

# SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Undefeated / Week 1

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## BEFORE GROUP

### BOTTOM LINE

Because of Jesus, separation is defeated.

### SCRIPTURE

*“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” 1 Peter 2:24 NIV*

*At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split. Matthew 27:51NIV*

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## INTRO

We’re kicking off a new series called Undefeated today! You’ve heard that word before, right? It means **you’ve never been beaten or defeated**. You’ve never lost. You’re the current and constant champion in whatever battle or contest you’re in.

Maybe you hold the highest score in your favorite video game, and your friends have no chance of taking the title from you. You’re undefeated! Or maybe you’ve been the first chair in your section of the band for the last three years of middle school. Nobody’s taking that spot from you, and that makes you undefeated! Or maybe you’ve had an undefeated season on your team. Nobody could take you all down, could they? Or maybe you haven’t actually been undefeated at something, but you dream of it because you know that feeling would be the best! You see other people celebrating when they’re undefeated, and you want to experience that too!

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## TENSION

You know why I think people who have experienced the thrill of being undefeated like the feeling so much? Because we all know what it feels like to be on the other end. We all know how it feels to be defeated—to lose. We know what it feels like to be separated from the victory we want to experience.

Because honestly, **that’s really what defeat is all about: being separated from the thing you want to be connected to**. In a way, we almost put that thing we want on a pedestal. And when we don’t get what we’ve placed on the pedestal, we feel separated. You wanted to win the big game, but you were separated from the title of champion when you lost. You wanted to get the award for being at the top of your class, but you were separated from it when another student took the spot. You wanted to be the head cheerleader or principle dancer, but you were separated from that dream when you didn’t get the part.

Often, **when we experience the feeling of defeat, we also experience a feeling of separation. It seems like we’ve been moved apart or away from the thing we really want.**

Truth be told, we experience **separation from people** in all kinds of ways in our lives. Maybe your parents are separated right now. You don't know if they're going to get back together or ultimately call it quits. Maybe you've experienced separation from a best friend or close family member who moved away. You used to be close, but the distance has caused more than just physical separation between the two of you. Sometimes separation happens even in places like church. Your Small Group leaves you out of the group text on purpose or a friend who talks to you at school won't speak to you here. In those cases, you feel separated from people in places where you thought everyone was supposed to accept you.

Maybe you even feel **separated from God**. You're not sure if you believe in Him, so the idea of being connected to Him doesn't really make sense to you. Or maybe you've made choices or done things that you think have defeated you in God's eyes. And because of that, you feel far or even separated from Him completely.

No matter what the source of your separation is, the result is usually the same. When we're disconnected from something or someone who we want to be connected to, we feel hurt, or frustrated, or sad, or lonely. The connection is lost, and ultimately, we feel defeated.

But here's the good news: **We aren't meant to live our lives feeling defeated**. Separation wasn't part of the plan. In fact, as we kick off this Easter season together, what we're celebrating is God's plan to defeat the pain of separation once and for all.

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## TRUTH

Before we dive into all that, let me give you a little background to this whole thing. When God made the world, **He created people to have a relationship with Him**. He created a Garden and two people—Adam and Eve. The Garden was like Heaven on Earth, and God Himself lived there with Adam and Eve. God had a relationship with Adam and Eve and was physically near them. But then, Adam and Eve chose to not trust God and His plan for their lives. They decided to do the opposite of what God said, and they sinned. **And that sin—their decision to not follow God's best for their lives—caused separation**. Adam and Eve were no longer fit to be in the Garden with God, and they had to leave.

After that, things looked different. A lot of people tried to get back to God but failed. **There was separation because of sin—actions, mindsets, and choices that hurt us and others and keep us from the best kind of life and understanding of God**. But God wouldn't have it. He wanted His people to be able to come close to Him, like He had originally planned.

So, God told His people to build a Tabernacle, which is just a fancy word for a tent. Every detail and design of the Tabernacle had significance, and it was a really special place. But the most amazing thing was this: **God Himself chose to dwell there! God made a way to be close to His people**, just like He had been in the Garden. Just like He had wanted from the start.

But there was still a big problem—sin. And that sin caused separation between people and God. In fact, **even though God was able to be closer to His people by living in the Tabernacle, He was still physically separated from them**.

### Removing Separation

Stick with me here while I explain. The Tabernacle that God told His people to build? Well, it had a lot of details, but the basic layout actually mimics this room we're in right now! There was an area called the Outer Court, which was kind of like where you're sitting in the audience. It was where people came to worship, so anyone who was a believer was welcome into the Outer Court.

Believers weren't, however, allowed into the tent of the Tabernacle, which was actually pretty similar to our stage area at church. This space was reserved only for the priests of the time because it was considered sacred. Within this tent were two additional rooms. (See what I mean? This Tabernacle had a lot of details!) One room called the Holy Place led into the most special and sacred area of all—the Most Holy Place.

Why was this the most special and sacred place of the entire Tabernacle? Well, God Himself lived there! But because of sin, people like us couldn't enter into this space. Our sins kept us from getting close. Once a year, only the priest was allowed to enter to ask forgiveness for people's sins. And just to make sure everyone understood the separation between God and humans, God instructed that a veil (or curtain) be placed as a barrier to separate the Most Holy Place from everyone else. It was a physical representation of the separation caused by sin.

Now, enter the Easter story! Easter is all about God sending His Son, Jesus, to Earth to live and ultimately die among us. But His death wasn't ordinary. Let's read what the Bible has to say about it.

*"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24 NIV).*

So what does this mean? Why exactly did Jesus have to die for our sins? Well, we're going to dive more into that the coming weeks, but what I want you to pay attention to is this: **Jesus died on the cross with the weight of all sin on His shoulders. He took the payment for all our mistakes and the burden for all our sins. Why? Because He loves us so much that He wanted to make a way for us to be close to God once again.**

When Jesus died on the cross, **He took the punishment for all of our sins.** For all of the things we do that don't honor God and the times we don't choose God's best for our lives. And when Jesus died, something amazing happened. Remember the Tabernacle we talked about a few minutes ago? Well, by Jesus' time, the Tabernacle had been replaced by the Temple, which was a bigger, even more detailed place where God Himself lived.

Let's read what Matthew, one of Jesus' followers, wrote about what happened at the Temple when Jesus died.

*At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51 NIV).*

Did you catch that? At the very same time that Jesus was dying— when He was ending our separation from God because of our sins—the physical curtain that separated everyone from God in the Most Holy Place—tore straight down the middle! **The physical separation ended because Jesus ended our spiritual separation from God.**

With Jesus' death on the cross that we celebrate every Easter, we also celebrate the end of our separation from God. **Because of Jesus, separation is defeated.**

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## APPLICATION

Isn't that amazing? God loves us so much that thousands of years ago He sent Jesus to make sure that separation was no more. The curtain was torn, and the connection between God and us was restored.

**Because of Jesus, separation is defeated.** And when we believe in Jesus, **we never have to worry that sin—our actions, mindsets, and choices that keep us from God's best—will keep us separated from God again.**

So today, if you're feeling separated or disconnected from God because of mistakes in your life, or choices you've made, or sins that are weighing heavily on your heart, know this: **God**

**loves you so much that He made a way for you to be close to Him.** He paid the highest price to make sure that you wouldn't have to feel separated from Him. That's what Easter is all about!

Maybe you need to acknowledge this truth in your life by **confessing the things that are holding you back from God.** Ask God for His forgiveness for the things that you feel are separating you from Him. Thank Him for the fact that separation doesn't remain between you and God. **Because of Jesus, separation is defeated, and that means your relationship with God can be right no matter what you've done.**

Or maybe you're not quite sure what you believe when it comes to this whole Jesus thing. You've never thought about the weight of your choices or mistakes and the way they might be holding you back. If that's you today, **consider what your life might look like if those choices didn't have to separate you from God.** Talk to your youth Leader about what it might mean to take a step toward the God who loves you, forgives you, and wants to be close to you.

So remember, what we celebrate at Easter is the fact that **because of Jesus, separation is defeated.** And as you head to Small Group, I want you to think about this question: **What's one thing in my life that I feel separates me from God?**

## QUESTIONS

### ICE BREAKER

What's one thing you'd love to be undefeated at?

### DISCUSS THIS

1. What's one example of the way a high schooler might experience feeling separated from something they want?
  2. How might being separated from something you want or someone important in your life make you feel?
  3. What's one way you know you are close to someone?
  4. What do you think it feels like to be close to God?
  5. Do you think it's a bad thing to be separated from God? Why or why not?
  6. What's one reason a high schooler might feel separated from God?
  7. How might knowing that Jesus died so you would never have to be separated from God again change the way you feel about . . .
    - Yourself?
    - God?
    - Your choices?
  8. This week, what's one step you can take toward believing, confessing, or receiving the fact that because of Jesus, you have a way to be close to God?
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