

SUB TOPIC THEME:
Loss Through Divorce

Lesson Objective:

The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand that, while divorce happens, it does not have to define their lives.

Divorce, just like many other things in life, can become a way that we define ourselves.

Who are you? Someone who comes from a broken home?

That shouldn't be the way that

we define ourselves. God has given each of us a new name as his followers, and our desire is to help students discover this truth and live it out.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. No technical equipment necessary.
2. Bring the Student Response sheets, make sure to print enough.
3. Make sure to bring Bibles with you, one for each student, but also encourage students to bring their own.

Instructive Prep:

Throughout this time we want to help students discover the ways that they define themselves. Many times when a student goes through the process of divorce they begin to define themselves by this event in their lives. It becomes all that they focus on, all they can see when they look at themselves and their lives. You see, divorce may not directly involve students as they aren't the ones filing for divorce papers, but students are affected in huge ways by their parents' decision to get a divorce.

The primary way that students are affected is by loss. Loss of financial stability, loss of friends if they have to change schools, loss of the familiar and many times, as we will focus on today, loss of a parent. While unlike some of the other subtopics covered, the parent who is lost is still very much alive and well, but the student does not get to see them as often as they used to. The student does not get to talk to them as much, probably doesn't live in the same house anymore, and, in some cases, maybe not even the same state. How is a student to deal with divorce when it was their father they were close to and now, it is their father that is gone? Maybe they weren't close, but now do they wish they hadn't wasted the time that they had?

Then other times when dealing with divorce, students lose the parent that they are living with as well. Depression, reshaping of identity, self-discovery and new sense of purpose are all things that either parent could be going through personally. Remember this is probably new for the parent too. Now the mother or father that your student thought they knew is rediscovering themselves, reinventing themselves and this can be confusing and hard for the student who may be going through that themselves. The goal here is to help students realize that, even with all the craziness they may feel at home, God is a constant for them and they don't ultimately have to be defined by these things taking place.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: learn, feel, do and what next. The goal is for students to learn something new, connect at an appropriate emotional level and participate in doing something during the study. Finally, the "What Next" section focuses on a change in attitude, and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember that the movement is toward spiritual and emotional transformation in students' lives, so the application section based on God's truth is really the crux of the time together!

Intro:

Are your parents going through a divorce? Maybe yours aren't, but chances are you know someone who is or has. Even if you aren't personally going through one with your family, pay attention; this may help you understand what your friends are dealing with too. If your parents are going through a divorce, listen up.

Things at your house are probably a little crazy right now. Maybe your life feels like it's falling apart, but most of all maybe you feel like you're losing a parent. Loss is hard and right now loss is all around you. Selling the family home? Two new places? One? Dog staying with Dad instead of with the kids? Mom living with someone else now instead of you and Dad? New School? Split time? Did one of your parents just disappear on you? Even though they promised they wouldn't... Maybe one of the hardest parts about divorce is loss of what you believed your family was. Nobody pictures or hopes for divorce. It doesn't work that way. Maybe you never believed your family was the Jones, Cleavers or Kardashians, but you had an idea of what your family was and now everything has come crashing down around you. I'm sorry. I truly am.

However, maybe for you, that's not even the hardest part. For you, the hardest part is losing one or both of your parents, either physically or emotionally.

Intro Story:

When I think about divorce and the struggles that come with it, I think of my friend Maz. I met Maz my freshman year of college. We were both new on campus and we just connected right away. We did a lot together. When he asked me if I wanted to

join him on Sunday for church a few weeks later, I was surprised. I hadn't realized just how much we had in common, a brother in Christ. Our friendship just grew from there.

About three months into the school year Maz and I were walking over to the gym. I was giving him a hard time about something when he said something kind of weird, "Hey, can I talk to you about something?" We had been hanging out a lot, a bunch of us, but Maz had never said this before, so I listened up. He went on to tell me that his parents had just filed for a divorce. He told me that his dad had called him last week, admitted to Maz that he had an affair, and now Maz's mom wanted out.

As I watched my friend throughout the year I saw him struggle a lot. Divorce is *hard*. It was especially hard for Maz. By the time he was able to go home for Christmas, his parents' divorce was finalized. He went home and nothing was the same. Two of his little brothers handled it okay, but the third really struggled. He wanted to be there for his brothers, but wasn't sure how. By Easter, his dad was getting re-married to another woman. Maz's dad, someone he looked up to and talked to regularly, was slipping away. His dad wasn't there for him anymore to help him, offer him advice the way that he used to with this new woman in the picture. And finally, Maz, maybe similar to you, was in a new place. He didn't know a lot of people on a deep level yet and so he struggled for a while, feeling like he couldn't share what was going on in his family. It was also hard for him because his three younger brothers were home, states away dealing with everything while he was away at school.

At first Maz was a little angry about everything. His dad was his role model, he looked up to him in so many ways and now he felt like he was losing his father and his brother. Maz struggled internally a lot. It was hard for him coming home and having everything different. Hard to process all of what happened. Hard not to blame himself. Hard to accept this new woman. Hard not to be mad at his mom for insisting on a divorce after so many years and one mistake. Hard not to be disappointed in his father for the mistake. Hard not to be angry at his dad for giving in and following through with a divorce. Maz struggled academically that year and also struggled with depression. He wanted to understand the divorce and know why it happened. He hoped things would go back to the way things were, but they didn't and that was hard.

Even with all these struggles, Maz didn't let the divorce his parents were going through define him. He could have; it would have been easy to, but he didn't, and he grew spiritually more than he ever had. He deepened his relationship with Christ in ways he had never experienced before. Grew deep and meaningful friendships with people who walked through the divorce with him and he became a rock for his three little brothers who weren't dealing with it well. He listened to them and pointed them toward God.

I learned a lot from Maz. I had never seen someone hurt so much, but love and depend on God anyway. I had never seen someone go through such a trial and not let it define them and shape them in negative ways. Maz took what life had thrown at him and

didn't let it name him, but threw the tough situation over his shoulder for God to catch and take care of. Too often we forget the power we have walking with u;, we can lean into God. While we may struggle, learn from Maz and don't let the struggle and loss you feel define who you are.

Intro Questions:

1. Have you ever been in a similar place as Maz? What did you do? How did it define you?
2. How can you turn to God when facing tough circumstances?

Personal Reflection Questions:

As a small group, give your students some time to look over each of these questions. When ready, take some time to go over each of them. Remember that students may be hesitant to share, but also remember that when we share with each other God helps us to heal a little more.

1. How did you feel when you found out your parents were getting a divorce?
2. Did you have someone who helped you work through your parents' separation and feelings of loss? If so, who was it? How did they help? (See Student Response Sheet)
3. Since things have changed, what are different things you have learned about yourself, your family and your friends? (See Student Response Sheet)
4. What has been the most encouraging thing for you throughout this time? How have you been able to make sure the divorce does not define you?
5. Write your own questions:

Central Bible Passages:

When we look at this passage we see something incredible. You see, when Jacob was born, he was a twin, the younger of two boys. His father Isaac named the first of his sons Esau, then Jacob was named. What is interesting is that the biblical meaning of Jacob is Supplanter, in other words 'deceiver.'

Can you imagine that! Being named a deceiver? Trickster? Imagine meeting kids at school, “Hey, my name is Deceiver, I’m going to lie to you and trick you, take advantage of you.” Not so good. When we look at Scripture, we see that his name defined him for a long time. He stole from his older brother, tricked his father and then had to run for his life. Maybe you feel like Jacob did. Your parents messed up getting divorced, and it has defined your life. In everything that you do, your parents divorce affects you. Remains of loss surround you and you feel like you can’t escape it. Know this.

Just like Jacob, God does not want you to define yourself by that. In this passage we see God give Jacob a new name, a new way to define himself, and God has that for you too.

Genesis 32:22-30

Jacob Wrestles at Peniel

That same night Jacob got up, took his two wives, his two concubines, and his eleven children, and crossed the Jabbok River. After he had sent them across, he also sent across all that he owned, but he stayed behind, alone.

Then a man came and wrestled with him until just before daybreak. When the man saw that he was not winning the struggle, he hit Jacob on the hip, and it was thrown out of joint. The man said, “Let me go; daylight is coming.”

“I won’t, unless you bless me,” Jacob answered.

“What is your name?” the man asked.

“Jacob,” he answered.

The man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob. You have struggled with God and with men, and you have won; so your name will be Israel.”

Jacob said, “Now tell me your name.”

But he answered, “Why do you want to know my name?” Then he blessed Jacob.

Jacob said, “I have seen God face-to-face, and I am still alive”; so he named the place Peniel.

Life Application:

1. How do you think Jacob may have felt considering the meaning of his name? How did it affect his life? You may need to learn more about him to know the full extent. His story starts in Genesis 25. (See Student Response Sheet)
2. Look at your life. Do you ever feel like you're wrestling with God? What are struggling through? Why are you struggling with it? Do you recognize God's presence as more than a force working against you, but as one that wants to give you a new name? How do you see it in your life?
3. What is the new name that God has in store for you? Do you need reminding that you are his beloved? That you are his child? Loved deeply by him? Do you need a reminder that he cares for you, has a plan for you? Or maybe you need a reminder of hope. Similar to Jacob, God has another name for you. While Jacob lived out his name as deceiver early on in his life, he also lived out the new name that God gave him. What name is God giving you today? Why? (See Student Response Sheet)
4. Sometimes we feel a lot of different emotions, but we aren't sure what is what or why we feel the way we do. It may feel strange at first, but write out some of the things that you feel like you lost through your parents divorce. Part of healing is grieving the loss of these things. (See Student Response Sheet)
5. Have you talked to anyone about the divorce, the feelings of loss that you are experiencing? Find a friend you trust and confide in them. Maybe your list is part of that conversation with them. Divorce is hard, but know that you don't have to go through it alone. There is healing when we share with one another. (See Student Response Sheet)

6. Write your own challenge:

STUDENT RESPONSE:

Losing A Parent: Loss Through Divorce

1. Did you have someone who helped you work through your parents' separation and feelings of loss? Who was it? How did they help?
2. Since things have changed, what are different things you have learned about yourself, your family and your friends?
3. How do you think Jacob may have felt considering the meaning of his name? How did it affect his life? You may need to learn more about him to know the full extent. His story starts in Genesis 25.
4. What is the new name that God has in store for you? Do you need reminding that you are his beloved? That you are his child? Loved deeply by him? Do you need a reminder that he cares for you, has a plan for you? Or maybe you need a reminder of hope. Similar to Jacob, God has another name for you. While Jacob lived out his name as deceiver early on in his life, he also lived out the new name that God gave him. What name is God giving you today? Why?

5. Sometimes we feel a lot of different emotions, but we aren't sure what is what or why we feel the way we do. It may feel strange at first, but write out some of the things that you feel like you lost through your parents' divorce. Part of healing is grieving the loss of these things.

6. Have you talked to anyone about the divorce, the feelings of loss that you are experiencing? Find a friend you trust and confide in them. Maybe your list is part of that conversation with them. Divorce is hard, but know that you don't have to go through it alone. There is healing when we share with one another.

7. Write down Group Members Prayer Requests: