



Bottom Line:

Everyone has an opinion about you, but only one matters.

Hey students welcome to our new three-week series called “Hall of Mirrors”! My name is _____ and if I have not had the chance to meet you yet, please come introduce yourself to me because I would love the honor of getting to know you.

How many of you have ever been to a carnival? Have any of you been through a hall of mirrors? If you have not, the basic premise is that you enter a maze of mirrors which are the obstacles to getting out. Some of the mirrors give you distorted versions of reality and where you are because they are convex or concave or contain curves in the glass to throw you off. Some of the mirrors are humorous and some are a little scary looking (who wants to look like they gained 100 pounds?!) But the point is, the hall of mirrors doesn't want you to be able to reach the exit.

Today, I've got an exclusive story for you—breaking news. I believe that America has increasingly become a hall of mirrors without us realizing it. If you went to the carnival, I'm sure you chose to use your tickets to go into the maze. But friends, you woke up in this one for free and it is not an easy maze to escape.

The theme of our weekend is the “Hall of Mirrors,” because I am 100% convinced that our culture has been showing you distorted versions of reality without you knowing it. These mirrors have subliminally given you a way of seeing the world that at times is illogical and downright dangerous. And this weekend I want to, as your pastor, gently show you how those commonly held beliefs are unfulfilling for your life and share some good news that can set you free. You don't have to be trapped in the hall of mirrors anymore.

As a disclaimer, the theme of this weekend may be unpopular because truth is not popular these days. Many people think that everyone gets to make up their own truth, but I am here to tell you that there is an absolute truth that we had nothing to do with creating—it simply is because God created everything in this world: from the laws of nature and physics all the

way down to your identity. We can't just walk away from truth because it isn't popular anymore. **John 8:31-32 (NLT)** says, *"Jesus said to the people who believed in him, 'You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"*

Remaining faithful to your own thinking is going to leave you in bondage. You will continue to wander around the hall of mirrors. But if we follow Jesus as His apprentices, we will be set free.

So, stick with me and Jesus is going to show us the way out of the hall of mirrors. He is our perfect guide to truth because He invented reality. Let's get started.

Tonight's lesson from the Bible is called "it's brutal out here." Any Olivia Rodrigo fans in the house?

It's brutal out here. Raise your hand if you are so overwhelmed by the number of opinions buzzing in your pocket on a daily basis? That's partly what she was talking about in her song—the constant noise of everyone's critiques of us.

[Leader Note: consider having several big pieces of butcher paper up on the wall around the room. For each one, write something light hearted many people have opinions about at the top. Have markers available at each station. Have students walk around the room for just a couple minutes and write down the different opinions people have about these subjects. Examples: best tv series of all time, best musical artist/band, best ice cream flavor, Nintendo Switch, Playstation, or Xbox, best restaurant, best app: Snapchat, Instagram, Tiktok?]

Ok, those were lighthearted things many of you had an opinion about but there are a lot more serious things that people have opinions about. And one of the hardest parts of that is when they have an opinion about you.

Here's the bottom line today. If you remember nothing else, it's this — so write it down.

Everyone has an opinion about you, but only one matters.

Let me repeat that. **Everyone has an opinion about you, but only one matters.**

There are many reasons why many of you in the room, if not most of you, have experienced some kind of anxiety. But one of those reasons is the fear of what others think of you.

It's why you post or don't post what you do. It's often why you do or don't wear certain things. And it's often why you don't talk openly about your relationship with Jesus. I get it! None of us wants to be rejected. None of us thinks being cancelled feels good. And it would be easy for us to slowly change our beliefs over time—to want to water down things that the Bible says because we don't want to experience being the center of negative attention in person or online.

Everyone has an opinion about you, but only one matters.

God's opinion of you is the only one that matters. It's easy to say but hard to embrace. Why? Well, because God is invisible. The reality of God's presence, the supernatural realm, and what happens when we die is not usually on the forefront of your mind as a teenager. It's easier to believe what the culture believes and assimilate to what is normal.

Many of the fundamental beliefs of Christianity have not been the commonly held belief of Americans since before you were born. "Ok, Boomer, maybe you use to have some Judeo-Christian values, but that is so out of touch with reality now—we have evolved and are enlightened to a better understanding of the world. I mean, the internet wasn't even invented until you were like 40!"

Guys, that is the hall of mirrors talking. Somebody in this room needs to hear today that God's opinion about you is the only one that matters. The truth from God's Word is not outdated or irrelevant. I promise if you read the book of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John you will be hit with a waterfall of wisdom from Jesus for your life that speaks to your life in 2023.

[Leader Note: Talk about either your dad or father-figure or about being a dad to your kid. Explain how the love they had for you, or you have for them, makes the voices of others not matter as much. You could talk about your mom instead, too!]

That authority figure who loves you in your life, loves you with an imperfect love. They blow it sometimes, and yet, knowing they are proud of you makes the opinions of others not matter as much. So, if God is our perfect parent, how much more will His love allow us to walk out the exit of the hall of mirrors and into freedom, even if it is not popular.

We are going to be reading some important passages in the book of Romans together this weekend, so get a pen and be ready to underline this part in chapter 1 with me.

Romans 1:1-7 (NLT),

"This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name. And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace."

The real historical Jesus that lived and walked this earth and said some controversial things and did some controversial things and actually was unjustly murdered by being nailed to a piece of wood and who actually came back to life because He was actually God and actually told His group of followers to go and tell everyone about a set piece of truth—LOVES YOU. And He has called you to be His own holy people.

God loves you. God is calling you to be His holy people. That is the opinion about you that should outshine all the others because it is a fact! Our world does not live by facts anymore. We are in a maze of mirrors reflecting half-truths. Thankfully we still have math—but oftentimes statistics are still even skewed by our post-truth Western culture.

I don't believe that this is just "my truth." The truth is that God loves you and is calling us all to be His holy people. We like the love part. That's not



Series Goal:

Just like a house of mirrors shows distorted versions of reality, western culture is doing a great job convincing teenagers of illogical and unstable ideas that have led many to walk away from God's authority and absolute truth because it has been deemed unpopular. This three-week worldview series exposes three commonly held beliefs as unfulfilling narratives for life and counters them with the truth of the gospel. Truth is unpopular these days, but it is the only thing that will set students free.

Title: Main Character: My Feelings

Main Point: Feelings are normal. But God is my boss.

Scriptures: Romans 1:7b, Romans 8:11-32

Leader Prep:

-Take 15 minutes and pray for your students by name. Talk to Him about the needs you know they have, for their spiritual growth, for them to feel connected in your group and Christian community, and for wisdom in partnering with their parents to challenge and encourage them.

-Read through the Scriptures from this lesson as you prepare. Read the entire passage surrounding these verses as well so you have the context of what the apostle Paul was trying to communicate to the church in Rome. Having a study Bible like this or this will help you in your personal relationship with Jesus and as you partner with parents to shepherd the students in your small group.

-As you read the passages and scan the discussion questions, reflect on your own life and let the Holy Spirit convict you in areas where He wants you to personally to be challenged.

-Highlight the 3 discussion questions you really want to get to in your discussion today. This way if you are running short on time you are covering the most important things for your group.

-Remember to listen more than you talk today—shoot for students talking 80% of the time. Remember, they just heard a sermon. Now they just need you to facilitate a conversation.

Break The Ice:

-Set a timer for each student (if you have a chatty group) and have each share a high and low from the week. Sometimes I call it “happy, crappy, and God-moment.” The “God-moment” piece, encourages students to be looking for ways God was at work in their life that week.

-You could also have students share their prayer requests during their high/low portion instead of the end to save time.

-Ask a student to pray for the groups’ requests and to begin your discussion time.

-How did it go with your Hall of Mirrors “Other Six” Devotional this week? What did God speak to you? Did you write down your 3 questions that you are wrestling with about who God is, what God has set forth as reality and law for your flourishing, and what that means for you and your worldview? What are your next steps?

Dig Into The Word:

-Ask 3 students to read the Scriptures from today’s message Romans 1:7b and Romans 8:11-32.

-What does Paul mean by “grace and peace?” Is he referring just to our emotional status? Does God simply want us to be at peace in this life and have grace for every action we take? [Leader Note: No—Paul is referring to the grace we have from God because of Jesus for the sins that have separated us from Him and the peace that we now have with God because it has been atoned for. It’s easy to read this verse and think that though because our culture is so focused on our own personal feelings, personal happiness, and this life more than eternal life.]

-Does everyone have the Spirit of God living inside them? [Leader Note: No. Only those who have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord (John 5:1)]

-How do we overcome our sinful nature? [Leader Note: Not by trying hard to be a good person but through the sanctification by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-21, Galatians 5:22-23). We will never fully overcome sin in this life (1 John 1:8).]

-What future hope do we have despite suffering on this earth? What does God promise us through Paul’s letter to the church in Rome in Romans 8?

Discussion Questions:

- Our speaker showed clips from the Pixar movie “Inside Out.” What’s your favorite Pixar movie and why?
- What emotion would you say you experience the most?
- Do you think it’s a good thing that our culture is currently built on individuals’ personal feelings? How do you think we got to this being the predominant worldview?
- Why is “just follow your heart” or “live your truth” so popular?
- Do you think truth can change? Are there grey areas? In what ways can we know what is black and white truth?
- If our feelings are not good bosses, why do you think God gave them to us? What is their purpose?
- How do you think our feelings are affected by the fall in Genesis 3 (when everything broke)?
- When we feel something so strongly that is counter to God’s truth what can we do?
- Give an example of how you can interpret your feelings through Scripture and not popular opinion?
- How has following your heart failed to fix all your problems?
- What does the difference look like in following your feelings vs following God’s leadings?
- What would happen to our country if everyone truly did *everything* they felt like doing?
- What will happen to our faith if we base it only on our feelings?
- How do we reconcile as Christians that some hardships and struggles won’t ever be “cured” this side of Heaven? How do we carry on in that tension when the world is telling us to embrace everything that we feel?
- What future glory do we have?
- What hard things have you either gone through or are going through now? In what ways has God shown you His closeness to you during this time? How can we support you now in what you are wrestling with? What should true Christian community look like? What’s one step our group can take to be Christ centered community that doesn’t endorse every feeling but supports a person in their journey towards Christ-likeness?
- How can we as a group channel our emotion into building God’s kingdom? What people around us need the Gospel and how can we bring it to them?
- Why is God a good boss?

Application:

-Have your group come up with one way they can be a better community for each other—not endorsing every feeling but supporting each person in their journey towards Christlikeness

Prayer Prompt:

-Have your students huddle up and put their arms around each other if they feel comfortable. Step away and allow them to take the lead in praying for each other and building a tighter Godly community as a group.

Follow Up Text Message:

-Hey student. Praying for you today! I want our group to continue to grow as a community that supports each other in their journey towards Christlikeness. No matter what you are struggling with—we love you and God loves you and He sees you as holy because of what Jesus has done. Let me know if there is anything specific, I can be praying for you about this week. Can't wait to see you guys next week. Much love!

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