

A large graphic of a teal puzzle piece set against an orange background. The puzzle pieces are interlocking, and one piece on the right side is missing, revealing a dark teal shape underneath. The title "MADE TO BELONG" is written in large, bold, white capital letters with a thick orange outline, centered over the puzzle pieces.

MADE TO BELONG

Writer: Kim Marsh Weed
Editor: Mackayla McDaniel
Designer: Jena Diliberto

Created by Ministry to Youth

Lesson 1



Lesson 1:
Already Invited



Bible Verses:
Jeremiah 1:5, Romans 8:28-30,
1 Peter 2:9, Ephesians 2:19-21



Bottom Line:
God knew you, saw you, and chose you
before you did anything to “earn” it.

SUPPLIES

Opening Game:

- 4-6 puzzles in boxes (48-100 pieces, depending on time)
 - [Example 1](#)
 - [Example 2](#)
- 1-2 pieces removed and hidden from each puzzle box
- 1 work station (table) for each team
- Optional: an amazing prize for the winning team (something that will go to the whole group at the end of the lesson since there won't be a winner)

NOTES

All Scripture references are taken from the NLT unless otherwise indicated.

The lessons in this series all have a puzzle theme.

Set your stage or room with large puzzle pieces or completed and partially completed jigsaw puzzles.

OPENING GAME

Piece It Together

Objective: To show students that a puzzle's final picture is incomplete without all the pieces (just like God's big picture includes many vital pieces).

Game Prep:

- Remove 1-2 pieces from each of the puzzle boxes
- Print the "Sit Down If..." sheet (included in files)

How to Play the Game:

SAY: Hey, everyone!

I'm so glad to see you here tonight as we kickoff a brand-new series!

But before we get to the lesson, let's start off with a little competition.

First, we need to make teams.

Arrange students into the number of teams that you have puzzles in whatever way works for your group.

SAY: Awesome teams!

Tonight's game is pretty straightforward.

Each team will get a puzzle, and we will see which team can finish their puzzle the fastest!

The first team with a complete puzzle wins this incredible prize!

Hold up the prize.

SAY: Now, let's see what puzzles we'll be completing tonight.

Feel free to unveil the puzzles in a game show style to make it fun.

SAY: Amazing!

Have you all picked out your favorite one?

Great.

Let's see if you'll actually get to work the one you like.

Good place for an evil laugh.

SAY: First things first, let's play a little game to see which team gets to pick their puzzle first!

Everyone, stand with your team.

I'll read off some "Sit Down If..." statements.

If you're instructed to sit, sit.

Whichever team has the last member standing will pick their puzzle and assign puzzles for all the other teams.

Ready?

Everyone, stand up.

Play "Sit Down If..." and the last member standing will pick their puzzle and assign the remaining puzzles to the rest of the teams.

If several students all sit down at the same time to end the game, bring them up to "pick a number between..." to decide the winner.

SAY: Do not open your boxes until I say "go!"

Whichever team completes their puzzle first, wins!

Ready!

Let's go!

Students will eventually realize that they are missing a piece or two and cannot complete the puzzle. Once all teams get to that point, let them sit in the frustration of it for a minute or so.

SAY: We are running out of time here.

What's the problem?

You are all SO close.

You worked together and you did most of the work.

What happened?

Let students respond, likely saying that they didn't have all the pieces.

SAY: Hmm, I understand.

You were missing something important, and no matter how hard you tried, you couldn't complete the picture without those pieces.

Pause for dramatic effect.

SAY: Well, that's a bummer.

We'll come back to this game again later in the lesson, so don't worry about missing out on the prize!

TEACH

Say: Tonight, we are kicking off a brand-new four-part series called Made to Belong!

For the next four weeks, we will talk about God's big picture and see that we are all included, we are all perfectly fitted for our space, we are an important, valuable piece of the puzzle, and no matter what, we are the only piece that will fit the space God made us to fit in.

It's going to be a great four weeks.

Let me start tonight by asking you all a question: Have you ever felt left out?

Maybe you were at home doom-scrolling social media and saw a whole group of your friends out doing something together.

Or you found out that your bestie went somewhere with a whole different group of friends and didn't invite you.

Or maybe you've been sitting at youth group and there are a lot of inside jokes being told that you don't understand.

We all feel left out, invisible, or not included from time to time.

It's a feeling that can stick with us and even change how we see ourselves and our value in this world.

That's what tonight's lesson is all about.

Even though we can feel it sometimes, we are not invisible to God.

We are not left out or unimportant to Him or in His plan.

The big, beautiful picture that God is creating includes every single one of us, and each of us fits in a perfect way.

Turn in your Bibles to **Jeremiah 1:5**.

Would someone read this passage aloud for us?

Allow a student to read the passage to the group.

5 "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations."

SAY: Thank you for reading that for us.

ASK: What does the first part of this verse tell us?

Allow students to answer.

SAY: Yes, God tells Jeremiah (and us) that before our moms were even pregnant with us, He already knew us.

Imagine that.

A thousand years ago, God already knew that your mom was going to get pregnant with you and He already knew you.

He already knew all the characteristics that would be woven into how you are physically: your hair and eye color, your height, your shoe size, and even the number of hairs you'd have on your head.

He already knew your personality:

- If you would be quiet or the class clown
- If you would be adventure-seeking or safe and careful
- If you would love having tons of friends or love having a few close ones

And He already knew the amazing things you'd do and the times you'd struggle and mess up.

Before you were even a little flutter on an ultrasound, God knew you.

Sometimes we try to "find ourselves" by asking other people who we are.

Social media tries to define us.

Pressure from school, family, or friends can push us into certain molds, trying to shape us into something other than who we were made to be.

But God says, "Before you were even born, I already knew you."

That means your value doesn't come from likes, followers, grades, or starting positions on the team.

You don't have to find your identity ... you already have it!

You are deeply known and fully loved by the God who made you.

He doesn't just see the surface.

He sees everything about you and He still says, "I want that one in the story I'm writing."

Wow!

What else does this verse say?

Allow students to answer.

SAY: Right, before you were even born, God set you apart.

Something that is set apart is chosen for a special purpose or used differently than common things.

On a bride's wedding day, when she gets ready to walk down the aisle, does she put on her sweatpants and a tattered T-shirt with her old fuzzy slippers?

Not usually!

Most of the time, she has said "yes" to the dress of her dreams and walks down the aisle in that dress with to-die-for shoes.

A wedding dress is set apart from all the other clothes in her closet.

It is chosen for that special occasion and is used differently than her lounge-around, paint-the-bathroom, everyday clothes.

This is how God describes us.

Before you or I ever took a breath, God set us apart for His important purposes.

Finally, in the last part of **Jeremiah 1:5**, God told Jeremiah, "I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

God didn't just create Jeremiah and leave him to figure out life on his own.

God had a specific role, a calling, a mission for him.

He set Jeremiah apart for a purpose.

And that wasn't just true for Jeremiah several thousands of years ago.

It's still true for us today!

Let's turn to **Romans 8:28-30**.

Would someone read that for us?

Allow a student to read.

28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

29 For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

30 And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

SAY: These verses are packed with good stuff.

Let's slow down and break it all down.

First, it says God is working in all things for the good of those who love Him.

This doesn't mean that everything feels good, but instead that God is using everything, even the hard things, to shape us for His purposes.

Next, this verse says we are "called according to His purpose."

God didn't randomly make you.

He knew you in advance and, like we just read in Jeremiah, He had a purpose in mind for you from the beginning.

That word "called" means invited, summoned, chosen.

Even before you knew God, He had His eyes on you.

He was calling you to Himself, calling you to be part of something eternal, something meaningful – His big picture.

You are not an extra piece.

God saw you, called you, and is working everything out to draw you closer to Him for something beautiful.

We are each made on purpose with a specific role in God's big story.

We might not all be prophets, like Jeremiah, but we are all called to live for God, to show His love, to speak truth, to serve others, and to make a difference in this world for His Kingdom.

Let's look through a few more verses from the Bible.

Turn to **1 Peter 2:9**.

Would someone volunteer to read it to us, please?

Allow students to find the Scripture and have a volunteer read to the group.

9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

SAY: This verse says we've been chosen, loved, included, and called by God to shine in the story He's authoring.

Turn to **Ephesians 2:19-21**.

Would someone read that to the group?

Allow students to find the Scripture and have a volunteer read to the group.

19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

20 Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

21 We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.

SAY: God says that we are included, not on the outside looking in.

We're not the people on the bench waiting to be called into the game.

We aren't the ones sitting at home scrolling social media seeing everyone else have a good time.

Because of what Jesus has done on the cross, we are each included in the family of God.

We are "**joined together**" with Jesus like it says in **Ephesians 2:21**.

Like pieces of a puzzle.

Earlier we played a game where each team tried to complete a puzzle.

You were focused, working together, making progress, and just when you were close to finishing, you realized something was wrong.

ASK: What was that?

Allow students to answer.

SAY: Right, you didn't have all the pieces.

It was frustrating, right?

You gave it your best effort.

You worked hard.

You did everything right.

But no matter what you tried, the picture wasn't whole because something important was missing.

That feeling of something missing is a lot like how life can feel when we believe the lie that we're not included.

When we wonder if we really belong in God's story, or if maybe we were left out of the box completely.

But here's what I want you to hear tonight.

God has included you in His big picture.

You are not extra.

You are not forgotten.

You are not the one piece that accidentally got pushed under the couch (or thrown in an envelope by your youth leader).

From the very beginning, you were included.

Before you were born, God knew you and set you apart.

You've always had a place in the picture He's putting together.

Not because of what you do, how you look, how incredibly awesome you are, but because of who He is and how He deeply loves you!

Hold up the missing pieces from the puzzles.

SAY: Look at these pieces.

They might have seemed small or easy to overlook.

But without them, the pictures couldn't be completed.

That's how God sees you!

You are essential to what He's doing.

You've been included.

God doesn't just create people and hope they find their way into His plans.

He chooses us, calls us, and includes us all!

So, to finish things off tonight, I'm going to hand you the missing puzzle pieces.

Hand the pieces to the teams.

SAY: As your team finishes the puzzle, I want you to see something bigger than just a game.

Let it remind you of this: God's picture isn't complete without you!

You belong and you are included.

And since it appears that you will all finish your puzzles at basically the same time, everyone gets the prize!

You can grab your prize after we pray.

Pray for the group before dismissing students to small group.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you most in tonight's message?
2. Has there been a time when you've felt left out? What emotions did that stir in you?
3. Let's read **Jeremiah 1:5** again. How would you explain being "set apart"?
4. In **1 Peter 2:9**, we're called "God's special possession." What do you think that says about how God sees us?
5. In **Verse 10**, it also says we have received mercy, when we hadn't before. What do you think that means?
6. Do you ever struggle to believe that you're included in God's big picture? Why or why not?
7. If God has included you in His plan, what might that mean for how you live right now in your family, friend group, or sports teams?
8. What are some things that make it hard to feel like you belong?
9. What's one truth from tonight's lesson you want to remember this week?
10. How can we encourage each other that we are all important pieces in God's picture this week?