

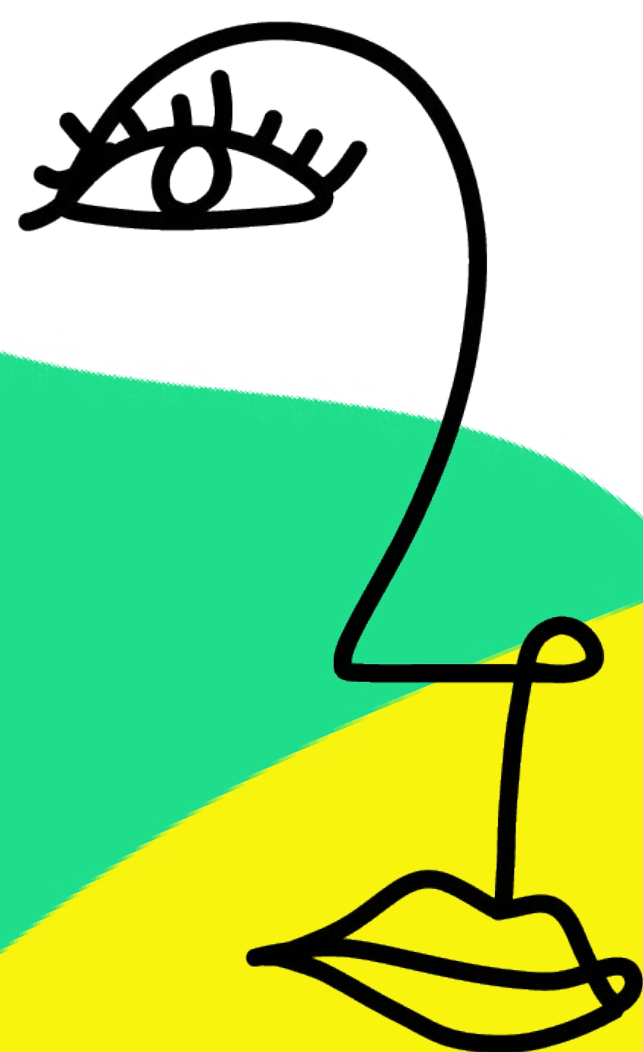


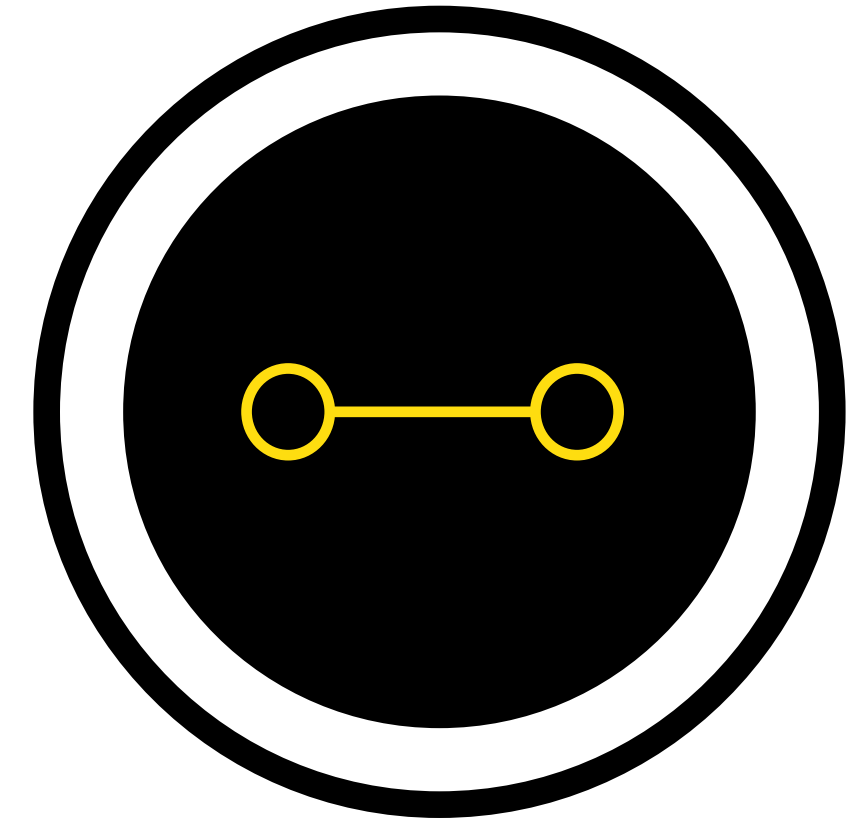
Feed



What are we?

LESSON 1





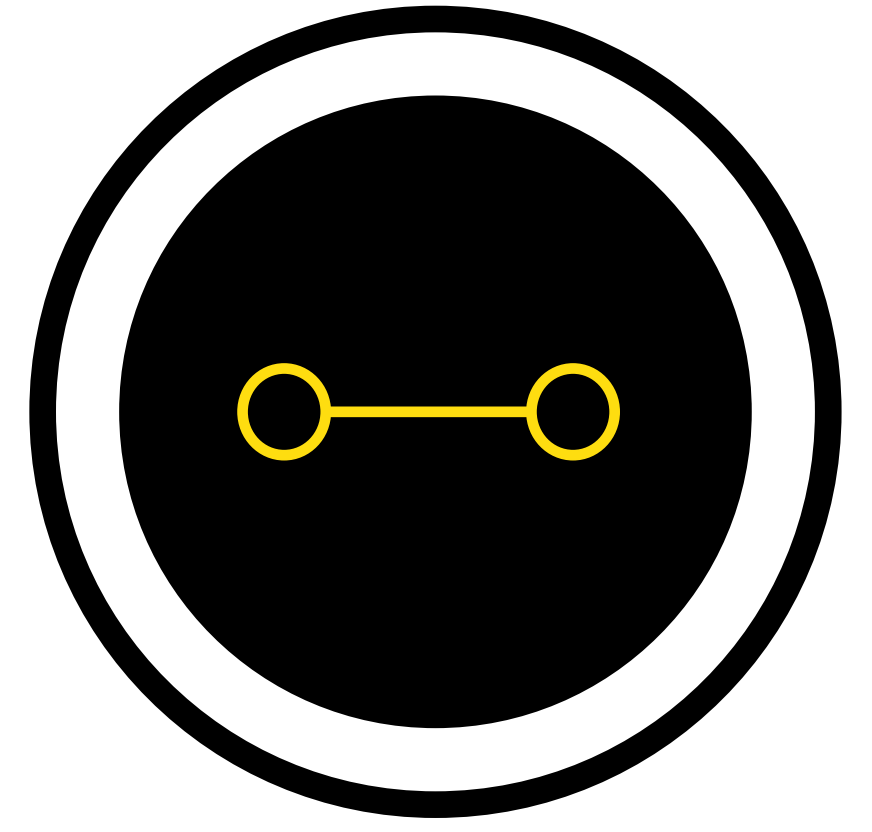
LEADER PREPARATION

Dear Small Group Leader:

We've all looked at our reflection in the mirror and wished to see something....different: whether it's wanting to be smaller, stronger, or taller, no one is immune from body image issues. Deep down, this desire to "fix" our appearance is rooted in a twisted understanding of God's good design and purpose for our physical bodies. In this series, we'll explore what it means to be made in the image of God. Instead of seeing our bodies as enemies we need to punish or transcend, you and your students will discover that our body is an essential part of our identity, intertwined with our mind, heart and spirit, with the ultimate purpose of bringing glory to God.

Scripture References

- Genesis 2:4-7
- Genesis 1:26
- Psalm 139:13-18
- Ephesians 2:10



Lesson Objectives

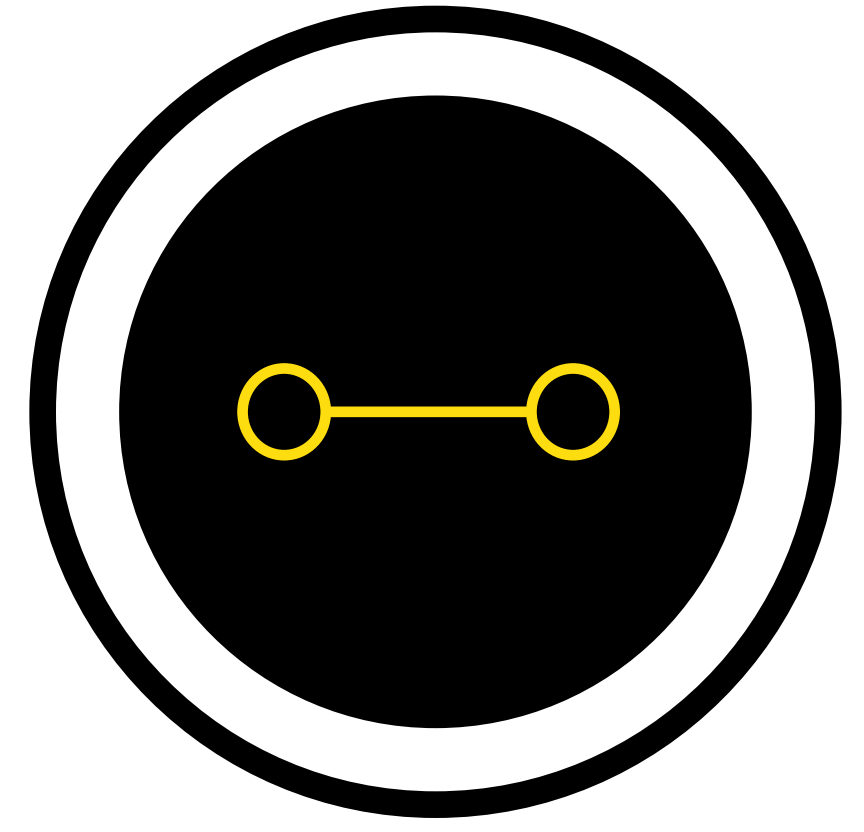
1. Students will explore how God designed them and how they are an example of his marvelous workmanship.
2. Students will recognize their value and the importance of caring for their bodies so as to fulfill God's purpose for them in this world.

Main Point

The whole of our humanity—mind, heart, *and* body—is created in the image of God and for his glory.

Helpful Hints

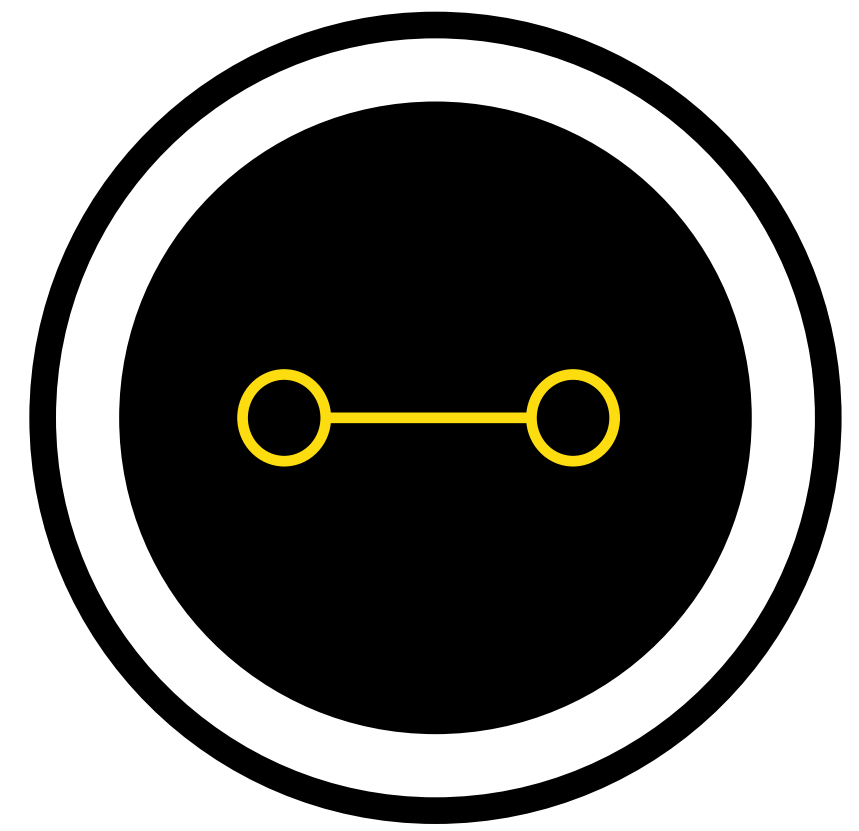
- Conversations about body image can lead to dangerous thought patterns for students who struggle with disordered eating. Be sensitive to language that may trigger these patterns and emphasize that our bodies are part of God's good creation.



- A spiritual conversation about positive body image needs to go deeper than the world's positive affirmation of "You're beautiful." We go further: God calls our bodies good because we bear his image. When we break free of body shame, we are free to love ourselves and others.
- For more theological background on the idea that the body, mind, and spirit make up one, integrated person, check out **the Bible Project's word study video on Nephesh.**

Materials Needed

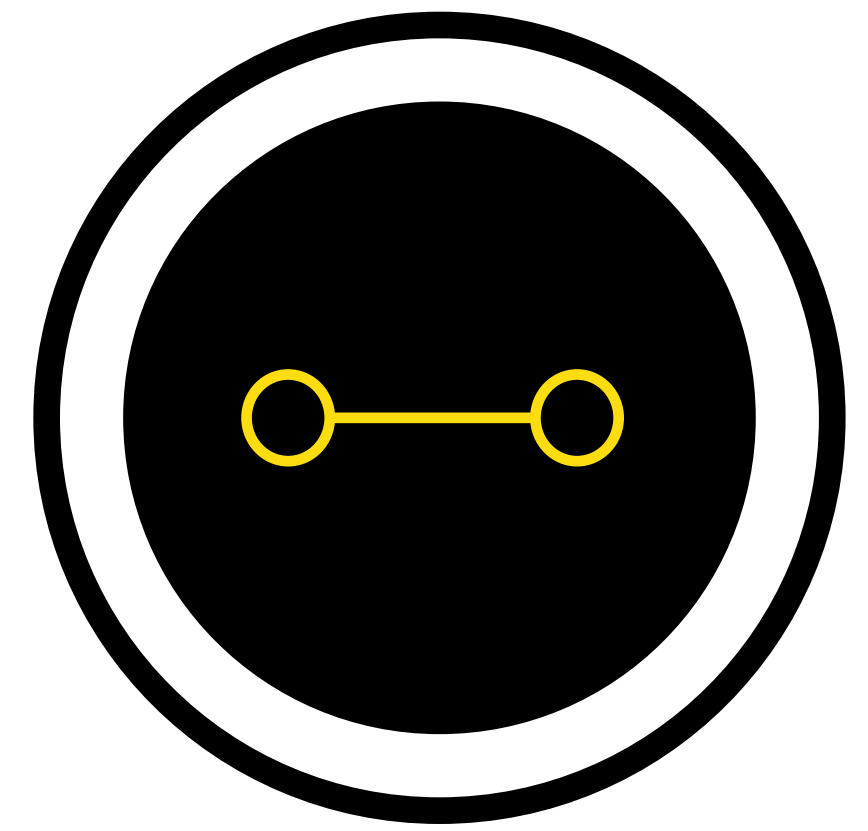
- Bible
- Laptop or TV with an internet connection to show videos



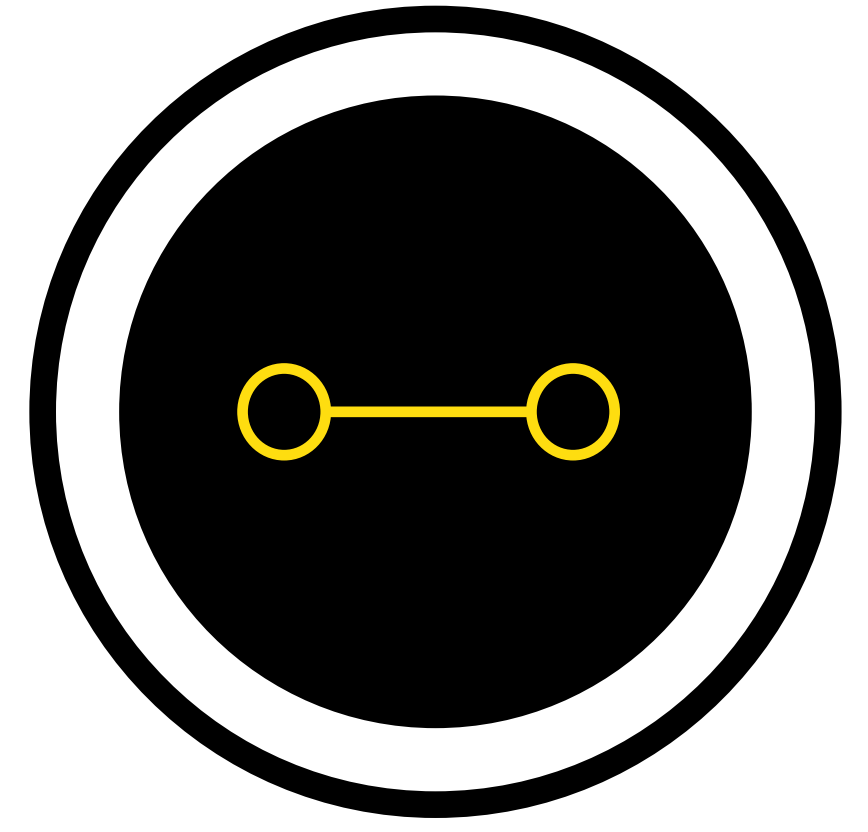
QUICK LINE-UP

Have the group form lines of 8-10. Each group chooses one player who is the only one who can speak. All others may communicate silently. If you have more than one line, they can race. Based on time limits, choose some or all of the below and have them line up in order of:

- Alphabetical by middle name
- Height, shortest to tallest
- Birth month, beginning with current month
- First three numbers of phone number (after area code) least to greatest
- Number of siblings, most to fewest



Say: Our culture floods us with messages about body image. Even without using words, the perfect pictures we see online and on TV persuade us that our bodies are our personal projects, our source of self-worth or shame, and a way to earn the love and approval of others. At the same time, though, you've probably heard messages like "Love yourself" and "Appearances don't matter." So why do these messages fall flat and fail to make us feel better? Why are so many of us struggling to love who we see in the mirror? Is it really possible to break free of insecurity and self-consciousness? Freedom is exactly what God wants for us, and when we embrace his view of our bodies, we'll find that we are free to love ourselves and others the way he does.

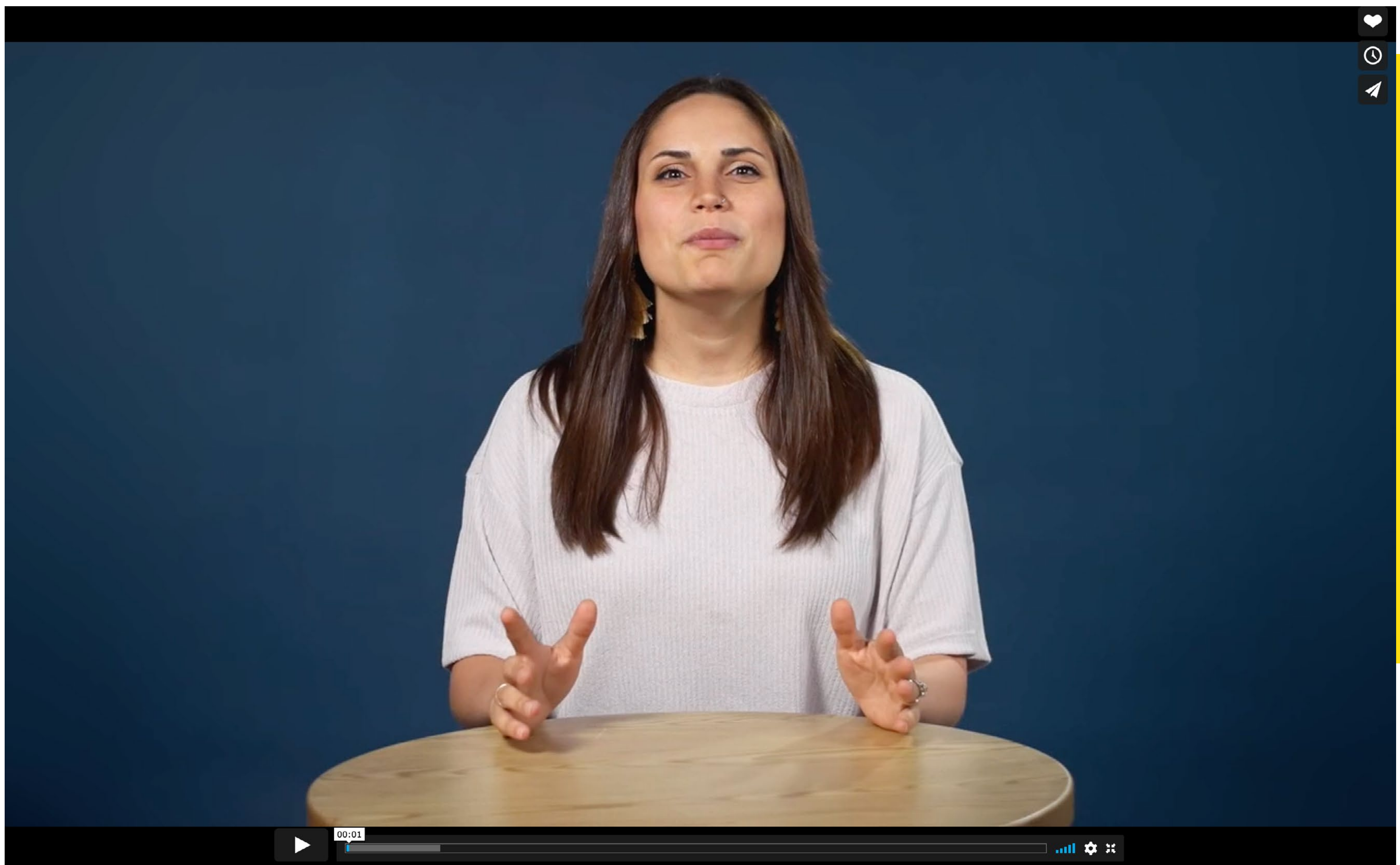
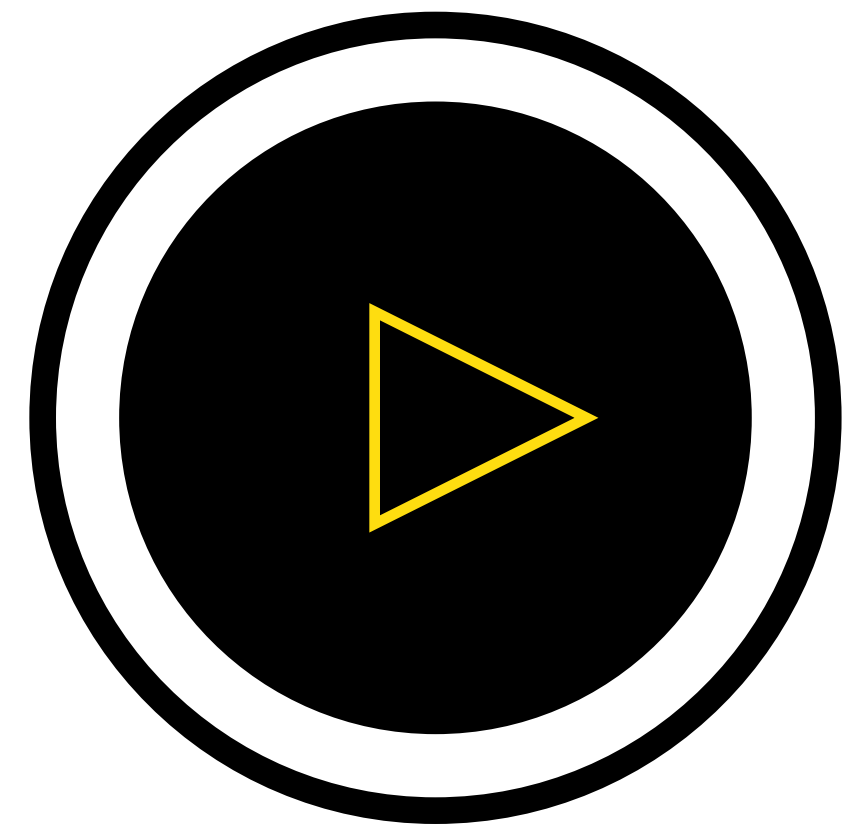


Ask students to consider the following questions while they watch the video:

Question 1: What are some ways our society teaches us to view our bodies?

Question 2: How can these messages damage us?

VIDEO (10 MINUTES)



PLAY VIDEO

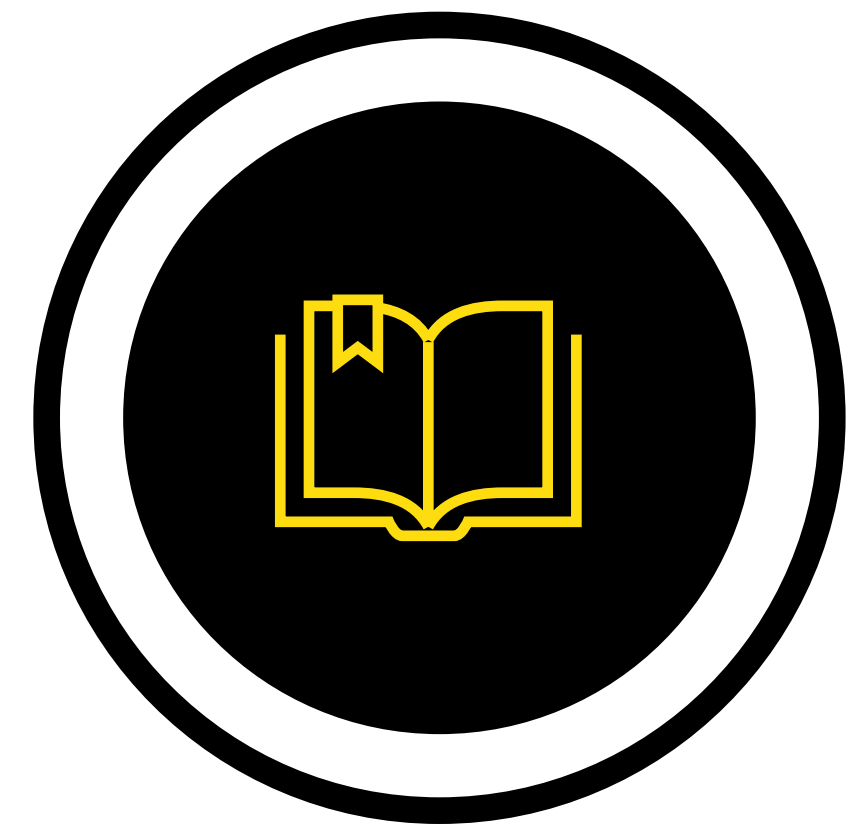


Show the Lesson 1 video to the large group. After the video is complete, **ask** the following questions:

Question 1: As you were thinking about the questions asked before the video, what stood out to you?

Question 2: What did God make us to be? How is this different from what you've believed before?

Question 3: What messages are you and your friends hearing from our society about their bodies, appearance, and self-worth?



Direct students into their small groups.

Read Scripture

Read the following passages of Scripture with your students.

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. Then **the LORD God formed the human from the dust of the ground.**

He breathed the breath of life into the human's nostrils, and the human became a living person.

Genesis 2:4-7

OPEN IN BIBLE APP



Say: These verses show us that God created every part of us with a purpose. In Hebrew, the word for “human” is “*adam*,” and the word for dirt or earth is “*adamah*.” Our “earthiness” – our physical bodies – are essential to who we are as God’s creatures. We aren’t just souls inside the shell of a body. Our body-mind-spirit are intertwined to make us the creatures that we are.



Then God said, “**Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign** over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

Genesis 1:26

OPEN IN BIBLE APP



Say: We can be tempted to think of our bodies and souls as completely separate: that we have a physical side and a spiritual side, and to be more spiritual, we just have to forget or overcome the physical. But our body isn't something in the way of our purpose: it's part of it! We are God's image in creation, tasked with taking care of the world on God's behalf. We have a unique role as mediators between God and the rest of the creation, and we could not fulfill this purpose if we didn't have bodies.



You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother's womb.

**Thank you for making me so wonderfully
complex!**

**Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I
know it.**

You watched me as I was being formed in utter
seclusion,
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.

You saw me before I was born.

**Every day of my life was recorded in your
book.**

Every moment was laid out
before a single day had passed.

**How precious are your thoughts about me, O
God.**

They cannot be numbered!



I can't even count them;
they outnumber the grains of sand!
And when I wake up,
you are still with me!

Psalm 139:13-18

OPEN IN BIBLE APP

For **we are God's masterpiece**. He has **created us anew** in Christ Jesus, so we can do **the good things he planned for us** long ago.

Ephesians 2:10

OPEN IN BIBLE APP



Say: These passages are a celebration of each human's *individual* worth and creation. Did you catch how intimate and intentional God's design of each person is? There is no one else in all of creation that is like you. God made you specifically to be yourself, and you're the only one. Every day of your life was ordained and is known by God.

How awesome is it that God made each of us on purpose! We know that all of God's works are wonderful, and we are also God's works, his creation. We are wonderful because God made us!



Ask students the following questions.

Question 1: Thinking about God's design of our bodies in Genesis, how are our bodies part of God's purpose for us?

Question 2: What do you think "wonderfully complex" means in Psalm 139?

Question 3: In Ephesians, we see that we are called God's masterpieces. What do you think this means?



Ask students the following questions.

Question 1: If you really believe what these verses say about your body and its purpose, how might that change the way you saw yourself and what you were capable of?

Question 2: How does recognizing God's design and purpose impact the way you view yourself and others?

Question 3: How does knowing that God designed our bodies for a purpose change the way you think about or treat your body?

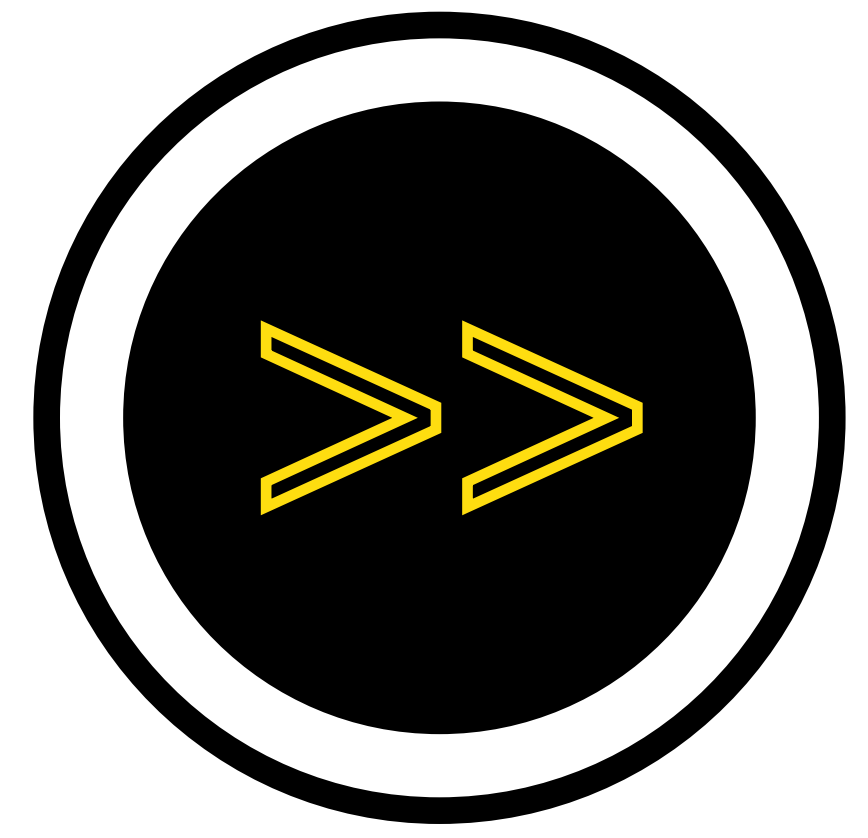
Question 4: How can we recognize God's design in difficult circumstances, like a disability? How can God use every body to fulfill a purpose?



Suggestion: If you're able to bring the small groups back together into a large group, do so at this time. Alternatively, this activity and the remaining activities can also take place in small groups. Share the following Catechism question and answer with the students.

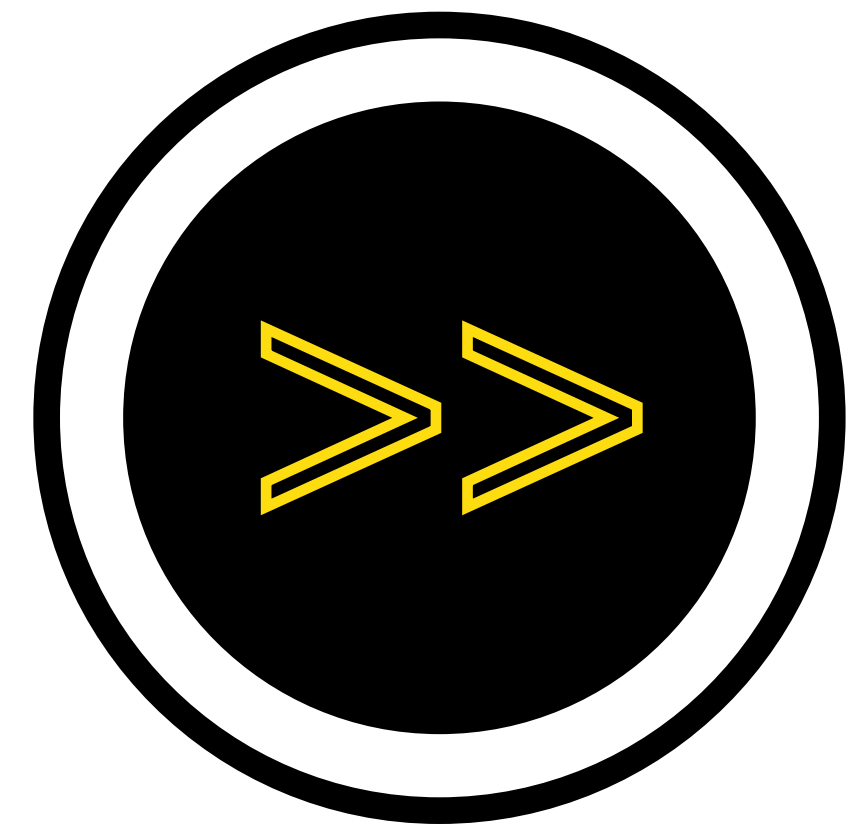
Question: Why did God create humans?

Answer: God created humans to know and worship him. We do this by reflecting his image to the world around us.

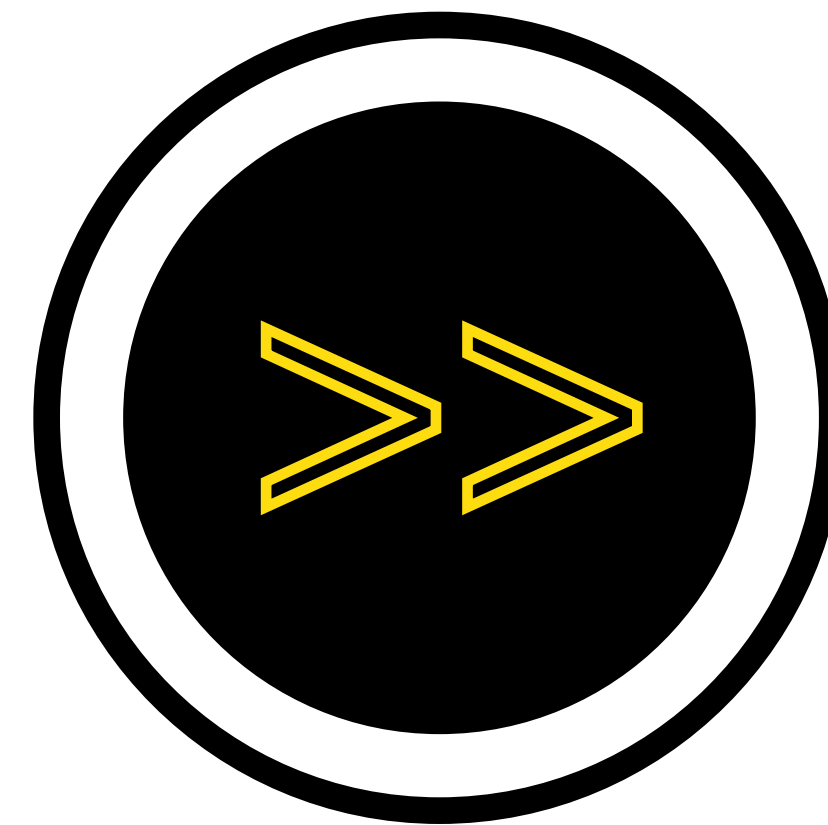


Say: Our society sends us two conflicting messages about our bodies: The spoken message is “Love yourself” and “Appearances don’t matter,” but the unspoken message is told in the flawless, unrealistic images that are praised on social media, the beauty world, and the fitness industry. So which one is it? How can those spoken and unspoken messages both be true? The short answer is that they can’t. Looking around to the world for answers won’t lead to lasting satisfaction. We can only break free from self-consciousness when we look to God. He made our bodies, and he calls them good because we bear his image. When we embrace the fullness of who God made us to be, we are free to truly love ourselves and extend that love to others.

Give students time to reflect and respond on their own, either on paper or in the Notes app on their phones.



- Take a moment to reflect on the way Psalm 139 and Ephesians 2 describe you. As you read through these verses, replace every “I,” “me,” and “we” with your name. How does it feel to think of yourself as a wonderfully complex masterpiece, known and loved by God? When you reflect on God’s intentional design and purpose for your life and body, how does that lead you to respond to him?
- What’s your motivation for self-care? Are you seeking to punish your body or nourish it? God designed our bodies for a purpose and wants us to care for ourselves so we can function and fulfill that purpose. God doesn’t want us to be caught up in constant striving for self-improvement; he invites us to care for the body he created in a way that nourishes and strengthens us! Take some time to confess wrong motivations for self-care and ask God for his help in adopting a God-honoring mindset toward caring for your body.



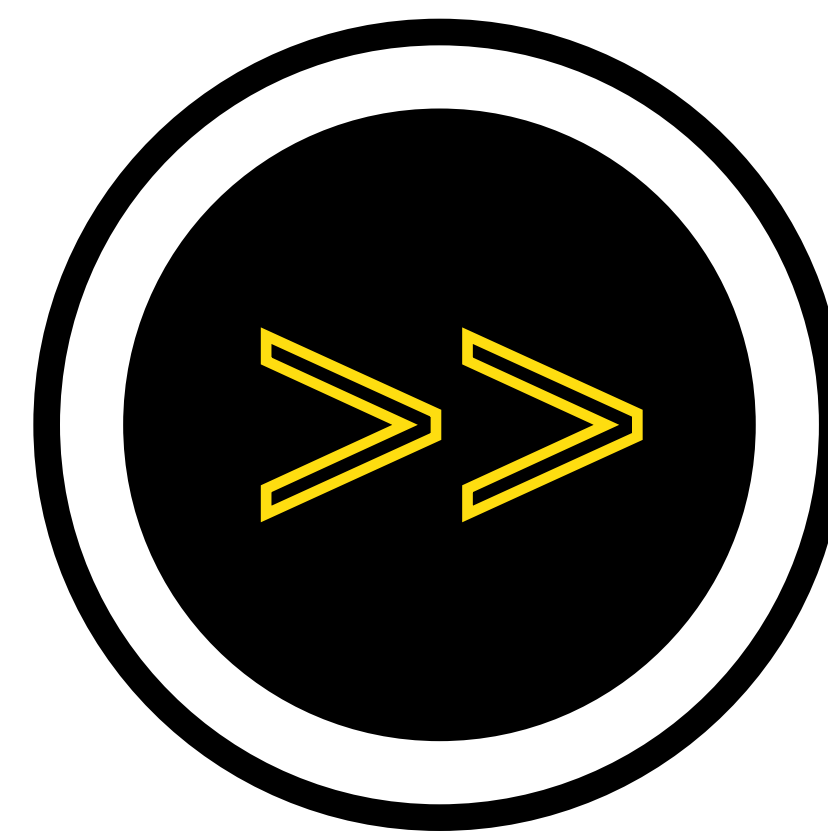
Close in Prayer

End this time together by praying over your students.

Take-Home Tip

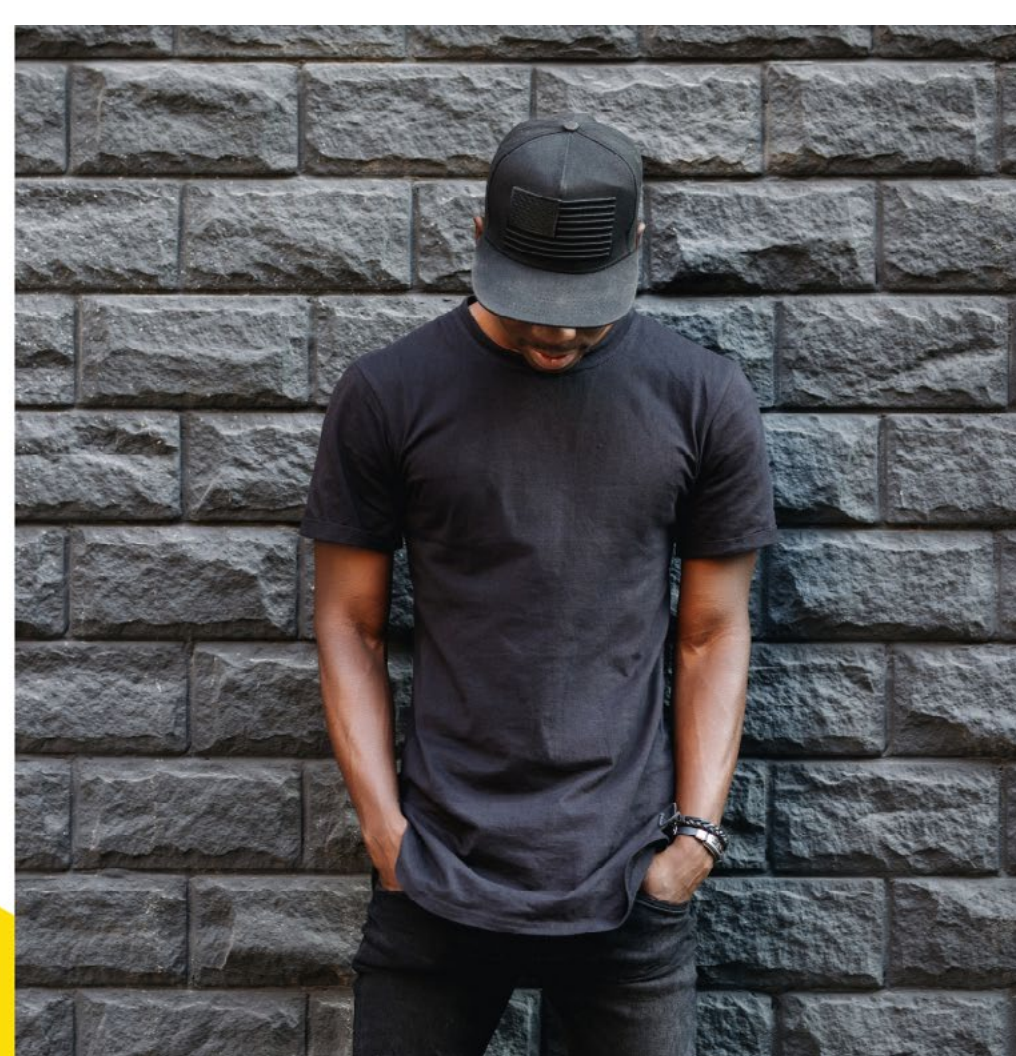
Say: God made our minds, souls, and bodies to be connected. But many of us feel disconnected from our bodies. If you feel this way, you can try *Progressive Muscle Relaxation* at home. It's a practical way to help us become more aware of our physical bodies and how they are connected to our emotions and thoughts. Begin with these basic steps, starting with your toes and working your way up your muscle groups:

1. Clinch or tighten up your toes while taking a slow, deep breath in. Hold it for a few seconds; then slowly release the tension while breathing out.
2. Then do the same thing with your legs, torso, arms, and hands.



YouVersion Reading Plan

Before you go... We've included a three-day YouVersion Reading Plan to engage students further in the conversation and close the gap between next week's lesson. Invite your students to download the plan and complete it this week. It can be found by searching for "Catechism: *What are we?*" in the Bible App's collection of reading plans.





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