



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

## How To See God / Week 3

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### SERIES OVERVIEW

#### SERIES BOTTOM LINE

A series about the fruit of the Spirit.

#### WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: You can see God.

WEEK 2: Practice helps you progress.

**WEEK 3: Pay attention to what has your attention.**

WEEK 4: Look for God every day.

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### SCRIPTURE

*Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8 NRSVUE).*

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### NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

#### THINK ABOUT THIS

Be sensitive to the fact that you likely have students with a variety of different attention spans in your group. So much of this has to do with their natural wiring! Some may be naturally more disciplined and focused in all areas of their lives. Others may show discipline with their attention mainly when they're directing it toward something they choose, care about, or are interested in. And, of course, you may have some students who are neurodivergent or living with an attention deficit disorder of some kind. So, as you talk about what it means to pay attention to what has their attention, be sure not to inadvertently talk down to one group or make anyone feel as though they're "wrong" or "bad" for not being able to focus all the time. The goal isn't to change their wiring or abilities, but rather, to help them see that, no matter who they are or how God made them, there is value in putting your focus on the things of God.

#### NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

Be aware of the temptation to over spiritualize or under spiritualize the practice of looking for God. The last thing we want to do is conflate or confuse God with superstition or an alternative, counterfeit version of spirituality. At this age and phase of life, middle schoolers are trying to figure out so much about who they are, and a big part of that includes their faith and how to find God in their everyday lives. Putting too much pressure on or being too prescriptive about "seeing God" could become manipulative or harmful or just plain frustrating if it seems to not work. Be encouraging and lead with practical ways to see God.

#### NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

When preparing your words for this week, be mindful of students who are neurodivergent and may experience unwanted inattentive behaviors beyond their control. Avoid using terms like ADD/ADHD thoughtlessly. Use inclusive examples of unfocused, short attention spans that all students can relate to.

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## INTERACTIVE: PAY ATTENTION

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll ask your students to self-reflect and share with the group where they've put most of their attention this week.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A large whiteboard or posterboard
- A writing utensil
- A way to display the whiteboard/posterboard on stage
- 2-3 examples of where you, the communicator, have focused your attention this week
- All your middle schoolers

### PREP

- Place the whiteboard or posterboard along with the writing utensil on stage.
- Be prepared to share a few personal examples of where you've focused your attention this week.

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## TEACHING OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

- Throughout this series, we've been talking about ways you can see God at work in your own life, other people, and the world around you.
- Paying attention is not always easy, is it?
- *[Tell a personal story about a time where you struggled to focus or pay attention to something.]*

### TENSION

- Even if we know that slowing down, taking a minute, and focusing our attention can be super helpful, the reality is, in today's world, this isn't always easy! *[Give relevant examples.]*
- With so much coming at us all the time, it's tough to make sense of what we're actually giving our attention to on a daily basis.
- *[INTERACTIVE: Pay Attention: This is where you'll ask your students to self-reflect and share with the group where they've put most of their attention this week.]*
- Some of us find it more difficult to maintain focus than others, but the truth is, distractions exist for all of us.
- With so many things competing for our attention, how do we make room to give more of our focus to God?

### TRUTH

- The advice we're going to look at today was written a long time ago to people in a very different world than the one we live in today.
- Humans are humans in any time in history, and we all have a hard time staying focused on what matters most at times.
- Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends and followers, wrote a letter we now know as 1<sup>st</sup> Peter where he gave a lot of advice about what it means to follow Jesus in everyday life.
- The people he was writing to were often being persecuted or excluded by their communities simply because they followed Jesus, so their attention was being pulled all kinds of places.
- If you are facing some serious situations in your life, God cares about you and wants to make sure you're safe and healthy.

- Check out what Peter wrote:
  - *Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8 NRSVUE).*
- Peter told early followers of Jesus to “discipline” themselves and “keep alert.”
- They needed the same thing we all do to shift our focus: discipline.
- It’s so easy for us to get distracted from the things that matter most in life, so we have to work on building the discipline necessary to shift our focus.
- That’s one way you can work on seeing God every day: by developing discipline that helps you put your attention on God no matter what is happening around you.
- You can think of developing that discipline by considering what things we can do to help us grow in our faith—things that help us spend time with God.
- And that starts with some discipline, or self-control, to give us a better chance of finding focus.
- What happens if we don’t develop discipline around what has our attention?
- Look back at what Peter said: We run the risk of being devoured.
- If we’re not intentional about what has our attention, we run the risk of being distracted by things that aren’t helpful or healthy for us.
- So, if we want to see God at work in our everyday lives, we have to start here: Pay attention to what has your attention.
- Paying attention to what has our attention can help us build the discipline to focus on the things of God.
- It can clear space in our hearts and minds to focus on the fruit of God’s Spirit in the world—the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control on display in our lives and the lives of others.
- The goal is to develop the discipline of shifting your attention to look for God in the world every single day.
- And that starts by paying attention to what has your attention.

## APPLICATION

- So, what can you do to pay attention to what has your attention?
- Let’s make this as simple as possible: Commit to tracking what has your attention for one week.
- For the next week, let’s end our days writing down where our attention went most that day.
- Once you know where your attention is going, it’s easier to know where you can make a change.
- Then, reflect on where your attention is going and decide where you want it to go moving forward.
- My encouragement is simply to pay attention to what has your attention this week.

## LANDING

- Look, our attention matters.
- So, what if we were people who really paid attention to what has our attention?
- This could be a big step in helping us see God!
- So, pay attention to what has your attention.
- What is one thing you give a lot of attention to in your daily life?

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## TEACHING SLIDES

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

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# TEACHING SCRIPT

## How To See God / Week 3

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### BOTTOM LINE

PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT HAS YOUR ATTENTION.

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### INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

What's up, I'm \_\_\_\_\_. Welcome to week three of *How To See God*. Throughout this series, we've been talking about ways you can see God at work in your own life, other people, and the world around you.

Yes, you can see God. Maybe not literally, but you can see the evidence of God all around you... *if* you pay attention!

Paying attention is not always easy, is it? There are plenty of distractions around us all the time!

#### TELL A PERSONAL STORY

*Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following thoughts or ideas...*

- Talk about a time (preferably in middle or high school) where you struggled to focus or pay attention to something.
- Maybe it was a teacher's lecture in school, or a movie your family was watching, or a conversation with a friend.
- Keep the example light and phase appropriate.

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### TENSION

2 ½ MINUTES

I'm guessing you've had a similar experience! Even if we know that slowing down, taking a minute, and focusing our attention can be super helpful, the reality is, in today's world, this isn't always easy!

We have everything from...

- Phones
- Friends
- Family
- Schoolwork
- Clubs
- Teams
- Social media
- Video games
- The Internet

And it's all competing for our attention! With so much coming at us all the time, it's tough to make sense of what we're actually giving our attention to on a daily basis. Even if we know how important our attention is, few of us slow down enough to really get intentional about where we're putting our focus throughout each day.

So, let's take a second to do that right now!

### **INTERACTIVE: Pay Attention**

*This is where you'll ask your students to self-reflect and share with the group where they've put most of their attention this week.*

Here's what we're going to do: I'm going to give you sixty seconds to think about the top three things that had your attention this week.

- Maybe it was an app on your phone.
- Maybe it was a skill you're trying to improve.
- Maybe it's a new show you binged.
- Maybe it's school or practice.
- Maybe it's a group chat that's constantly going off with your friends.
- Maybe it's a new interest that you've been deep diving into.

The goal is for you to think about the top three places you've put most of your focus this week.

Ready? Go for it! *[Pause to give students a chance to think and talk about their answers.]*

I want to know some of the things that you've been paying attention to this week! Why don't I go first? *[Share 2-3 personal examples and write them on a whiteboard or posterboard for everyone to see. Be sure to leave enough space for answers you collect from your audience.]*

These are mine, but what came to mind for you? Go ahead and shout out some of the things you've been paying attention to this week. *[Write down some of the best examples from the crowd.]*

Thanks for giving that your attention for a few minutes!

Just look at this list. *[Point to list.]*

Some of us find it more difficult to maintain focus than others, but the truth is, **distractions exist for all of us.**

But, like we mentioned earlier, we're trying to find ways to see God at work in our everyday lives. We want to leave room to do that! So the question is: With so many things competing for our attention, **how do we make room to give more of our focus to God?**

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## TRUTH

5 MINUTES

The advice we're going to look at today was written a long time ago to people in a very different world than the one we live in today. No phones, social media, or streaming platforms—nothing digital at all! Because of that, you might think they had an easier time focusing their attention on God. But the truth is, humans are humans in any time in history. That means we all have a hard time staying focused on what matters most at times.

Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends and followers, wrote a letter we now know as 1<sup>st</sup> Peter. In that letter, he gave a lot of advice about what it means to follow Jesus in everyday life. The people he was writing to were often being persecuted or excluded by their communities simply because they followed Jesus. So it's safe to say their attention was probably pulled in all kinds of places! Things like fear, anxiety, social pressure, and even survival had their focus on a regular basis—and for good reason!

Can we fully relate to their situation? For most of us, the answer is likely no. But let me just say, if you are facing some serious situations in your life, don't feel bad that you're distracted. God cares about you and wants to make sure you're safe and healthy. You might even want to talk to a trusted adult who can help you figure out your next steps.

But even though we may not be facing the same realities as the people Peter was talking to, there are other ways we may see our focus shift and our attention spread thin. With that in mind, check out what Peter wrote:

***Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8 NRSVUE).***

Whoa! This is a lot, right? A lion, an enemy, the devil—how does this verse tell us anything about giving God our attention? Let's break it down to find out!

Peter told early followers of Jesus to “discipline” themselves and “keep alert.” Sure, they were facing different circumstances that could distract them from paying attention to God, but they needed the same thing we all do to shift our focus: **discipline**.

It's so easy for us to get distracted from the things that matter most in life—things like seeing God at work in us and the world around us! Because of that, we have to work on building the discipline necessary to shift our focus. That's one way you can work on seeing God every day: **by developing discipline that helps you put your attention on God no matter what is happening around you.**

You can think of developing that discipline by considering what things we can do to help us grow in our faith—things that help us spend time with God. We can be people who slow down enough as much as is within our control to see God in the world around us. We can be people who are aware of the things that distract us. We can be people who build the habit of shifting our focus back to what's good for us when we need to.

And all that starts with some discipline, or self-control, to give us a better chance of finding focus.

What happens if we don't go this route? If we stop being aware of what has our focus? If we don't develop discipline around what has our attention?

Well, let's look back at what Peter said: We run the risk of being devoured. Dramatic? Sure! But the point is still the same! If we're not intentional about what has our attention, we run the risk of being distracted by things that aren't helpful or healthy for us. See, the work of the “adversary,” or enemy mentioned by Peter, is often to distract us from giving God our full attention.

So, if we want to see God at work in our everyday lives...

If we want to build discipline in looking for God around us...

If we want to give more of our attention to the things of God in ourselves, others, and the world around us...

We have to start here:

**Pay attention to what has your attention.**

Paying attention to what has our attention can help us redirect how we're spending our time, energy, and attention when needed. It can help us build the discipline to focus on the things of God. It can help us stay alert to what may try to devour our focus and connection to God. It can clear space in our hearts and minds to focus on the fruit of God's Spirit in the world—the **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control** on display in our lives and the lives of others.

Here's the good news: I'm not asking you to never watch Netflix again, or delete all your social media accounts, or stop hanging out with your friends so you can be completely focused on nothing but God all the time. That's not really the goal. The goal is to develop the discipline of shifting your attention to look for God in the world every single day. To create space to see the fruit of God's Spirit. To focus on that first and foremost.

And that starts by **paying attention to what has your attention.**

Maybe you'll realize that you have more time to connect with God in prayer, or to spend time with your Small Group, or to dive into a new Bible study. Maybe you'll start seeing more of God's Spirit at work in the world around you when you intentionally put more of your focus there. Maybe you'll even discover new things about who God is when you do!

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## APPLICATION

1 ½ MINUTES

So, what can you do to **pay attention to what has your attention?**

Let's make this as simple as possible: **Commit to tracking what has your attention for one week.**

Seriously! For the next week, let's end our days writing down where our attention went most that day.

Remember, this isn't a test.

There are no wrong answers.

So please don't judge yourself or anyone else for how their list looks.

The point of this is to help us start paying attention to what has our attention. If we finish the week and feel great about our focus, awesome! And if we don't, that's okay, too. The point is to help you become aware of where your attention is going. Once you know that, it's easier to know where you can make a change.

Then, at the end of the week, **reflect on where your attention is going and decide where you want it to go moving forward.** Maybe you'll discover that you want to build the discipline of a prayer practice or reading the Bible more regularly. Maybe you'll want to take time to silently think about where you see God at work, or maybe you'll want to start your day focusing on God by going through a morning devotional. Even showing up to your small group more often could be a great step since they're focused on seeing God alongside you.

What you decide to do is totally up to you! My encouragement is simply to **pay attention to what has your attention** this week. Then, you can decide the areas where you want to build the discipline it takes to look for God daily.

Sometimes doing simple things like taking breaks, removing distractions that are nearby, changing the way we're sitting, or developing a routine can help us develop the discipline to pay attention to what has your attention.

## LANDING

1 MINUTE

Look, our attention matters.

So, what if we were people who really paid attention to what has our attention? Imagine if we were the kind of people who built the discipline needed to set ourselves up to shift our focus as much as is within our control when we needed to. Imagine if you could build the habit of giving your attention to what God is up to in your life, other people, and the world around you.

This could be a big step in helping us see God!

**So, pay attention to what has your attention.**

And when you move to Small Group, think about this question:

**What is one thing you give a lot of attention to in your daily life?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS

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