

# Forever One

## Psalm 100:5

*“For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”*

Youth Group Curriculum from ThereforeGo Ministries

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# **INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL**

## **COMPONENTS OF THE HOLISTIC EXPERIENCE**

### **>> Setting the Scene:**

While you are doing this study seek to personally abide in the message of the theme, and help your team to do so as well. Engaging fully in the theme for the 76 weeks of this study will help students really absorb the teachings and remember them after the series is over.

Consider visuals and hands-on ways to incorporate the theme into the places where students will meet. For instance, put up newsprint in the Youth Room/dining area with the theme title written on top, and ask students to write a one to five word situation or headline for something that comes to mind from the evening or small group sessions or devotions.

One of the ways we can encourage and remind one another about the theme is by sharing stories of real life journeys and God's faithfulness and power. During the Sessions, share a story of a historic Christian who was an example of this theme. You might also invite those who have been touched by God to share their story with the group. It may be good to have them share their story with their small group first as a means of screening it for appropriateness. You should also give them a clear time expectation (e.g., three to five minutes) for how long you would like them to share.

### **>> Note to Speakers As You Prepare:**

You have an exciting, challenging and rewarding task ahead of you. The good news is that you don't have to do it alone. God has called you, gifted you and empowered you to be his agent of change this week. He is also working in the hearts of those who will attend. As you pray for God to guide your preparations, ask him to provide you with at least three prayer partners.

These materials are designed to set you free and equip you to use your unique creative abilities to prepare messages that will inspire, encourage and challenge the participants to understand the theme. Pay careful attention to the Speaker Notes under Session as you read through this material. Many of the ideas are basic, and you can build upon them or refine them. Feel free to use what fits your unique personality and style,

and dismiss what doesn't. And by all means, add what we've missed, not only in Biblical depth, but also in illustrations or multimedia elements that connect strongly with students. May God bless you richly and move through you.

### **>> Things to Keep in Mind:**

To provide the best experience, the Speaker and Worship Leader should work together to set an appropriate tone based on the weekly focus. Students enjoy multi-media and multi-sensory approaches. You may want to incorporate media clips, songs, props, dramas and more.

1. **Get Creative:** You may want to involve youth advisors on your planning team to help brainstorm ideas that will have the most impact. Be sure it is all done with excellence.
2. **Weekly Speaker Challenge:** Each week, the Speaker should end with a specific challenge based on the session. This will be followed up on during small group discussions. At the end of the series, it is important to challenge all participants to set goals for how they're going to take what they have learned from this experience and use it in their everyday life with their family, church and community.

### **>> Helpful Tips for Leading Small Group Discussions:**

#### **Ask open ended, thought provoking and feeling level questions.**

Open-ended and feeling-level questions help the group focus on what is important to them and provide you with more information to stimulate the conversation.

**Samples:** What do you like/dislike about...? How did you feel when...?

#### **Watch the Body Language:**

A person's body language can say something different from what is being stated verbally. Check for facial expressions, sitting posture, crossed arms, etc. Remember, you do this also.

#### **Keep the Pace Rolling By:**

- o Being supportive (I've felt that way!)
- o Clarifying (Do you actually mean. . . ?)
- o Reflecting (Apparently you were very angry about. )
- o Offering examples (I know a guy who )

- o Don't feel the need to do this after each student shares, though.

### **Additional Hints for Making Small Groups More Effective:**

- o **Be Honest, listen and think.**
- o **Don't force anyone to share:** There's a difference between a student who is intentionally distancing himself and one who is simply quiet. An open ended, thought provoking question can help with both.
- o **Be confidential:** This has been covered a couple times already.
- o **Address Anger:** If you sense anger in a person, say something like, "I get the feeling that this is making you quite angry. Is anyone else feeling this way? What is going on?" Or if there is conflict with two of the students, you may want to diffuse the situation by using some humor or by asking them to talk with you later.

### **>> Easy Ways To Build Community Within Your Group:**

Find out what makes each student unique. Affirm them often. Be flexible. Intentionally include anyone who seems isolated. Be serious when necessary. Pray with each other and for each other. Appreciate their hard work. Remind them that they are making a difference. Wander off the material in your small group time – that's OK. Write notes to your group, and put them in the mailboxes.

## **THEME SUMMARY**

The Bible is full of stories. These stories give us a glimpse into the nature and character of God, as well as God's relationship to humanity, in a way that informs how we should live. They tell of people, places, and events from particular times and cultures and yet speak to each of us right where we are at today.

The stories in the Bible are not standalone accounts of people, places, and events though; the Bible is one cohesive grand narrative of the Triune God who created all things, loves all things despite brokenness and sin, came down in flesh to redeem all things, and is weaving a master plan to bring all things back to himself. All stories of all people, places, and events in the Bible are part of this grand narrative. At first read, biblical narratives may seem to tell the story of a prophet, or a country, or a miracle but really Bible stories are only a little bit about these things. They are mostly about God. It has been almost two thousand years since the most recently penned stories in the Bible were recorded, and no written texts will be added. And yet, the grand narrative of God, the story God is unfolding through time and space, is far from complete for God is still at work in, among, and through God's people.

In a world where we are so busy and things around us often seem so wrong, it can be easy to miss how our stories are woven into the grand narrative of God. Many days most of us are just trying to do the best we can to get work done and hold things together. We do not give much thought to where we fit into the overarching story of how and where God is at work in the world because our lives are full and our minds are preoccupied. Together we have a chance to take a step back and consider the bigger picture of the story of God.

Over the next few weeks, we are going to live deeply into stories from the Old Testament. We are going to learn about interesting characters in the Bible and how God used them to bring about his salvation and the restoration of all creation. We will explore how this hope of restoration was made perfect in Jesus, how Christ was the fulfillment of all of God's promises. We will witness how the early church faithfully lived into the good news of Jesus. Finally, we will ponder how God is still at work bringing each of us back into relationship with him through Christ, and inviting us to join in the work of the Holy Spirit as participants in the story God continues to write.

## **Weekly Session Outline**

**The Story of Abraham and Sarah:** God's Restoration Begins

**The Story of Moses:** God Provides All We Need for the Journey

**The Story of Rahab:** God Calls Us to Obedience

**The Story of David:** God Uses Imperfect People

**The Story of Amos:** God Calls Us to Justice

**The Story of Jesus:** God's Restoration is Fulfilled

**The Story of Lydia:** God's Restoration Advances

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