

SUB TOPIC THEME:
CHAIN OF COMMAND:
what's my role

LESSON OBJECTIVE:

Families will differ in their structure, discipline, and values. But all families need these things to function well as families. It's the nature of families to provide these basic life elements, and if these are missing or weakened (possibly due to deployments, divorce, over-dominating parent, disobedient/undermining children), then everyone in the family suffers. Ultimately, a loving chain of command is what God desires - for our benefit and our sakes!



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Computer or internet connection to watch the YouTube video
2. Pieces of paper with differing military rank on them.
3. Some paper, markers, pens, etc.
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 transformed in their positive influence on friends!

Instructive Prep:

Military families will vary in their structure and function like all other families. Their uniqueness comes in at least two ways:

- (1) Military families ALL live within a military chain of command; therefore this form of governance is inherent in their lives and decisions.
- (2) Today's military families are exposed to high levels of stress with the accelerated OPTEMPO and the frequency of separations and deployments. Thus, family structures are under a constant state of flux, which may strengthen or diminish the family chain of command.

This session is designed to look at the ways teens can understand what the structure, discipline, and values are in their families, and how the chain of

command works or doesn't work. Helping kids grasp what God says about this order within a family, and how their very important role as obedient children brings stability to the family system. Some students will be given more responsibility in families when the military member is not present, so some discussion should acknowledge that aspect as well.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: *learn, feel, do, and what next*. We want students to learn something new, connect at an emotional level to some degree, and participate in doing something during the study (like making a hand gesture as a weapon). Finally, 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 toward 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:

Sometimes as teens we are getting pretty tired of being told what to do. We believe that it is time for us to make our own decisions, and to some extent, that's very appropriate. After all, growing in maturity means becoming independent of our families as we become our own person. Military families face some exceptional challenges and opportunities with high rates of deployments and separation as well as military members reintegration back into the family unit. This dynamic can create all sorts of issues for a teen trying to figure out where they fit in the family. The story below identifies some of those development issues and ends with a specific look at a familiar military family.

INTRO STORY:

I remember standing on the step looking down into our family room. My mom and dad and younger sister were sitting at the table having just finished dinner. Everybody had their assumed seats at the table. Now that I think about it, I can't remember those seats ever being 'assigned,' but we all knew who sat where during meals and we didn't even think to violate it. I wonder how different life would be for me if I had sat for years where my brother sat? Would I understand life differently? My seat was to the right of my dad who sat at the far end of the table away from the kitchen. Mom sat at the other end, closest to the kitchen, and that made sense since she was up and down during meals going back and forth from the kitchen to the table. My younger sister sat to my right, and my older brother sat across from me and to the left of Dad.

As I stood on the step, Dad was in his normal spot at the far end of the table. I was mad for some reason that escapes me now, but I have always been a bit emotionally hot-headed, so who knows what set me off this time! Did I mention that I was a senior in high school? Yeah, I was pretty full of myself having been the starting tackle on a championship football team that year and having received a four-year Army ROTC scholarship for college (I had decided on Virginia Tech and their Corps of Cadets).

So, there I stood, angry and vindictive; I couldn't wait to be out on my own and from under this man's rules! I puffed myself up and declared, "Well in a few months, you won't get to boss me around, and I won't owe you a thing!" (referring to my full-ride scholarship and my dad not having to pay for my college) I turned and strutted away with what must have looked like a scene out of a bad movie. My dad did not challenge me nor did he ever bring it up. I think he knew that in a few short months, there would be a whole lot of people telling me what to do and making darn sure I followed their rules! Only this grand exchange I was making from moving out of my family's chain of command into the chain of command of the Corps of Cadets meant that 19-year olds were now superintending my every move in life! There were many days I longed for the freedoms I had at home and the jokester role I played within my family. And another thing; I grew up, and as I did, I realized the *huge debt* I owed my dad and my mom (and sister and brother to a lesser extent) for providing a stable, good family for me to flourish in. It wasn't perfect (whatever that looks like), but the structure and the discipline and the values were foundational and strong. I look back with sorrow that I was so self-centered at the time that I couldn't see the grander 'otherness' of my family.

The structure I have seen in families since then certainly varies a lot, but one of my favorite scenes for military families comes from the movie "The Great Santini." Colonel Meachum is a Marine fighter pilot who is raising his children under a military chain of command structure as his family structure. This scene may be more familiar to some of you than you might like to admit. Like it or hate it, you'll hear the structure, discipline and values are clearly (very clearly) defined!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvnglzH0u7E>

(As an aside, you might take a look at some of the comments that appear below this YouTube video. Don't let it distract from the study, but there are some strong feelings expressed there that kids may identify with. More of this will be addressed in the sub topic on "Fathers.")

Intro Questions:

1. What are some of your first impressions when you heard the story of the senior who told his dad he was glad he was leaving and he wouldn't owe him anything?

2. Identify some things that stood out to you in the video clip of the Meachum 'Hogs.'

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Use the pieces of paper with military rank on them to determine the order that kids will answer the next questions. Have everybody pick a piece of folded paper with a rank on it, then the person with the highest rank gets to 'control' the order of who answers by selecting. Then collect them and do it again. There will be a sense of chain of command and the power it brings from the exercise. At some point, after a few questions, you might address the ways that the students have lorded power over their peers (or not), and how that feels to be the one in charge. What if someone doesn't want to obey? How might that translate into the family dynamic?

1. If you were to give a title to what you think the *first* story is all about, what would that title be? (see Student Response sheet)
2. How would you have responded if you were the dad sitting at the table? What do you think might have been going through his head at the time?
3. Have you ever had a similar incident – a challenge to the family chain of command – happen in your family? Describe it and what happened.
4. *The Great Santini* offers a window into a military family. How much do you relate to this video scene? Does structure like this bring you more stress or provide an environment that reduces your stress?
5. What's one way your family is similar and one way your family is different from the Meachums.
6. How would you describe the chain of command in your family? How does it change when the military parent is not there (ie. Deployed, at a school, etc.)? (see Student Response sheet)
7. Write your own questions: _____

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES

The following Scripture passage offers a biblical look at God's chain of command for the family. It is clear that members of the family are given certain roles to play that assist the family in its healthy, godly function.

Colossians 3:18-21

¹⁸Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, for that is what you should do as Christians. ¹⁹Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰Children, it is your Christian duty to obey your parents always, for that is what pleases God. ²¹Parents, do not irritate your children, or they will become discouraged.

Comment: *What naturally occurs when we read a short passage like this is to begin focusing on the other person's role and how they are NOT doing it well. Challenge students to focus on their role and what the results are of doing their part correctly. You may choose to discuss how really simple this structure is, but how we tend to complicate it by our actions.*

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. Using the idea of a family dinner table as a chain of command, have students draw the table, the placements of family members and structure of decision making that goes on in their family. Make a second drawing based on what changes during a deployment. Have them consider sharing that with a family member. Discuss it together and have them declare how each 'table' feels to them. (use Student response sheet)
2. Using the Scripture passage from Colossians as a template, have each student write out their attitudes toward obedience. When is it easy and when is it hard? What have they seen as the results of their obedience AND disobedience and its effects on the family? Do they find it easier to disobey when the 'disciplinarian' is not around? How might they address their attitudes toward disobedience? (use Student response sheet)
3. Write your own challenge: _____

STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. GIVE A TITLE TO THE FIRST STORY:

2. VERBALLY DESCRIBE THE CHAIN OF COMMAND IN YOUR FAMILY, THEN DESCRIBE ANY WAYS IT CHANGES WHEN A MILITARY PARENT IS DEPLOYED:

3. DRAW YOUR FAMILY TABLE AS A CHAIN OF COMMAND WHEN EVERYONE IS PRESENT AND DRAW IT AGAIN WHEN A PARENT IS DEPLOYED. PUT A STAR BY THE ONE YOU PREFER.

4. WRITE OUT YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD OBEDIENCE.