

MOVIE: “Over The Hedge”**Subtopic Theme:**

Finding A Team

Lesson Objective:

Finding and joining a community or team can be difficult to do, especially when we are always finding ourselves in new places. But sometimes it’s hard not only because we are in a new place, but also because we don’t understand what it takes to be a part of a community. The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand some of what it takes to join a community, what is expected and what is desired.

**Intro to the Movie:***Over The Hedge*

According to IMDB.com

Traveling raccoon con artist, RJ, arrives in a woods outside a human city in the Midwest, excited about the wonders that living near humans can bring hungry animals. What he finds, however, is an Amish-like community that is deathly afraid of humans, after their leader, Vern the tortoise (Shandling), has an encounter with human boys that terrifies him. Encouraged by RJ, however, the animals slowly venture over the hedge that separates them from the brand new suburban development that appeared over the winter while they were sleeping, and what RJ shows them is a whole new world where humans leave tin cans full of fish and other food in big canisters, ripe for the taking. As they get closer and closer to humans, however, their comfortable lives in the woods appear to be threatened...

The 3D Lenses

When RJ met Vern and his other friends, he realized he could use them to pay back the debt that he owed the bear; he just had to play his cards right. So RJ came in with slick tricks and flashy moves to win their favor right away,;but that wasn’t who he was, and the other animals soon discovered that. Isn’t that what we try to do sometimes when we find ourselves in a new place? We act like someone we are not in hopes of gaining their favor? But the truth is, to really belong, we need to be ourselves as we can see from RJ’s example in this movie.

Discussion Group Questions:

1. What do you think stopped RJ from being honest with Vern and the other animals from the beginning?
2. Maybe you relate more to Vern. What could Vern have done instead of just listening to his tingling tail to really welcome RJ and know his heart?
3. Following blindly can be dangerous! Were there warning signs that RJ would bring trouble that the other animals missed?
4. In the end, what made the difference for both Vern and RJ? What had to happen for them to accept one another, look out for one another and be friends?
5. What are things you can take away from their example? What can you learn from them? How did they learn to work together and how did they become a true community?

Group Input:

Leader-solicited responses from the large group on reactions to some of the questions.

Gathering of ideas and themes recognized in the discussion groups with a focus on guiding the audience toward the main objective: *Finding a joining a community or team can be difficult to do, especially when we are always finding ourselves in new places. But sometimes it's hard not only because we are in a new place, but also because we don't understand what it takes to be a part of a community. The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand some of what it takes to join a community, what is expected and what is desired.*

Bullet Objective:

Put this summary section in your own words, but here are some ideas you can use:

When we look at the movie *Over The Hedge* we see some very lovable characters learn some hard lessons. RJ made some big mistakes, messed with the wrong people or in his case bears. He was on the run, trying to make up for past actions to spare his own life. When RJ met Vern and his friends, he wasn't in a very good place, but RJ didn't make it easy on himself either. The first thing RJ tried to do was take advantage of those new animals around him because he thought what he had was superior knowledge. Then he tried to win them over, not by being himself, but with flashy moves and tricks. Vern

knew something was up, but he wasn't able to figure out exactly what it was for a while!

The thing is though, in the end, they all end up being friends, being able to help one another and working together so that everyone benefits. My question is, what changed!?

I think the first thing that made a difference was everyone learning the truth about RJ. Sometimes it may feel like you can't tell anyone what is really going on because nobody would understand or want to help, but the truth is nobody can help you if they don't know! I love what Vern says near the end—if RJ had just asked, they all would have helped. Isn't that so true of our own lives? We put up these walls, try to protect ourselves and the whole time you end up just shutting out those who want to help you.

Maybe for you, being in a new place again, PCSing again is hard. You long to belong somewhere, but aren't sure how to or where to begin. I believe the first thing you have to do is learn to be yourself. I get it; it's hard; school can be brutal, but when we are true to who God made us to be it makes a difference in our lives, and people notice and want to know more. Just look at this Old Testament example from Daniel, chapter one.

Daniel and his friends have just been taken captive by a foreign king. Everything is a little chaotic; then they get selected to live in the Royal Palace. Imagine that happening to you! It could be easy to slip into whatever persona they expect from you; it's *the king* of the nation that just took over your whole land! Daniel and his friends didn't do that though. They had courage, were faithful to God by still obeying his rules, and God blessed them. Not only were they accepted, but they were sought after, the wisest of the wise; and God blessed them greatly, all because they were faithful to him by being themselves. Check it out!

Daniel 1

The Young Men at Nebuchadnezzar's Court

In the third year that Jehoiakim was king of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia attacked Jerusalem and surrounded the city. The Lord let him capture King Jehoiakim and seize some of the Temple treasures. He took some prisoners back with him to the temple of his gods in Babylon, and put the captured treasures in the temple storerooms.

The king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief official, to select from among the Israelite exiles some young men of the royal family and of the noble families. They had to be handsome, intelligent, well-trained, quick to learn, and free from physical defects, so that they would be qualified to serve in the royal court. Ashpenaz was to teach them to read and write the Babylonian language. The king also gave orders that every day they were to be given the same food and wine as the members of the royal court. After three years of this training

they were to appear before the king. Among those chosen were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, all of whom were from the tribe of Judah. The chief official gave them new names: Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Daniel made up his mind not to let himself become ritually unclean by eating the food and drinking the wine of the royal court, so he asked Ashpenaz to help him, and God made Ashpenaz sympathetic to Daniel. Ashpenaz, however, was afraid of the king, so he said to Daniel, “The king has decided what you are to eat and drink, and if you don't look as fit as the other young men, he may kill me.”

So Daniel went to the guard whom Ashpenaz had placed in charge of him and his three friends. “Test us for ten days,” he said. “Give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare us with the young men who are eating the food of the royal court, and base your decision on how we look.”

He agreed to let them try it for ten days. When the time was up, they looked healthier and stronger than all those who had been eating the royal food. So from then on the guard let them continue to eat vegetables instead of what the king provided.

God gave the four young men knowledge and skill in literature and philosophy. In addition, he gave Daniel skill in interpreting visions and dreams.

At the end of the three years set by the king, Ashpenaz took all the young men to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them all, and Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah impressed him more than any of the others. So they became members of the king's court. No matter what question the king asked or what problem he raised, these four knew ten times more than any fortuneteller or magician in his whole kingdom. Daniel remained at the royal court until Cyrus, the emperor of Persia, conquered Babylon.

Know who God made you to be, who you are; be true to that. Entering a new place, looking for places to belong can be hard, but it's easier when you know who you are because then you know the compromises you are willing to make and which ones you are not willing to make. Sure, for Daniel and his friends it sounds like it was just giving up meat and eating vegetables, but it was more than that. It wasn't that they couldn't eat meat, but Jewish dietary laws forbid them from eating meat prepared in a way that left blood in it. Also some of it may have been used in sacrifices made to Babylonian gods, so Daniel and his friends did not want to be disloyal to God by eating it. They were faithful and stayed true to themselves which meant eating vegetables in this case. God is asking you to be faithful too.

Wherever you go there will be people who try to bring you down, have you try new

things, and try to convince you that these things are okay. Sometimes it will be okay, but often it will not be. Remember Daniel in this case and the example he set for us. We all want to belong, to join a community, but you don't want to join a community that makes you compromise who you are and who God has made you to be.

Know your values; stand firm and find belonging where people love you for who you are and care for you and support you like RJ found when he learned to be himself.

Challenge:

1. Answer these questions on a sheet of paper, in a prayer journal or something similar. This is for you. 1. Who are you? 2. Who has God created you to be? 3. What does calling yourself a follower of Christ mean for your life when looking for community? 4. What does it look like to be true to yourself? 5. What are you not willing to compromise on? It may sound silly or obvious now, but when you're in the situation, if you haven't thought about it, and even if you have, lines can be blurred.
2. What do you desire from the community that you are seeking out? The challenge here is to know what you are looking for so that you can find a place you belong. RJ didn't know what he was really looking for; he thought he was content with his family of one, but it turns out, he wasn't. What are you looking for?
3. What do you have to offer the group you belong to? RJ offered knowledge of new things; Daniel offered great wisdom and knowledge for the king. What has God gifted inside of you to help out the community you are seeking or already belong to?

Pray for God's purpose and love to put it into action and transform lives. Remind them of the online personal journey at ReZilient Life for further involvement with this topic of Belonging: Finding/Joining Your Team!