

SUBTOPIC THEME:
Belonging in the Cloud

LESSON OBJECTIVE:

To encourage students to reflect on their past online interactions through the framework provided by scripture and begin a dialogue about the influential factors in our online lives. By pinpointing the things of this world that keep us from living according to a standard not of this world, students will begin to develop resilience against conformity and courage to live a life honoring God. In order to empower them to have an online presence that goes against the crowd, there must be a foundation of security in their identity through Jesus Christ and in his great love for us and the world.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Straws or sticks of many different lengths
2. A copy of the *Dead Poet's Society* would be useful but not necessary
3. Internet connection for playing clips
4. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below)
5. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
6. A passion to see students hearts transformed!

Instructive Prep:

Being online is second nature to teens these days. You would be hard pressed to find one that doesn't even use email to communicate. So what does belonging look like when using secondary communication? The best answer would be - convoluted. It's a place where everyone seems to be included but not everyone is accepted. It's a place that you see harsh truths about how many people are interested in you or like what you have to offer. Knowing how to connect and communicate online is something everyone is doing but few are actually accomplishing.

This can be a stressful issue for any teen but for Military teens who are often separated from people that matter to them, it can be overwhelming. And it's tempting to conform and act like everyone else is online and say what you think, others' feelings be damned. But Jesus calls us to a higher path. He tells us not to conform to what others are doing but instead forge a new path! He wants us to show his love and power and presence to the whole world. So encourage your

students to talk about their experiences online and what pushes them to act one way or another, and how and why choosing to follow God is ultimately more rewarding.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: learn, feel, do and what next. The goals are for students to (1) learn something new, (2) connect at an emotional level to some degree, and (3) participate in doing something during the study (like writing a resolution or making a list of goals). Finally, (4) the what next focuses on a change in attitude and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember, we are moving towards spiritual and emotional transformation in kids' lives, so the application section based on God's truth is really the crux of the time together! Have fun and lead well.

INTRO:

Put away your phone and listen up! Did I get you? I probably got one or two of you. That's what our lives are like now. We have technology constantly at our fingertips and that's not a bad thing. Being able to keep in touch with people all over the world or discover new ideas and beauty in the world is an amazing thing. Technology is a tool and like all tools it can be used for good or for evil. Nowadays nearly everyone is online in some way or another. Chances are you are probably online in multiple ways - Facebook, Hulu, Pinterest, Vine, Grooveshark, Skype and on and on. So how do you ensure that who you are online is consistent with whom Christ has called you to be. How do you keep from conforming and instead go against the crowd. Let's keep going to find out more about how to be yourself and a messenger of God's love to others.

INTRO STORY:

Trailer:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrBk780aOis>

Class Time Compilation:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FoCgROXHE8o>

Conformity Clip:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnAyr0kWRGE>

Oh Captain, My Captain Scene:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJsjNNp0foE>

The story told in *Dead Poet's Society* is a coming of age tale with romance and betrayal and secrets and tragedy. It's about a group of boys who have been raised to excel and conform. They attend one of the top schools in the nation, famed for turning out presidents and powerful leaders. When a new teacher comes to the school to teach poetry, the boys lives and their perception of the world is completely revolutionized. While the movie's message talks about beauty and free-thinking and seizing the day, the main thing encouraged by their teacher is to not conform. He constantly challenges them and pushes them to break out of the structure they have been raised in and look inside of themselves for more. He encourages them to look at the world through their own eyes and not through the framework that has been set up for them.

If you watch the movie it seems impossible to not be caught up in the spirit of Carpe Diem! It's exciting and this film is highly celebrated for it's message and emotions. That's because of God. Do you see that? The light inside us and the wonders to be discovered in the world have an addictive, contagious effect on us because they are pieces of God that are shining out at us. You have it inside you and Jesus calls us to let it shine out to everyone! In Matthew 5:14-16 says:

“You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead it is put on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.”

As you go online and post pictures or comment on other people's statuses, consider what things come from that light inside of you and what is conforming to this world's version of acceptable. Even rebelling is conforming if you do it in a wordly way. If you truly want to follow Christ's example and go against the flow, follow his instructions in Roman 12:1&2 and refuse to be like everyone else:

“So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. ² Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.”

INTRO QUESTIONS:

1. What part of the movie/clips struck you the most?
2. Which character do you identify with the most? Why?

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGE

Consider why you have trouble being God honoring in your daily interactions online. Perhaps conformity is a huge factor in that struggle for you. Maybe it's not. As you talk with your group about what influences your behavior, keep this verse in mind. It really just sums up the way things are when it comes to living our lives by the Lord's standards or the Worlds.

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father.¹⁶ Everything that belongs to the world—what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of—none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. ¹⁷ The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live forever.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

To determine in what order you should answer, snag a piece of each person's hair and go from shortest to longest.

1. Which of the verses stood out to you the most? Why?
2. What are the 5 biggest influences on how you act online? Circle whichever ones you think are good influences (use student response sheet)
3. Can you remember a time that you chose not to conform to what everyone else does online? What happened? (use student response sheet)
4. If you were a student in Mr. Keating's class, how do you think you would have responded to his methods? (use student response sheet)

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. Make a list of 8 things you have done or are doing online that are not God honoring. Be brutally honest here. Think about your words, the videos, what you use to describe yourself, comments you may have left, people you deleted, etc. Now pick 2 or 3 (try to go for the bigger harder ones but only share what you feel comfortable with) and talk with your group about why you were motivated to do these things and what happened. Don't end the discussion without a decision for

action being made, even if it's just to pray that the Lord soften your will and give you a desire to live for him. (use student response sheet)

2. Think about this coming week and the ways you will interact with others online. Choose one thing to PERMANENTLY delete from your behavior and resolve as a group to do this. Outline a plan of action and also set up accountability amongst the group. Don't just talk, do! (use student response sheet)

STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. WHAT ARE THE 5 BIGGEST INFLUENCES ON HOW YOU ACT ONLINE? CIRCLE WHICHEVER ONES YOU THINK ARE GOOD INFLUENCES.

2. CAN YOU REMEMBER A TIME THAT YOU CHOSE NOT TO CONFORM TO WHAT EVERYONE ELSE DOES ONLINE? WHAT HAPPENED?

3. IF YOU WERE A STUDENT IN MR. KEATING'S CLASS, HOW DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD HAVE RESPONDED TO HIS METHODS?

4. MAKE A LIST OF 8 THINGS YOU HAVE DONE OR ARE DOING ONLINE THAT ARE NOT GOD HONORING. BE BRUTALLY HONEST HERE. THINK ABOUT YOUR WORDS, THE VIDEOS, WHAT YOU USE TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF, COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE LEFT, PEOPLE YOU DELETED, ETC. NOW PICK 2 OR 3 (TRY TO GO FOR THE BIGGER HARDER ONES BUT ONLY SHARE WHAT YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE) AND TALK WITH YOUR GROUP ABOUT WHY YOU WERE MOTIVATED TO DO THESE THINGS AND WHAT HAPPENED. DON'T END THE DISCUSSION WITHOUT A DECISION FOR ACTION BEING MADE, EVEN IF ITS' JUST TO PRAY THAT THE LORD SOFTEN YOUR WILL AND GIVE YOU A DESIRE TO LIVE FOR HIM.

5. THINK ABOUT HIS COMING WEEK AND THE WAYS THAT YOU WILL INTERACT WITH OTHERS ONLINE. CHOOSE ONE THING TO **PERMANENTLY** DELETE FROM YOUR BEHAVIOUR AND RESOLVE AS A GROUP TO DO THIS. OUTLINE A PLAN OF ACTION AND ALSO SET UP ACCOUNTABILITY AMONGST THE GROUP. DON'T JUST TALK, DO.