



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

The Comeback Kid / Week 4

SERIES OVERVIEW

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

When the Kid from nowhere came back to life.

WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: Jesus is the person who gives us hope.

WEEK 2: If you want to love like Jesus, serve like Jesus.

WEEK 3: Jesus' comeback backs up everything He said.

WEEK 4: Living for Jesus means loving like Jesus.

SCRIPTURE

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24 NLT)

"If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it." (Matthew 16:25 NLT)

INTERACTIVE 1: THE WAY OF JESUS

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll write down what students brainstorm when you ask them to list characteristics of Jesus and ways they can live out those traits as middle schoolers today.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A large poster board or whiteboard
- A bold writing utensil
- A way to display the board for your audience
- All of your middle schoolers

PREP

- Draw a vertical line down the middle of the board, creating two columns.
- Place the board on stage with the writing utensil within reach.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- I'm so glad you're here for the last week of our series, *The Comeback Kid*, where we've been talking all about the biggest comeback ever: Jesus coming back to life.
- Before we get into our talk, let me ask you this: How do you show you're a fan of something? *[Give relevant examples.]*
- So, if that's the case, how do people know if you're a follower of Jesus? *[Give relevant examples.]*
- We've been talking about Jesus' epic comeback story, and now we're asking: What does it look like to live for the Comeback Kid Himself?

TENSION

- We might think following Jesus means doing a bunch of actions.
- Maybe we think that to live for Jesus we need to follow certain rules.
- Or maybe you've tried to follow Jesus and live like Him before, but it felt like you could never measure up.
- You might wonder if being a follower means you can't have any fun.
- You might start to question if you're actually cut out for this Jesus stuff.
- What if a lot of what we think about following Jesus isn't actually what Jesus had in mind?
- What if it's not just about a list of dos and don'ts?
- What if God has something so much more adventurous in mind?

TRUTH

- All we have to do is look to Jesus Himself to help guide us.
- Jesus made it really clear before His death what He wanted us to do *after* it.
 - *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24 NLT).*
- When Jesus said, "Give up your own way," He was talking about letting go of the idea that we always know best.
- Now, to "take up your cross" in Jesus' time was an intense image. The cross was a way the Roman empire put people to death, and it was a cruel, horrible way to die.
- Many in Jesus' audience risked their lives to follow Him, so when He talked about taking up a cross, Jesus meant that following Him might not always be easy.
- Finally, Jesus said, "Follow me." This is the key.
- Jesus was basically saying, "Do as I do, say, and teach."
- All of this comes with a promise in the next verse when He said:
 - *"If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it" (Matthew 16:25 NLT).*
- What Jesus was getting at was this: When we hang onto our way, we're putting our wants before everything else.
- When we follow Jesus and give up on trying to control everything, we'll find true happiness and a more meaningful life.
- So, what did Jesus do? How did He live? *[Give relevant examples.]*
- Jesus was about loving God and loving others.
- The earliest followers of Jesus were called "followers of the Way," and people could tell they were following Jesus not by the rules they did or didn't follow, but by how they treated people and lived their lives.
- Living for Jesus means living like Jesus.

APPLICATION

- If living for Jesus means living like Jesus, how do we do that?
- *[INTERACTIVE: The Way of Jesus: For this Interactive, you'll write down what students brainstorm when you ask them to list characteristics of Jesus and ways they can live out those traits as middle schoolers today.]*
- If we want to start doing everything we've been talking about today, we must remember that first:
 - We can follow Jesus' example.

- We can only live like Jesus when we know who Jesus is. So, my challenge to you would be to do this:
 - Learn more about Jesus.
- You're not going to do all this perfectly. None of us do!
- Remember, living like Jesus is a journey.
- Sometimes, living for Jesus means we must let go of some things that are getting in our way of following Him.
- What Jesus gives us is much better than anything we hold on to, but we can't experience it fully until we open our hands and let go.
- Living for Jesus means living like Jesus.

LANDING

- Living for Jesus means living like Jesus.
- Living like Jesus makes us part of the biggest comeback story ever told; we get to help make the world a little bit more like what God created it to be.
- So, I want to encourage you to try something this week: Pick one way you can live more like Jesus. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- Jesus—the ultimate Comeback Kid—is with you every step of the way.
- What's one specific way you could live more like Jesus this week?

TEACHING SLIDES

All bolded words and phrases in the Teaching Script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier subscribers.



TEACHING SCRIPT

The Comeback Kid / Week 4

BOTTOM LINE

LIVING FOR JESUS MEANS LOVING LIKE JESUS

INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

Hey, everyone! I'm so glad you're here for the last week of our series, *The Comeback Kid*. In it, we've been talking all about the biggest comeback ever: **Jesus coming back to life.**

Before we get into our talk, let me ask you this: How do you show you're a fan of something? *[Pause for students to respond.]*

Maybe you wear a T-shirt with your team's logo, use catchphrases from your favorite shows, follow fan accounts for updates, or wear merch from your favorite influencers. Sometimes, we even give our group of fans a name. When we really like something or someone, we want to show it.

So, if that's the case, how do people know if you're a follower of Jesus? Is it about wearing a cross necklace? Putting a Scripture in your profile? Never saying bad words? Do you need religious T-shirts or stickers on your water bottle? Of course, all of these things are totally fine! I'm not trying to bash those if you enjoy them, but what if it's something more?

That's what we're diving into today. We've been talking about Jesus' epic comeback story, and now we're asking: What does it look like to live for the Comeback Kid Himself? Stick with me because the answer might surprise you!

TENSION

1 MINUTE

We might think following Jesus means doing a bunch of actions. Like a list that needs to be checked off. Maybe we think that to live for Jesus we need to follow certain rules, or lead a prayer before a big soccer game, or only be friends with other people who follow Jesus.

Or maybe you've tried to follow Jesus and live like Him before, but it felt like you could never measure up. Like you had to be perfect all the time. The second you messed up, you were failing at the whole being a Jesus follower thing.

It can be confusing and frustrating, right? You might wonder if being a follower means you can't have any fun. You might start to question if you're actually cut out for this Jesus stuff.

These are all normal thoughts to have. But what if a lot of what we think about following Jesus isn't actually what Jesus had in mind? Now, living for Jesus is not always easy, but it can be simpler than what we sometimes make it out to be.

What if it's not just about a list of dos and don'ts? What if God has something so much more adventurous in mind?

TRUTH

3 MINUTES

Well, all we have to do is look to Jesus Himself to help guide us. Jesus made it really clear before His death what He wanted us to do *after* it.

Let's look at what Jesus said about following Him:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24 NLT).

Now, at first glance, this might sound kind of intense.

Give up your own way?

Take up your cross?

What did Jesus mean by this?

Let's break it down. When Jesus said, "Give up your own way," He wasn't talking about giving up your personality or the things that make you unique. He was talking about letting go of the idea that we always know best. It was about recognizing that sometimes, our way of doing things isn't the best way.

Now, to "take up your cross" in Jesus' time was an intense image. The cross was a way the Roman empire put people to death, and it was a cruel, horrible way to die. Many in Jesus' audience risked their lives to follow Him, so when He talked about taking up a cross, Jesus meant that following Him might not always be easy. For most of us, taking up our crosses won't look like experiencing violence or risking our lives, but it may mean doing difficult things. Taking up your cross may mean giving our time to volunteer when we'd rather do something fun with our friends. It might mean giving up our popularity to include the new kid at school or standing up to a bully. It might mean being kind even when we want to be rude.

And finally, Jesus said, "Follow me." This is the key. Jesus was basically saying, "Do as I do, say, and teach."

All of this comes with a promise in the next verse when He said:

"If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it" (Matthew 16:25 NLT).

Again, this is some intense stuff! But what Jesus was getting at was this: When we hang onto our life, we're putting our wants before everything else. But when we follow Jesus and give up on trying to control everything, we'll find true happiness and a more meaningful life. Now, Jesus didn't mean for us to give up our lives completely. Instead, it's more about putting God first and letting God lead us.

So, what did Jesus do? How did He live? Well, if we look at the stories about Jesus, we see that He loved people who others ignored or looked down on. He stood up for what was right, even when it wasn't popular. He forgave people who hurt Him. He served others instead of trying to be served. He told the truth, even when it was hard.

Jesus wasn't about following a bunch of rules. **Jesus was about loving God and loving others.**

The earliest followers of Jesus were called "followers of the Way." Amazingly, they became known as Christians (which literally means "little Christs") because they lived so differently from everyone else. People could tell they were following Jesus not by the rules they did or didn't follow, but by how they treated people and lived their lives.

What it comes down to is this:

Living for Jesus means living like Jesus.

It's not about wearing the right clothes or saying the right words. It's about letting Jesus change how we think, treat others, and live our lives.

APPLICATION

3.5 MINUTES

Okay, so if **living for Jesus means living like Jesus**, how do we do that? Let's brainstorm together some ideas to get us started.

INTERACTIVE: The Way of Jesus

For this Interactive, you'll write down what students brainstorm when you ask them to list characteristics of Jesus and ways they can live out those traits as middle schoolers today.

Throughout this series, we've talked a lot about Jesus, who He is, what He taught, and what He stands for. When you think of Jesus, what characteristics come to mind? Yell out your answers! *[Write down what they say on the left side of a posterboard or whiteboard.]*

Yes! Jesus is all of these things. *[List off some of the traits students brainstormed.]*

Okay, so now, if living for Jesus means living like Jesus, let's figure out how we can do that. Think about the characteristics we just came up with that describe Jesus. How can you, as a middle schooler today, display those traits in how you act, what you say, and how you respond to people? *[One at a time, go through each characteristic in the left column and, in the right column, write down a corresponding action that students come up with.]*

[Motion to the posterboard/whiteboard.] This is a great starting point for us! See, if we want to start doing everything we've been talking about today, we must remember that first. . .

1. **We can follow Jesus' example.** Remember when we said that Jesus told His followers to pick up their crosses and follow Him? Jesus did just that. Even before His death, He constantly chose to serve others. He showed kindness to people the rest of society ignored. He spoke up against injustice. He loved people by healing them and providing for their needs. Jesus is the perfect example of how to live. All we have to do is choose to follow His lead.

And I think we can take it a step further. We can only live like Jesus when we know who Jesus is. So, my challenge to you would be to:

1. **Learn more about Jesus.** You can't follow someone if you don't know what they're like, right? So start by getting to know Jesus better. Read stories about Him in the Bible. Ask questions about Him in Small Group. Try to understand why He did the things He did. Even more than that, get to know Him by spending time with Him. Ask Him questions and talk to Him about your day. We follow Jesus by staying close to Jesus.

Now, here's the thing: You're not going to do all this perfectly. None of us do! Remember, living like Jesus is a journey. It's about progress, not perfection. The cool thing is that every day is a new chance to try again. But to be clear, following Jesus isn't just about adding new activities to our lives. Sometimes, living for Jesus means we must let go of some things that are getting in our way of following Him. And here's the amazing thing: What Jesus gives us is much better than anything we hold on to, but we can't experience it fully until we open our hands and let go.

Living for Jesus means living like Jesus. And Jesus was all about putting God first, loving others, and not being controlled by the stuff of this world. When we do that, we find a better life than anything imaginable.

LANDING

1.5 MINUTES

Now, I know we've covered a lot today. We started by talking about how we show we're fans of things, and we discovered that following Jesus isn't about being a fan; it's about being a follower.

Living for Jesus means living like Jesus. It's not always easy, but it's always worth it. Living like Jesus makes us part of the biggest comeback story ever told. We get to help make the world a little bit more like what God created it to be.

So, I want to encourage you to try something this week: **Pick one way you can live more like Jesus.** Maybe that means picking something that we wrote down earlier and actually doing it. [*Motion to the posterboard/whiteboard.*] Maybe it's showing love to someone who sometimes gets on our nerves, like a frustrating little sibling or the rude kid at school. Maybe that is standing up for someone who is being picked on or taking action to stand up for people who are being treated unfairly. Maybe it's serving your family in a new way. For a lot of us, it might look like giving something up, like giving up first dibs on the front seat or giving up some screen time. Whatever it is, give it a try.

And remember, you're not doing this alone. Jesus—the ultimate Comeback Kid—is with you every step of the way. He's cheering you on, helping you when you fall, and celebrating whenever you choose to live more like Him.

When you head to Small Group, think about your answer to this question:

What's one specific way you could live more like Jesus this week?



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
