of the worth of all people

The Bible teaches the great value of all people, regardless of their relationship to God or their awareness of the gospel. God deems all people to be of great worth primarily because He has created them in His image.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God repeatedly states how deeply He loves all people, regardless of their awareness of Him.

Jonah 4:11 But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?

Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

God expresses love for those who are in the midst of rebellion against Him.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is...patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

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Luke 23:34 Jesus said of those who were crucifying him, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

All peoples of the world are so valuable to God the Father that He would allow His Son Jesus to die on their behalf.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

While God will execute judgment on all who do not know Christ, this judgment is not something that brings Him joy.

Ezekiel 33:11 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is...patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God values all people regardless of their gender, age, wealth, race, talent, and exposure to His church and His Word. God loves children.

Matthew 18:10 See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

Matthew 19:14 Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

God loves women as well as men.

John 11:5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

God equally loves people of all races.

Acts 10:34-35 God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Revelation 5:9 You were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

God loves the poor as well as the rich.

Luke 6:20 Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

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Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

What has been shared so far indicates the great worth God places on the life of each person. However, a holistic view of mankind requires that one also understands how deeply sin has touched each person. One must understand the judgment of God that resides upon all people because of sin.

Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men.

This in no way keeps the Christian from acting in loving ways toward all men, even those who do not know God. God Himself acts in loving ways toward non-Christians and commands that Christians do the same.

Matthew 5:44-45 Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Section 2: Advocating the worth of all people with those who do not accept a Christian world view

Many Christians work in corporate, academic, and non-profit entities that do not hold to a Christian worldview. People at these organizations or in government may not have a belief in God, the Bible, or even the immortal souls of men. The Christian passionately says to everyone, "You are loved and valuable," based on a biblical worldview. How can a Christian advocate the worth of all people to those who do not accept Christian teaching as an authority?

There are ways a Christian can advocate the worth of all people, and they have more to do with experience and emotion than with propositional logic. Everyone has an innate sense that all people have significance. That innate sense is not equally strong in everyone. People are all conditioned by their cultures, families of origin, experiences, and sin. As a result, some people struggle to find worth with certain ethnic groups, children, women, the physically disabled, the poor, perceived

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enemies, and so on. Yet, there is a sense that, even for an ethnic group that is perceived as an enemy, their own families and countrymen will find value in them.

Christians can appeal to this innate sense of value by sharing their own love for those perceived to be of little worth. Pictures and videos are tools that can evoke positive emotional responses. Sometimes those who have little in the way of emotional attachment to people have developed a strong bond with a pet. They understand their animal has accomplished nothing in the way of education, work, or personal attainment; yet, they have developed a strong emotional bond with their pet. Love for God's creation at any level can become a springboard that leads to love for people.

Sometimes the goal of a Christian organization is to receive permission or funding to do a particular charitable work. Some parties involved may not see the value of human life, but there may be political or economic advantages for them to allow the charitable work to happen. Many governments and businesses realize that caring for the needy gives them a good public image. While this is not all a Christian hopes for, such passive acknowledgment of human significance may be enough to allow them to accomplish their intended ministries.

One powerful way to proclaim the value of human life is charitable works by Christians. When Christian people voluntarily serve complete strangers that have nothing to offer them, they send a powerful message to non-Christians who are watching. Their generosity does not fit inside the mindset of anyone whose life values are materialism or power. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." The selfless love of Christians for undesirable people raises a huge question mark in the hearts of onlookers. They will naturally wonder the reason for the generosity, which then leaves the door open for the believer to share about the unconditional love of God.

Section 3: The worth of the Christian

The Bible speaks of the worth of all people, which was addressed in Section 1. Because of the Fall and the entrance of sin into the world, mankind has fallen under the judgment of God. The image of God is still a part of all people, but it has been marred by sin. All people have great worth in the eyes of God, but all people also are under the judgment of God because of sin.

This is not true for the Christian who has been forgiven and made new in Christ. The Bible has far more to say about the worth of the Christian than it has to say about the worth of mankind in general. There is abundant reason, based on biblical truth, for every Christian to understand their worth before God and to have a healthy self-concept.

Because this section is longer, it is divided into three parts. **Part A** asks where one's sense of worth ought to come from. **Part B** discusses how one can transform

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these truths into personal experience. **Part C** asks, "Isn't the self evil and sinful? Shouldn't one put the self to death instead of discussing its worth?"

Part A: Where does one's worth come from?

Everyone searches for worth and meaning in life based on something. What they choose to value will determine whether they are able to attain a sense of worth. If they believe that human worth is determined by beauty, intelligence, wealth, or status, they will believe they have worth to the extent they have those things. To the extent they do not have those things, they will feel worthless and insignificant.

The battleground for significance is in the *mind*. What one *believes* determines what they *value*, and what they *value* determines what they *feel* about themselves and others. The Bible stresses that a person's beliefs determine their values:

John 8:32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Romans 12:2-3 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

To truly understand one's worth, a person must value the things God values. They must see themselves through his eyes.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 This is what the LORD says, "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

1 Samuel 16:7 The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

2 Corinthians 10:12 We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

Having an understanding of one's significance in Christ does not result in pride. Rather, one learns that fellow Christians are as loved and valued by God as they are. God's goal is not that one becomes lifted up in pride or that one despises themselves. His goal is that one loves themselves the same as they love others.

Matthew 23:39 Love your neighbor as yourself.

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Ephesians 5:28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

The Christian should not believe that they are more important than others or that others are more important than them. Jesus commands everyone to love others *as* they love themselves. Understanding one's significance in Christ helps one to understand the value of others' lives as well as their own.

Part B: Moving God's truth from the mind to the spirit

One does not need to be a Christian very long to know that God loves them. The Bible repeatedly confirms God's vast love for Christians. No Christian would dispute this love. Yet many Christians do not have a sense of feeling loved by God. Some Christians have hearts filled with guilt and shame because of their sins and failures. Others see God the Father as a great philanthropist who generously gives eternal life but may not particularly *like* them. One may be ready to acknowledge the love of God in their minds but may not have come to the point where it creates a sense of feeling loved in their hearts.

God *wants* the Christian to be deeply aware of his passionate emotional love for them. In Ephesians 3:16-19, Paul prayed:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Paul is writing to a group of people who are already believers. Paul wants the Ephesians—and all the saints—to grasp the love of Christ in a manner that surpasses head knowledge. God wants all Christians everywhere to experience God's love in their hearts. The Apostle John expresses the same thing:

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

When many Christians think of entering into God's presence, they do not imagine joyfully coming before a loving Father. They have hearts full of fear, shame, and inadequacy. Why? John says these Christians have not been made perfect in love. It has already been clarified that these Christians are completely forgiven, adopted into the family of God, and passionately loved by the Father. Yet their hearts are dominated by fear, not by joy and peace.

Why are many Christians full of fear and shame? Because they are more emotionally in touch with their own flaws than they are the truth of whom they are

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in Christ. God wants Christians to experience His love in a way that surpasses their experiences of pain and loss.

God tells Christians His intensely passionate love for them is not something they will experience once they improve themselves, but something they will experience just as they are today. God was speaking about the Prodigal Son, not the compliant brother, when He said in Luke 15:20 and 15:10:

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him....there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

This is how God and His angels feel about someone who has made a complete mess of his life. God's passionate love is not earned by the diligent work of the obedient Christian; it is the birthright of every child of God.

So how can one take the truths that are in their mind and move them 18 inches south into their heart? Jesus said in John 15:9, "Abide in My love." If one's Christian experience is only composed of hard work, they will only experience God's love on a rational level. Warmth and compassion in marriage is maintained by regular, consistent expression of affection for one another. Maintaining the warmth of that relationship requires time and affection from both persons. God extends his passionate love to Christians every day. Christians must make it a priority to abide in Christ's love. This means inviting the love of God to fill those areas of life where the deepest hurt and loss are felt. Experiencing God's love in one's heart is not a one-time event. Like a healthy marriage, it is something that is able to grow in stages over time.

Part C: But isn't the self sinful, wicked, and worthless?

Some object to an emphasis on the worth of the Christian because of what the Bible teaches about the sinfulness of human nature. There are passages that can be mistaken to say that human beings are worthless because of their rebellion against God. Some have concluded that it is the duty of the Christian to eradicate the self, not to find the value of the self. The following are some passages that speak clearly about the wickedness of the human heart:

Romans 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.

Romans 7:23-25 I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

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Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Mark 10:18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone."

Mark 8:35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature.

Some Christians misunderstand passages like these to say that their self is by nature valueless and needs to be eradicated. They believe that somehow God and themselves (or possibly just God alone) work together to destroy "me" so that a new, Christ-centered being can come into existence.

It feels awkward to embrace the worth of the believer while at the same time comprehending the wickedness of human nature as taught by the verses above. It feels as if both cannot be true.

It is helpful to understand four chronological stages of human nature. First is the **innocent** self, the way God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Second is the **fallen** self. This refers to the condition of mankind after the Fall and continues to describe all non-Christians today. Third is the **redeemed** self. This refers to all born-again Christians in this life. Christians have a reborn, transformed nature yet still struggle with that fallen side of themselves that still lives within. Fourth is the **glorified** self, the Christian in heaven who is perfected and no longer has any inclination toward sin. The following will look at each of these one by one:

1. The innocent self: This refers to the way Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Despite the Fall, the image of God remains in all people. This leads Christians to affirm the value of all human life, as was discussed in Section One.

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2. The *fallen self*: The sin of Adam and Eve brought corruption and death to all of their descendants. Mankind stands separated from God because of sin and its effects.

Ephesians 4:17-18 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Romans 3:9-10 What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one."

Because of the Fall, all people have hearts that are inclined away from God. They are not able to please God. This fallen self is at war with God, and this self must be put to death to enter into a right relationship with God.

Romans 8:7-9 The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

3. The *redeemed self*: When a person comes to faith in Christ, he is reborn—born again. God gives birth to a new nature that did not exist prior to salvation. The qualities of a believer, listed below, are true of every redeemed person whether they have been believers for days or years, whether they are living in or out of fellowship with God.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Romans 6:2-4 We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

The redeemed self is no longer controlled by sin, Satan, and death. However, in this life the redeemed Christian still has the evil desires of the fallen self within. There is a lifelong battle against the sinful desires of the evil nature and the godly desires of the redeemed nature. This results in Christians being torn between two passions and two allegiances. It feels like an internal civil war.

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Galatians 5:17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Romans 7:18-19 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

When one affirms the worth of the Christian, they are referring to the *redeemed* self. It is very correct to say that the *fallen* self is in rebellion against God and must be put to death. As a result, one must hold to two complementary views of the nature of the Christian. On the one hand, every Christian has a *redeemed* nature that is of great value. At the same time, every Christian also has a *fallen* nature that is in opposition to God and must be resisted, as was just seen.

Many hold to an imbalanced view of the believer that emphasizes one part of his nature over the other. Those who de-emphasize the *fallen* nature can hold to a view of Christianity that does not compel the Christian to righteous living. Those who de-emphasize the *redeemed* nature can have a self-loathing faith that sees Christian growth as a constant process of hating and eradicating one's self. A healthy, holistic view of the Christian is acutely aware of both sides of his nature.

Part 4: The *glorified* self: This will be the state of every Christian in heaven. Upon death, the fallen nature will be finally eradicated by God. Not only will one not sin any more, but they will not be capable of being tempted.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

1 John 2:16-17 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Hebrews 12:23 You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect.