

**next**

EVIL AND SUFFERING



GENERATION 514



THE YOUTH CARTEL

# NEXT Teaching Curriculum

BROCK MORGAN

with Brian Cress, Chuck Hunt, Mark Helsel, Leah Knight,  
Danny Kwon, Paul Martin, Kelsey Morgan, and Mark Riddle

**Edited by:**

Kelsey Morgan

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The Youth Cartel, LLC

[www.theyouthcartel.com](http://www.theyouthcartel.com)

Email: [info@theyouthcartel.com](mailto:info@theyouthcartel.com)

Born in San Diego

## Introduction to Series

Long gone are the days of shallow and pat answers that have been common in our teaching. Students today live in a complex world and our teaching must rise to the occasion and help guide them through the maze of culture's complexities. Brock Morgan, along with this dream team of authors and thinkers, have put together what we believe is NEXT in youth ministry teaching and engagement. Through a more holistic manner, we have addressed the topics that are key in a student's burgeoning faith and crafted a series that will direct investigation and appeal to the heart. Connected to *The Amazing Next Conference*, this series is meant to empower students and to help them have a sustainable faith that lasts; a faith that is thoughtful and engaged in what God is doing in the world.

## Authors

*We have brought together some amazing authors, who are veterans in ministry and really smart!*  
Brock Morgan plus themed lessons from: Brian Cress, Chuck Hunt, Mark Helsel, Leah Knight, Danny Kwon, Paul Martin, Kelsey Morgan, and Mark Riddle

# Index of Themes

(Each theme covers 4 weeks and 1 student leadership lesson = 5 lessons/theme)

1. Evil and Suffering
2. Sexuality
3. Truth
4. Gifted and Called
5. Science and Faith
6. The Gospel Reframed
7. A Dismissed Faith
8. Big “C” Church
9. Why Jesus
10. Supernatural

## How to Use this Curriculum

This curriculum is based on a topical short presentation (15-20 minutes) and followed by discussion questions. We believe that small groups are a great means of discussing these topics because COMMUNITY is key in exploring your faith. Valuing the question and the work of the Holy Spirit is pivotal during these times and we believe engaging students in the discovery is one of the best teaching tools. There are *lots* of questions throughout.

This curriculum should stretch your students and should stretch you. It is recommended that you attempt to answer questions with questions, not pat answers. This is a model found in the ministry of Jesus and we hope will begin to teach your students how to THINK through the tough questions of the faith. This is not an easy endeavor! We know that, but we also know it will get easier over time.

Use at your discretion. You are welcome to modify, simplify, and add to any lesson you would like. We have left plenty of space for you to add personal stories and encourage testimonies as well. There's a lot of meat in there, so there is plenty to build upon.

## Here's What You Will Find

Each theme is presented through four lenses: Culture, Identity, Theology, and Acts of Worship. Each weeks focus may be presented consecutively, however each one can be presented as a stand alone. There may be references to the former lenses, but they are easily used by themselves. Break them up, use a particular focus for a retreat theme, or whatever your heart feels led to do.

Any video clips used are included in the text as well as listed at the beginning of each lesson.

# Lessons Generally Look Like This

## I. Big Group

- A. Introduction
- B. Presentation (15 min.)
- C. Conclusion and Dismissal to Small Groups

## II. Small Group

- A. Connect to Topic
- B. Opening Question
- C. Discussion
- D. Scriptural Affirmation/Benediction

## STUDENT LEADERSHIP FOCUS

We believe in students and we believe that the future of the Church is not simply youth ministry, but youth in ministry. Included with each topic in the *NEXT* curriculum is a STUDENT LEADERSHIP lesson, located right after the *Introduction to the Topic*. We highly recommend taking your student leadership or your core students through the student leadership week before offering it to the whole group. This will not only help your leadership students think through the topic beforehand, but empower them to be a part of what is being taught. We'd even recommend team teaching with students each week- hand stuff out to them! There's plenty to go around.

## BASIC PRINCIPLES OF A QUESTION BASED CURRICULUM:

*This is a conversation and you are the resident Sage.*

Our desire is to teach students, by example as well as instruction, how to actively listen and ask meaningful questions. Questions are better than answers in this case. As you journey through, we have done our best to anticipate the questions that students will have. Our concern is not to have all the answers, but to make students wrestle a bit while they are in community in their discovery of GOD'S TRUTH.

As the Sage, do your best to be prepared for these questions and don't let them scare you! None of this surprises God and, as a good friend likes to say, he will not fall off his throne if we cannot answer every question. We are not asking you to endorse any specific view point, but to be the standard bearer of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe that all truth is God's, so on that premise we act as facilitators.

Take time as needed. Pause over what students are really into and move over less interesting content. You dictate the pace.

This is community based learning, so keeping order is important. Setting up guidelines is key in allowing each student to be heard. It's important that we wrestle in a safe and productive environment.

Please note that we place high value on the work of the HOLY SPIRIT as we journey with students. Regardless of your theology concerning the person of the Holy Spirit and how he works, we have found that opening ourselves up to him has done more for the faith of our students (and ourselves) than years worth of great curriculum and teaching. The convincing is left up to God, not to us.

# Introduction to the topic: Evil & Suffering

Today's student really struggles with this topic. With the advent of the internet, we are able to see our world in a whole new light. The problems that we used to be aware of in our neighborhoods, communities, states, or nation have now paled in comparison to the evil and suffering found in the world that we are now able to access. This poses a specific set of questions for young people about God's role in the world and in their own life. These questions, if not expressed in a loving and faith filled community can become stumbling blocks in the growth of a teen's faith.

Some of the most pertinent questions are:

- Why would a loving God allow people to suffer?
- Why doesn't God make evil people stop what they are doing?
- There are so many terrible things going on in the world, how can I make a difference?
- If God allows evil to exist in the world, does that make him evil too?

We strongly recommend that you create a box where students can write down and submit questions as you go along. It's very likely they will be addressed at some point in the series, but this way you will know where your students are at in the process and you can tailor the lessons to them.

We are sure you can add to this list. We also know that there are not pat answers to any of these questions that will satisfy students long term. The most effective way to answer them is to allow students to experience the truth for themselves through a number of means. We strongly recommend that the curriculum prompts that include scripture, prayer, and discussion be utilized, but all that is up to you.

One of our foundational beliefs is that the Holy Spirit does the work of convincing. We encourage you and your team to lean into that belief as well. Our job is not to argue anyone into the Kingdom or to berate another's beliefs, but to present better questions, the testimony of people, and the scriptures.

## **This packet includes:**

- Student Leadership Meeting
- Four Topical Lessons with Small Group Questions

## HELPFUL HINTS

- If you see something *italicized* like this: *Italicized* it is a script you can follow or utilize however you like.
- *Next Curriculum* will have helpful hints from time to time which you can find at [brockmorgan.com](http://brockmorgan.com)
- Do you need support or have questions? Contact us at [hrlp.theyouthcartel.com](http://hrlp.theyouthcartel.com)

# NEXT Curriculum

## Evil and Suffering: Culture (Week 1)

**Author:** Brian Cress, *IJM Director of Youth Mobilization*

**Editor:** Kelsey Morgan

### OBJECTIVES:

- Summarize the causes of evil, injustice, and suffering
- Discuss differing world views
- Discuss morality (right and wrong)
- Familiarize ourselves with scriptures concerning Evil and Suffering

## Videos

### Fox News

<http://video.foxnews.com/v/3681262354001/some-very-bad-things-happened-in-the-world-to-day/?#sp=show-clips>

### Top 10 Man Made Disasters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPiINrpQEgl&nohtml5=False>

### IJM Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZT-CgkPnzw>

### Photos of homelessness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJkzdZk03Dw>

### Syrian Crisis CNN

<http://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/09/09/refugees-syria-war-amanpour-pkg.cnn>

## Introduction

### (Option 1) News Search

To help your students get a current worldview of evil and suffering, you will need to gather multiple copies of the local and national newspapers over the course of a week. Gather enough so each small group has a full edition.

Now have your students see how many articles they can find where evil and suffering occurred. Look particularly for articles where a crowd was the cause of injustice happening. It might be something as big as an international riot or as small as a local robbery.

### ASK:

1. What did you all discover about evil and suffering from this exercise?
2. Why do think there is so much evil and suffering in our world today?

### 3. Are only bad things happening in the world today?

*The next four weeks will be about discovering and discussing the difficult issue of evil and suffering. This topic is tricky for many of us and can be overwhelming. We want to come out on the other side of this with a sense of hope and purpose.*

#### (Option 2) News Clips

<http://video.foxnews.com/v/3681262354001/some-very-bad-things-happened-in-the-world-to-day/?#sp=show-clips> END AT 40 SECONDS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPiiNrpQEgl&nohtml5=False> BEGIN AT 40 SECONDS

The short Fox News clip reveals not only the evil that happens in the world, but our culture's attitude. The second clip shows man made disasters that had long term impact on humanity and nature.

Have students express what stuck out to them.

#### **ASK:**

1. *Who caused the disasters?*
2. *Could they have been prevented?*
3. *What were the long term impacts of the oil spill? The radiation leaks? Improper farming techniques?*
4. *Do you think that big companies and world governments care more about people today? (remember, these incidents were not that long ago)*
5. *Are only bad things happening in the world today?*

#### AFFIRM THE STRUGGLE

*When we begin to talk about evil and suffering most of us feel upset or maybe a bit confused. We have questions, important questions, that come up in our minds. Some of them might be:*

- *Where is God in the midst of all this evil and suffering?"*
- *Why does violent evil go unaccounted for in so much of the world?*
- *What is a Christian's role in the face of injustice? Are we simply supposed to pick up the pieces after the fact?*

*I wish there were easy answers to these questions, but there are not. What we will try to do is to think through evil and suffering with our minds even as we feel things strongly in our hearts. We will seek God's perspective and empower one another to encounter our culture in such a way that we are peace makers.*

(This is a great time to say a short prayer asking for the Holy Spirit to enter into the conversation about evil and suffering)

## Scripture and Message

*We often view evil, suffering, and injustice from either a position of power or a position of vulnerability: I can choose where I will go, what I will wear, how I spend my money, etc... OR I do not have the ability to choose where I will go, what I will wear, how I spend my money, etc...*

**ASK:**

1. Which perspective do we have? (As students, some will feel that they are both)
2. What is the reality in our culture?

*Most of us will eventually make many choices for ourselves even though some choices will be made for us by those in authority, like the government. We can feel somewhat sure that the law, police, and military are making a good attempt to protect the people of our country. It doesn't mean that bad things do not happen, but it does give us a greater chance to thrive. People all over the world are much less secure than we are. There is no one standing up for their safety and their rights as human beings. They are coming from a position of vulnerability.*

*Evil and injustice prevail in these places and here are some ideas that help us understand why:*

Impunity is defined as “exemption from punishment or freedom from the injurious consequences of an action”. Basically, people can get away with evil because they do not fear punishment or consequence for their actions.

Cultural and religious acceptance is also a reason that people are harmed and abused.

**ASK:**

1. Can you think of times when this has been what is true? Something one culture or religion says is wrong but another culture or religion says is right? (Ask for specific examples)

Examples: Prostitution, slavery, abuse of women and children, slaughtering innocents, etc...

**Note:** Make sure that students understand the difference between forced subjugation and volunteered actions. Here is an example you might share: The wearing of the hijab by Muslim women is, especially in the West, often a voluntary act that represents (for them) respect for their faith and asserts their own identity. This is a great simplification, but Muslim women in the West will affirm that this is true for the majority of them and as adult women they have made this choice. The hijab has also been hijacked by political movements and extremist groups in the East where women have been forced to wear the hijab as well as more overwhelming forms of cover like the burqas or niqabs (though some women wear these willingly as well) and face punishment if they do not. One scenario is a person of age making a decision based on their understanding of the hijab and another is based on fear of punishment with no choice in the matter.

*Here is some evidence that impunity and cultural acceptance make it possible for people do things that are universally recognized as unjust acts that lead to suffering:*

**Note:** These are figures that the International Justice Mission uses based on research with various government and human rights groups. Other facts can be added to this list as desired.

- Nearly 36 Million slaves in our world today.
- 1 Million Children a year pulled into sex trafficking.
- 2.3 million Women & girls held in forced prostitution in India alone.
- UN says 1 in 3 women around the world will experience abuse in their lifetime.
- 10 Million people are held in prison or jail without proceedings to determine guilt or innocence.
- 85% of the police force in India has not been trained in criminal investigation.
- 90% of students in the USA report having been bullied at school by the 8th grade.

*So much of the injustice that happens in our world today is a result of crowds, large and small, allowing or doing bad things.*

*Understanding evil requires we clearly define what injustice is.*

*Here is a definition by Gary Haugen the Founder of International Justice Mission:*

*“Injustice is the abuse of power, to take from others the things God had given to them, their life, freedom, pursuit of love, pursuit of labor”*

*Having a good definition helps us to differentiate the difference between something that is evil or unjust versus something that simply does not seem fair. Such as someone having 13 items in the 10 item or less line at the grocery store.*

*The result of the break down of human systems is suffering.*

## **STORY:**

This is a great time for a personal story from your life or someone close to you where evil affected you.

## **VIDEO:**

The IJM YouTube site has several video examples of evil/injustice that could be used here:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/intljusticemission>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZT-CqkPnzw>

Photos set in video covering homelessness in the U.S.: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJkzdZk03Dw>

Syrian Crisis: <http://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/09/09/refugees-syria-war-amanpour-pkg.cnn>

## **READ:**

Present these scriptures or have students look them up on their Bible app:

**Ecclesiastes 4:1** - “Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them.”

**Exodus 23:2** - “You must not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you are called to testify in a dispute, do not be swayed by the crowd to twist justice”

## **Conclusion**

Pray for your small group time and dismiss.

# Connect to Topic: Week 1

## SMALL GROUPS

*I think most of us would agree that evil and suffering often comes from the hand of groups of people as they oppress others. Let's review two big ideas that we just talked about :*

**Gary Haugen quote** - "Injustice is the abuse of power, to take from others the things God had given to them, their life, freedom, pursuit of love, pursuit of labor"

**Impunity:** defined as "exemption from punishment or freedom from the injurious consequences of an action".

### ASK:

1. What might be some morally absolute types of justice you believe should be extended to everyone? (For example, should everyone have the right to food and water? Or everyone should have a right to a fair trial?)
2. How does it make you feel when injustice happens to strangers? To your friends? To your family?

### READ:

**Ecclesiastes 4:1** - "Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them."

### ASK:

1. What does this verse say about those being oppressed? (tears, no comfort)
2. What does this verse say about oppressors? (they have the power)

### READ:

**Exodus 23:2** - "You must not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you are called to testify in a dispute, do not be swayed by the crowd to twist justice"

### ASK:

1. *How might following the crowd twist justice?*
2. *Why is standing up against the crowd so difficult?*

### ASK:

1. *How do most people handle evil and suffering? Ignore it? Do something to fix it? Pray about it? Donate money to organizations?*

**Hint:** *Use a real life scenario such as student being bullied in the hallway at school, or a friend being harassed online by another student.*

2. *What BIG QUESTIONS does evil and suffering in the world bring up in your mind?*

Do not try to answer their questions at this time. Reassure the students by saying something like this: *There are no easy answers, but we will process your questions together over the next few weeks.*

If there are any students that seem particularly saddened or frustrated, make a note and do your best to make contact with them over the next week, either personally or through social media/phone.

# Benediction

*I pray over us that we would know how much God loves us even in the midst of difficulty. I pray that we would seek to be a people of peace that are not swayed by the culture or by the crowd. We are a generation that cares about the oppressed and the needy in our homes, our community, our country, and the world. Amen*

(You are welcome to take regular prayer requests and pray together at your own discretion.)