

YOUTH  
11-14s

# GROWING UP

God's  
Good  
Story



SESSION 1

I am who God says I am

Genesis 1:26-27 • Psalm 112:1

faith  kids

# Contents

<b>Preparation for leaders</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>11–14s session plan</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Series overview visual</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Case study pictures</b>	<b>11</b>

Growing Up - God's Good Story 11-14s

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Cover design, cover illustrations and worksheet illustrations by Alex Webb-Peploe | Session illustrations by Magriet Brink | Writing team: Amy Smith, Ed Drew, Cathy Dalton, Jo Chamberlin, Lizzie Clarke.

"All for the glory of God alone" (1 Corinthians 10:31)



SESSION 1

# I am who God says I am

Genesis 1:26-27 • Psalm 112:1



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## Truth that changes me:

We are made by God. He knows who we really are.

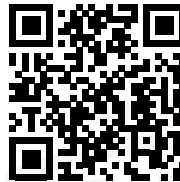


## Faith in Youth looks like:

Young people who listen to God, trusting that he knows what is best for them.

## Preparation

As you prepare this session, we recommend watching the series introductory video if you haven't seen it.



## Notes



## Where are we going?

We want our young people to hear the counter-cultural message of the Bible, that delight is not found in following their hearts, but in fearing the Lord. Their creator tells them who they are and how to live, so they should listen carefully to him. Other voices - friends, social media and their culture - do not love them and know them as their creator does.

Pray and read the Bible passage. Read **Where are we going**, **The world our young people live in** and **Look at the passage** to give you a better understanding of how to apply the truth.



## The world our young people live in

Our young people are told that they can and should define themselves; it's up to them to decide everything - their identity, gender, sexuality, and more.

What sounds like freedom is actually a crushing burden. They are left trying to work out what is good and who they should listen to in a confusing world of conflicting ideas and peer pressure. How can they make wise decisions? How can they filter the noise?

Their loving heavenly Father who made them and adores them wants to tell them who they are. He can be trusted, his words allow them to navigate the challenges of growing up: 'Do the messages I'm hearing say the same things about me as God does?'

In this series we want our young people to become more confident about what their heavenly father says, so that they are more able to filter other messages they will hear as they grow up.





## Look at the passage



### Created By God

*“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* **GENESIS 1:27**

Because God created us, he gets to tell us who we are. His is the voice we measure all others against, his message holds the most weight. We can be certain about who we are and how to live by listening to our creator God. His word is the instruction manual for the people he made and loves.

### Listening to God

*“Praise the Lord. Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands.”* **PSALM 112:1**

When we live listening carefully to the one who made us, we're in the safest place we can be. We are blessed. Our culture tells us that we will find delight in following our hearts; the Bible tells us that delight is found in obeying the Lord. Who we choose to listen to reveals who we believe.

In this Psalm, every line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It's a poem of beauty, order and symmetry, an echo of the world as it was designed to be. We are being the people we were made to be when we live according to the beautiful design of our creator.

This is the better story we want to share with our young people: our creator tells us who we are.



## Win my heart first

From the beginning, we have been fed the lie that obeying God means missing out. The serpent's first hiss questioned God's goodness: "Look at what God is keeping from you, don't listen to him, make your own rules". The lie remains the same today. Our culture's loudest message is: "Don't let anyone tell you how to live! You can choose". This drum beat that sounds like freedom is the same hissing lie dressed in a different costume. The God who made us, knows us and loves us is the only one perfectly able to tell us who we are and how we should live.

If we truly believe God's word, we will not be afraid of being in the minority, because we fear the Lord and we delight in him more than in other people's opinions. Do you want this for our young people?

- Who do you listen to? Whose opinion matters the most to you?
- In what situations do you easily care more about what others think than about fearing the Lord?

*For your heart, before you prepare the lesson.*



## 5 minutes to focus on your group

Who are the young people in *your* group listening to? Are they influenced most by friends, their peer group, media stars, influencers or their parents? What do you learn from how they dress, the questions they ask or the gradual change you see in them? Help them build a framework so that they can work out which messages they should listen to and which ones to mute.



*What do the young people in your group need?*

*Pray for them:*  
· to grasp the truth  
· to live it out  
· to rely on the Spirit



## In case you're feeling nervous...

- We want young people to know that all voices are not equal - God's voice is always the best one to listen to.
- We don't want to suggest that all other voices are bad - lots of other messages agree with what God says and should be listened to.
- Many young people have unbelieving parents, unbelieving teachers etc. Sometimes their messages will differ from God's, other times not. Young people are able to be more discerning about what they hear as they grow up. We want to affirm that these are still adults to be trusted, their messages are often good and young people can still listen to them.
- This session is introductory. It is building the framework that we will be using in future sessions, where the issues are more personal and perhaps more awkward to discuss. Try to open up conversation in this session, encouraging everyone to contribute.

*We understand this might feel daunting. The intention is to start a conversation, not to complete it.*



## Series overview visual

The overview visual (see p. 10) will help to explain this, and other big ideas in future sessions. Because God created us, he knows us better than anyone else. He gets to tell us who we are.

The visual shows a person hearing: messages from themselves - these are thoughts and feelings (represented by the thought clouds); messages from others - including other people and the media (represented by the speech bubbles); and messages from God - what he has written in the Bible. The crown shows that God's messages are the most important - we only let other messages stick if they say the same things as God says. God made us and loves us more than anyone, great delight comes from listening to him.



## 11-14s Session Plan




### Get going

#### Who are you listening to?

One young person wearing the blindfold sits at a table with some duplo blocks in front of them. The challenge for the blindfolded young person is to pick up certain coloured duplo blocks without touching the table or the other blocks. One or two other people can give instructions to the blindfolded person. At least one other person needs to be giving wrong, unhelpful instructions. If you have more young people in your group, you could have two or three people blindfolded with subgroups giving them right and wrong instructions. However many you have, create an atmosphere of confused noise (without it being chaotic or upsetting). Perhaps place those giving 'good' instructions on the opposite side of the room. To keep it quieter, you could insist that all instructions are whispered.

You could reflect on how the game could be made easier or harder and change the rules accordingly, as different people are blindfolded.

 **Link:** We all hear thousands of messages each day, some subtle and some in-your-face, some good and helpful, some destructive and discouraging. In today's session we are thinking about who we listen to, who we don't listen to and how we decide.



### Teaching time

You could start by watching [the first three minutes of this video](#). Ask the young people to look out for the messages behind the video. How is MrBeast wanting to influence us? What does he want to persuade us of? What messages does he want to tell us about himself? *MrBeast wants us to understand the damage pollution does and that plastic is the particular problem we all need to fight. But on a deeper level he wants us to see that he is a good person who cleans up, who is a team player, who will travel large distances to help others, who hangs out with other famous people, who makes a difference. The goal is not to judge MrBeast, just to appreciate that there is a reason they are called 'influencers'. We are hearing more messages than we realise. Some affect us more than others.*

continued →



### Notes

**You will need:** blindfolds, a few tables & chairs and some duplo blocks (or similar)



**You will need:** A way to show a youtube video, a large sheet of paper, series overview visual (see p. 10), post it notes

## Created By God

Introduce the verse to your group, giving them as much context as they need to understand it. Where does it appear in the Bible? What has happened before this verse?

**“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” GENESIS 1:27 (ICB)**

This is the start of us, the creation of humanity. How many things do we learn about ourselves from this verse? Scribble on a piece of paper, e.g., ‘we are created’, ‘God is our creator’, ‘we are made in God’s image’, ‘we are like God’, ‘we are male and female’.

What have you ever created? *A model, a friendship bracelet, a painting, a tag, a video, a piece of music, a recipe?*

When you create something, how does that change what you know about it, how you feel when others talk about it, how you treat it, what you do with it?

If we are ‘created’, if we have a creator and are uniquely created to be a little like God, how does that change how we treat our creator’s ‘messages’. What kind of ‘influencer’ is God? *Because God made us, and made us like him, he knows us better than anyone else. Because he made us, knows us and loves us he gets to tell us who we are. Just like the person who designed and built a car can tell you how it runs, our creator is best placed to tell us who we are.*

## Listening to God

**READ PSALM 112:1:**

**“Praise the Lord. Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands.”**

This verse describes a person who listens to who God says they are and lets him direct how they live.

- How are they described? What does that mean? *Blessed, happy, praising, delighting*
- Is that a surprise? Does it feel like listening to God is a ‘great delight’? Why/why not?

*Show and explain the series overview visual.*

In our lives, we hear

- messages from others - people we know, TV, social media (point to the speech bubbles).
- messages from ourselves - these are thoughts and feelings (point to the thought clouds).
- messages from God - what he has written in the Bible (point to the Bible). The crown shows this person is letting God’s messages be the ones in charge - they only let other messages stick if they say the same things as God says. The person is happy because they are listening to God.



*A conversation about whether this is metaphorical or literal truth, about evolution/creation, religion/science is beyond the scope of this session. If questions arise, affirm that these are great questions to think about but offer to discuss them later, not during the session. While Christians might disagree over some of these issues, all Christians would agree that this verse is foundational in understanding who we are and who God is.*

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Let's think about some different messages we hear from these three places:

- From Others – what do you hear from family, friends, peers, teachers, social media, TV, YouTube? Pick two different people, perhaps someone you respect and someone you would rather not listen to. Talk to the person next to you about what each would say about you. Write some of these messages on post-it notes. For example: 'Listen to your parents', 'Agree with your friends whatever they say', 'Study hard', 'Stay out of trouble', 'Be true to yourself', 'Live your best life', 'Care for the environment', 'You've got this'.
- From Me – what might you say to yourself, or feel about yourself? Pick two extremes of mood, perhaps when you feel on top of the world and as low as you get. Turn to the person next to you, how would you describe how you feel about yourself in those moments? *Write some of these messages on post-it notes.*
- From God – where do you hear people tell you the truth? Who reads the Bible or prays with you? Who teaches you more about God? Who encourages you? What are some messages from the Bible that you know God says about you? *You could draw out specific things God says and write them on post-it notes.*

We can work out which messages should stick and which can be dropped by measuring them against who God says we are. If it sounds like what God says about me - it can stick. If it doesn't - drop it!

To summarise, why does God get to tell us who we are and how to live? *Because he made us. He doesn't change. His words are true.*

Other voices can change - sometimes saying true things, other times saying untrue or unkind things. God's message doesn't change, he only ever says true things, so we can trust him.

This is what it means to live saying, "I am who God says I am". We can navigate the confusion by knowing the voice of our maker and letting his voice be the one we measure others against.



*Be ready to give your own examples for each of these. Help the young people to think about pressures they feel and values they pick up, not just words they might hear.*

*Young people will usually find it hard to be open about their inner thoughts, either because they haven't learnt to navigate them or because it is too awkward to share. Lead by example here, sharing something you say to yourself, and acknowledge that many of us find this hard. You decide what your group is able to do.*

*If you have time, if you want to go further, ask what/who the loudest voices are in their lives. Do any feel particularly difficult?*



## Brain break

### Swap if...

Sit the young people in a circle. Give "Swap if..." instructions, e.g. "swap if you are a boy", "swap if you are wearing a jumper", "swap if you have a brother", etc. The aim is that the children have to listen and work out if each instruction applies to them. After a couple of practice examples, make it harder by using double-facts, e.g. "swap if you are wearing denim and own a cat" or "swap if you are left-handed and not an only-child". Make these as complicated as your group can manage. Optional: You can play this with a circle of chairs, removing a chair occasionally as the young people swap. Be careful of removing a chair as someone is about to sit on it!

➔ **Link:** This game was all about listening *and* deciding how to respond - to swap or stay put. We have been learning that we do not need to respond in the same way to every message we hear. They are not equally important or true. We have choices to make.

**You will need:** chairs if desired

continued →





### Did you spot it?

- What have we learnt from Genesis 1:27 that tells us who we are?
- Do you agree that we should listen to God's voice more than other messages? What reasons have most convinced you?

### Work it out

- Looking back at the post-it notes we wrote earlier, can you spot any messages that sound the same as something God would say? Which ones are different? What should we do with the messages that are different? Are there certain messages from others or from yourself that you hear loudest?
- What is the message from God that you want to hear loudest? What do you want to remember as other messages shout loudly? *To be a Christian is to hear God always say, "You are a treasured child of mine. I will give you what is best for you. I will never leave you. You are safe in my family. Always."*

### Live it out

Look at Case Study Picture A (see p. 11) with the girl sitting on the sofa watching a YouTube influencer on a screen – thinking negative things about herself - "I'll never be as good as her."

- What messages is she picking up about herself?
- What will she think about herself if she keeps listening to those messages?
- How does listening to God change the messages we believe about ourselves?
- Have you got an example of where you chose not to listen/consume a message from somewhere else?

Look at Case Study Picture B (see p. 12) with the boy looking nervously at a group of mates - with one confident hair flicking cool lad saying "I don't let anyone tell me what to do, I choose". The boy looking on is thinking... "That sounds quite cool - is that right?"

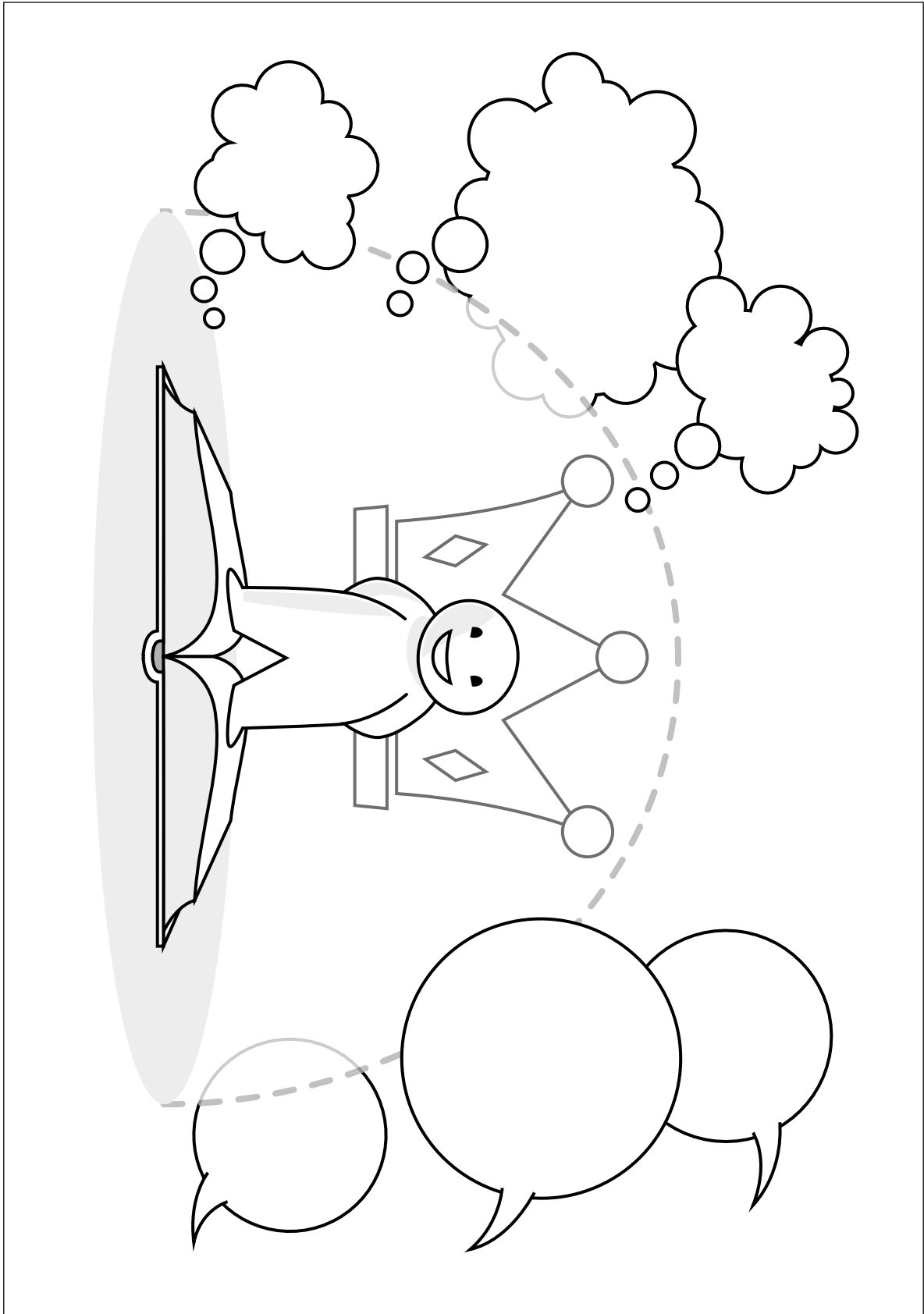
- Why does "I don't let anyone tell me what to do" sound good?
- Can you think of a fashion, haircut or habit that is so common, that it shows how much others do want to be like everyone else?
- Can you think of one example where you are wanting to be like others?
- God has decided who you are. How can that be a better story for you?

### Prayer

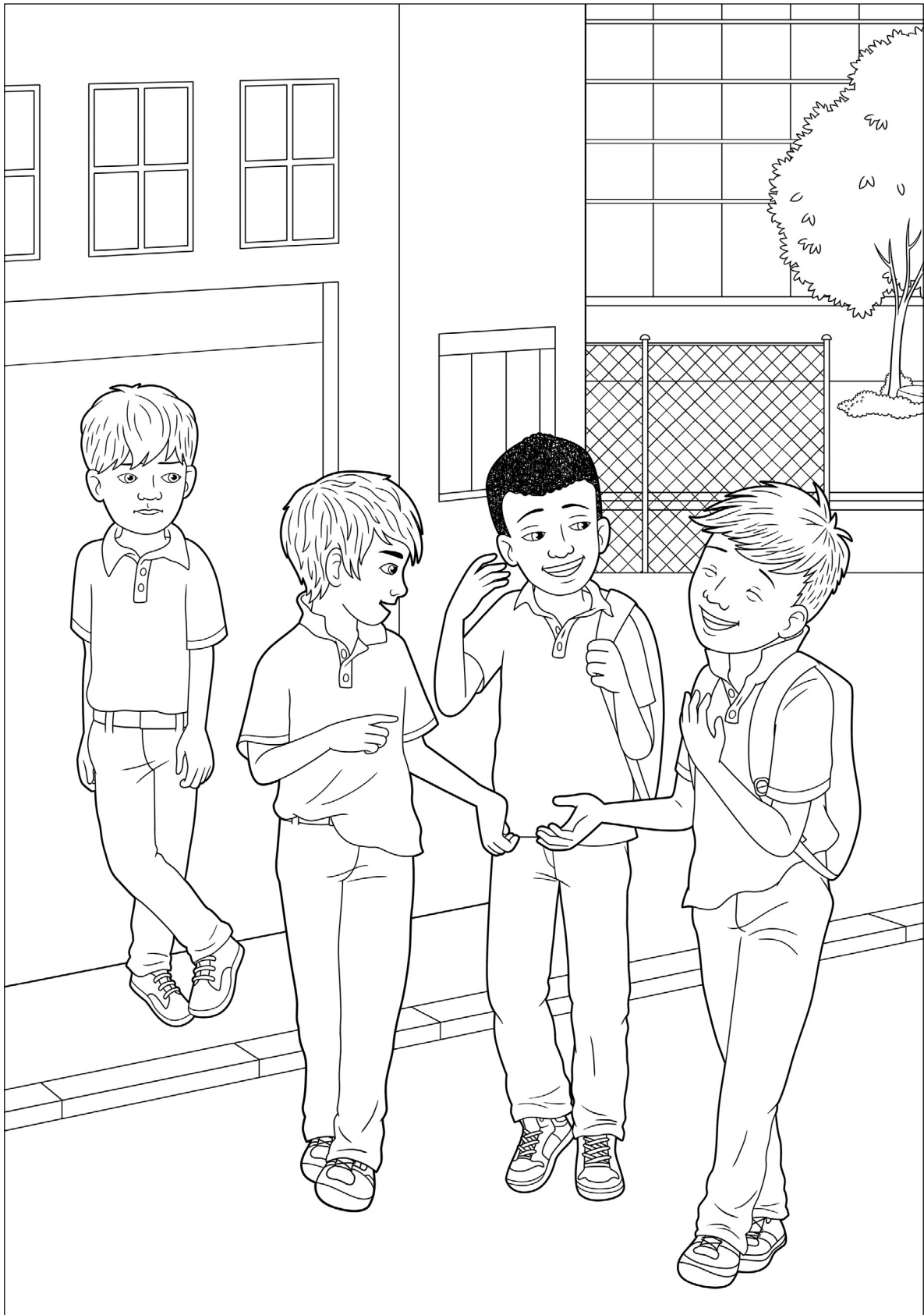
What help do you think you need to let **who God says you are** be the identity message that you measure others against? Ask God for that help now. Ask him to help you hear his voice and his truth louder than any other messages. Ask him to help you drop what is unhelpful and stick with what is true.

*We have found that this is where young people make the most progress relating the Bible to their everyday lives. Please leave enough time for this section.*

*It would probably be best to do this twice, once with messages from others and once with the messages from themselves. You could group the post-it notes from earlier, adding additional ideas if they are offered. Get the group to put a felt tip splodge by the messages they hear loudest. You could physically throw the ones that are different in a bin. What would they add?*









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