

First Priority Leaders' Guide

Module 1: Separation to Connection — Why God Gives Us the Freedom to Choose

Module Overview

In this module, we explore how God personifies love by giving us free will—because true love cannot exist without the freedom to choose.

Module 1, Week 1:

Adam and Eve, the first humans created by God, were given the freedom to love and obey God—or reject His instructions. Their choice to rebel brought death and separation from God. This week, we will see how the freedom to choose is a cornerstone of love.

1. In the first chapter of the Bible, we read God's instructions that were given to Adam: The LORD God told the man, *"You may eat from any tree in the garden, as much as you like. But you must not eat from the tree that gives knowledge of good and evil. If you do, you will certainly die."* **Genesis 2:16-17**

Q: According to these verses, what choices and instructions were given to Adam? Were they clear? What warning was given? A. Adam could eat from any tree except one. The warning was that eating from it would lead to death. The instructions were clear and direct.

2., In **Genesis 3**, we read that Adam and Eve, his wife, decided to eat the fruit even though they knew it was wrong and would lead to death: *Eve saw the tree was beautiful, its fruit was good to eat, and it would make her wise. She ate and gave some to Adam, who also ate.*

Q: Why would Adam and Eve disobey even when they knew the consequences? A. They desired wisdom, beauty, and what seemed good in their own eyes, allowing temptation to override trust in God.

3. After they eat the fruit, Adam and Eve immediately knew they had made the wrong decision: *They heard the LORD God walking in the garden and hid among the trees.* **Genesis 3**

Q: How do we know that they hide out of shame and what else do we learn about God from this verse? A. They felt guilt and fear because they had sinned. Remarkably, God is described as walking in the garden, showing His closeness to humanity.

4. In **Deuteronomy 30:19-20**, we read: *"I am giving you the choice between life and death...Choose life. Love the LORD, obey Him, and be faithful."*

Q: Why is following God's instructions an act of love and faithfulness? A. Obedience shows trust, loyalty, and a desire to stay in relationship with God.

Let's Talk About It:

- Why is the freedom to choose a cornerstone of love?
- Have you ever chosen to rebel against your parents? If yes, why?
- How has this week's lesson helped you to better understand the nature of love?

Dear Lord,

Thank you for loving us and giving us the freedom to choose. Help us to choose to follow you rather than our own selfish desires and help us to trust you even when we struggle with doubt. In Jesus' name we pray Amen.

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Module 1, Week 2:

Last week, we learned how Adam and Eve rebelled against God by doing what He had instructed them not to do, resulting in death and eternal separation from Him. This week, we will discuss our selfish nature, which prioritizes our own desires and harms or neglects others.

1. Being around children, it's easy to notice their natural tendencies to demand, refuse to share, and throw temper tantrums. These behaviors are not learned—they are part of human nature. In **Isaiah 53:6a** we read: *We have all turned away, like sheep that take the wrong path. Each of us has turned to follow our own way.* **James 1:14-15** says: *Each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. Then when desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is full-grown, it gives birth to death.*

Q: How is turning “to follow our own way” a form of selfishness, and what examples of these tendencies do we see in children? A. It puts personal desires above others. Examples: refusing to share, demanding attention, throwing tantrums.

2. Our desire to put ourselves first, often ignoring or neglecting others, is in direct conflict to God's desire for us. In **Philippians 2:3-4**, we read: *Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility...each of you should be concerned^d not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well.*

Q: How does selfish ambition and ignoring others' needs lead to suffering? A. It causes us to disregard others and causes broken relationships, conflict, and pain.

3. God's love is others-focused and freely given. In **Romans 5:8** we read: *God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Q: How is love given “freely given” and how has God demonstrated this? A. It is offered without expectation, and God demonstrates this kind of love to all people, even when they are directly opposed to Him.

4. In **Micah 7:18** we read: *Who is a God like you? Who forgives sin and pardons the rebellion of those who remain among His people? You do not stay angry forever but delight in showing loyal love.*

Q: According to this verse, what does God do, and how does He find joy? A. He forgives sin, pardons rebellion, and delights in showing love.

Let's Talk About it:

- How has someone else's selfishness hurt you?
- In what ways are we “motivated by selfish ambition” and how does this separate us from God?
- Why does God freely pardon our rebellion against Him?
- How has this week's lesson helped you to see how human nature is opposed to God?

Challenge: Each night before bed this week, talk with God about how selfishness may be getting in the way of you loving Him, and to help you recognize and appreciate His forgiveness and love towards you.

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In this module, we explore how God personifies love by giving us free will—because true love cannot exist without the freedom to choose.

Module 1, Week 3:

We have been discussing human nature, which is self-focused and often driven by selfish ambition and vanity. This week, we will focus on God's righteousness and how His nature is opposed to selfishness.

1. The word *righteousness* comes from a Greek term meaning impartiality and fairness, often pictured in the role of a judge or umpire. **Psalm 145:17** says: *The LORD is righteous in all His ways, faithful in all His deeds,* while **Proverbs 21** says: *“Wicked people are controlled by their conceit, arrogance, and lack of concern for others.”*

Q: In these verses, how is God's righteousness described in contrast to the wicked and their lack of concern for others? A. God is righteous and faithful in all ways, while the wicked are arrogant and unconcerned for others.

2. In **1 John 4:8** we read: *Anyone who does not love other people does not know God. We know this because God's own nature is love.* And **1 Corinthians 13:5** says: *Love is not rude, it is not selfish, and it cannot be made angry easily. Love does not remember wrongs done against it.*

Q: How is God's love incompatible with self-serving actions that harm others? A. God's love is patient, kind, and never selfish, so it cannot harm others.

3. In **Exodus 34:6** we read: *The LORD passed in front of Moses and said in a loud voice, ‘I am the LORD! The LORD! I am kind to people and I forgive them. I do not quickly become angry. My faithful love for my people continues forever, and I am always faithful.*

Q: If God is righteous, why is it impossible for Him to be selfish? A. God's very nature is true, loving, and fair, which is the opposite of selfish.

Let's Talk About It:

- How is it selfish to be controlled by pride and have a lack of concern for others?
- Why is it necessary for judges and umpires to be impartial and fair? Why is it necessary aspect of God?
- Why are selfish people unfaithful, rude, selfish, impatient, and unkind?
- How do we know that everything God does is motivated by perfect love and justice?

Let's Prepare:

For the remainder of your time together, talk about next week's INSPIRE Week by doing the following:

- Prepare a student leader to share their faith story
- Prepare a student to read the invitation (found on the phone app)
- Assign a leader to get the Response Cards downloaded (found on yclprograms/students.org website)
- Promote the meeting to others and inviting your friends

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Module 1, Week 4: INSPIRE Week

Welcome to our First Priority group! We are so glad you are here [Introduction of student leadership team].

We get together every week to talk about God, what He says in the Bible, and discuss different life topics. Even though we are a student-led Christian group, all students are welcome here, no matter their belief system or background. This is a reliable and safe place to make friends and feel connected.

Now, let's open the meeting in prayer [student leader prays].

Introduction of INSPIRE Week:

For the last three weeks, we have been talking about how God personifies love by giving us the freedom to choose to believe and follow Him. We've also talked about human nature and how it is self-focused and opposed to God. This is INSPIRE Week and it's a time when a student leader shares a faith story, inspiring us to move closer to God.

Student leader's faith story NOW

Prayer and invitation:

We will now take a minute to talk to God through prayer. In the quiet of your heart and mind, I invite anyone here who wants to begin a relationship with God through faith in Jesus, to agree in your heart and mind with what I am saying because God hears our private thoughts. I will pray out loud and I invite you to pray this in your head:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I come to you with an open heart. I acknowledge my selfishness and how it has separated me from you. Even though I may not fully understand, I believe that Jesus is the way back to you and want to place my trust in Him today. Help me to turn from doing things my way and release my life over to you. Thank you for promising to hear and answer my prayer.

In Jesus Name, I pray. Amen

Pass out Response Cards NOW

If this is your prayer today, know that God welcomes you into His family, and you can begin walking in a new relationship with Him right now. And please join us for next week's meeting when we will start a new module.

Challenge: Remember to invite your friends to church or youth group.