

SUBTOPIC THEME:

Finding A Team

LESSON OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of this lesson is to help students find their team. For many students they may already feel established in a community that they enjoy, feel like they already belong, but have they really found their community yet? Too often students settle for relationships that don't bring them the true depth of joy that belonging can give a person. How do you move a community to that place? That is the question we will explore here.

**Set Up Info:***Supplies Needed:*

1. No equipment necessary.
2. Make sure to print off enough Student Response Sheets ahead of time.
3. Bring Bibles to meeting and encourage students to bring their own

Instructive Prep:

Finding a place to belong can be easy or hard. For military teens who are moving more often than others it may be hard and scary, or it could be easy because they have done it so many times. Our hope is that they do find community and it isn't a challenge for them each time, but finding community is different from finding life-giving community that gives you a feeling of belonging. Your students may be plugged in, but how deep are those relationships? How can they be made deeper and what might be stopping them from growing deep roots?

Each of these are questions students will have the opportunity to wrestle with throughout this small group session. Our hope is that you will be able to guide them through these questions and facilitate deeper discussion to help give students a jumping off point.

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:

Belonging. What does it mean to belong, to a place, a group? Thefreedictionary.com defines it as, “acceptance as a natural member or part,” so how do we facilitate this in our lives?

For some of you, you may already have a community that you belong to. You hear that definition and you get it; it is natural, you are a part of something and you enjoy it. My question is, can it go deeper? What would it take for these friendships to go deeper and for these relationships to bring you a deeper joy than you ever could have imagined?

It’s hard right? You make these great friends, you *know* each other, but then you move and it’s okay. You try to stay in contact. It’s hard, you do for a while and then they are gone and you have a new group. You don’t go quite as deep as before, but they are good and they bring you joy. Then you move again. You sort of stay in touch, make new friends, they become a past time, something to keep from boredom. You may not even realize the road that you have slipped down, but if you think about it, you realize I’m right. Then you think back to those first friendships you treasured. How did you get there, what did it take? How can you have that again? In this time we will talk about actions you can take to find true belonging and joy in the relationships that you have today. Being in relationship is easy; being in life-giving relationship where truth can be spoken, that can be hard, but it also is good, true belonging.

INTRO STORY:*Short Story #1: Brandi*

Brandi had been friends with this group for the past two years. They were fun, did a lot together, but she still felt this emptiness in her heart. She still desired for something more, but she wasn’t sure what it was.

After praying about this for a couple of months she shared these feelings with a friend of hers. This was probably her closest friend, but she had never shared anything like this with her. She was nervous to admit her feelings. It felt vulnerable; she felt like she was exposing her soul, but after all that time talking to God about her struggles all she could think about was this friend. She didn’t know why, didn’t know what it meant, but decided to share with her.

Brandi and her friend sat down for coffee one day and she just shared her heart with her friend. She shared that she loved hanging out, but she had been feeling this emptiness that

she couldn't explain. To her surprise, her friend started to tear up. Brandi's friend had been feeling the same way.

That day the girls realized that what they had been missing wasn't good friends, but intimate friends. Friends you share your thoughts and feelings with, friends that meet you where you are and ask the hard or awkward questions.

Short Story #2: Tyson

Tyson was new to the area; his family had just PCSed, but he was feeling pretty good. He had made the football team at his new high school and, being a decent player, he had been able to make friends easily. They harassed each other going into practice, worked hard during practice and then hung out for a little bit after, laughing about things that had happened or recovering from a tough practice.

Tyson was pleased he had transitioned so well. Sometimes his parents worried about him, but this time their worries had proven to be pointless. As football season wound down, he was able to breathe a little more. He got home earlier and was able to have a little more free time. He had two months off before winter workouts would begin, but he was sure he could manage them. A couple months after the season ended Tyson began to feel restless. He took his time getting home and had little patience for his family. He tried to figure out what was going on with him because he had transitioned so well!

A few days later when he got home from school his mom sat him down to talk to him about his recent behavior and school. It was after that talk that it clicked. He hadn't seen his friends in weeks! Without football he felt like he had no reason to talk to them. What did they have in common without football?

Eventually, Tyson worked it out. He made a point to invite his football friends over to hang out or to meet up in different places and do things together. You see, sometimes community just comes to us, but other times we have to initiate things. It wasn't that Tyson's football friends didn't want to hang out; but because of where they were at, they just didn't think about it. When Tyson initiated things, took ownership of the relationships that he wanted to have, and things changed. But it took those first steps of courage.

Short Story #3: Savanna

Savanna had a great group of friends. It had taken a little work to get to where she was now, but a year into this new location and she felt good about the people and friends she had surrounded herself with.

Now that she was older, she decided that she wanted to find a job. There wasn't much she had experience in, but she knew some of the other kids at her school worked at a

local retirement facility, working with older folks, serving them food, cleaning for them and doing yard work depending on which part of the grounds they lived.

She decided to apply and got the job! She was pretty excited; first attempt and she had succeeded. She went through a weeklong training course and everybody praised her, assured her she would do well and have fun. At the end of the week she was assigned primary help to Mr. Peterson.

Her first day she dropped his food as she was rushing around trying to work hard, then couldn't find cleaning supplies to clean up the mess and then ended up tripping over him trying to clean up without paying attention. So much for all the praises. This was hard and he wasn't very nice about it. All she wanted to do was work hard, bust her tail, earn her keep.

After talking to her older brother, he suggested that instead of focusing on the task at hand and trying to work as hard and as fast as she possibly could, she should slow down and focus on the other part of her job, the unwritten part, doing life with and engaging in conversation with Mr. Peterson. Savanna wasn't 100% sure what that would be like, but she decided to start off just coming up with two different questions to ask him each day. At first he was hesitant; she had spilled food all over his house and stepped on him after all, but two weeks later they had developed an appreciation for one another and six months later they were good friends. When Savanna's family PCSed again Mr. Peterson was the last person she said good-bye to and they wrote letters back and forward to each other till he passed away, but it all started with two questions about the other person.

INTRO QUESTIONS:

1. Which of these people can you relate best to?
2. Do you think any of their solutions would work for you and your situation?

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Give your students some time to go over and reflect on each of these questions. Not every student has to answer each question. Students will vary in their desire and readiness to share, but encourage them; remind them this is a safe place, and when we share, we all learn and grow together.

1. Which of these three (Brandi, Tyson or Savanna) do you most identify with and why?

2. Have you ever found yourself in the position Brandi did - slowly blocking people out little by little? How did you change your behavior? Do you think there are others in your group of friends who would like to share more? How can you encourage this? (See Student Response Sheet)
3. What are different things you can invite your group of friends to in order to deepen community, whether it be for fun or for something more intentional?
4. Have you ever found yourself having a hard time relating to others who are older or younger than you? What are different ways you can connect to others who are different from you in age or any other way? (See Student Response Sheet)
5. Have you ever been in community and just wanted more? Had a hunger for something greater? What did it feel like? What did you do? Looking back, is there anything you would do differently? A person you would talk to? (See Student Response Sheet)
6. Write your own questions:

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

In this passage we see an example of a woman who wanted something more. She saw that the times were changing and realized that it was because the one true God was leading the Israelites. Kind of like you. Sometimes things change, but even then, God is still in control and desires what is best for us.

Rahab took initiative to change her circumstances; she saw something better and went after it, also similar to you and your life. It is easy to be a part of a community, team, club or family, but really being a part of something like that can take work. Rahab put her life on the line so that the spies could get away; she sacrificed something to get something better. Maybe you think it would be weird to ask your friends deeper questions or to uncomfortable to ask them to hang out in a new setting for the first time, but something better is waiting; it just takes courage to get there. Check out Rehab's story.

Joshua 2

Joshua Sends Spies into Jericho

Then Joshua sent two spies from the camp at Acacia with orders to go and secretly

explore the land of Canaan, especially the city of Jericho. When they came to the city, they went to spend the night in the house of a prostitute named Rahab. The king of Jericho heard that some Israelites had come that night to spy out the country, so he sent word to Rahab: “The men in your house have come to spy out the whole country! Bring them out!”

“Some men did come to my house,” she answered, “but I don't know where they were from. They left at sundown before the city gate was closed. I didn't find out where they were going, but if you start after them quickly, you can catch them.” (Now Rahab had taken the two spies up on the roof and hidden them under some stalks of flax that she had put there.) The king's men left the city, and then the gate was shut. They went looking for the Israelite spies as far as the place where the road crosses the Jordan.

Before the spies settled down for the night, Rahab went up on the roof and said to them, “I know that the LORD has given you this land. Everyone in the country is terrified of you. We have heard how the LORD dried up the Red Sea in front of you when you were leaving Egypt. We have also heard how you killed Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan. We were afraid as soon as we heard about it; we have all lost our courage because of you. The LORD your God is God in heaven above and here on earth. Now swear by him that you will treat my family as kindly as I have treated you, and give me some sign that I can trust you. Promise me that you will save my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families! Don't let us be killed!”

The men said to her, “May God take our lives if we don't do as we say! If you do not tell anyone what we have been doing, we promise you that when the LORD gives us this land, we will treat you well.”

Rahab lived in a house built into the city wall, so she let the men down from the window by a rope. “Go into the hill country,” she said, “or the king's men will find you. Hide there for three days until they come back. After that, you can go on your way.”

The men said to her, “We will keep the promise that you have made us give. This is what you must do. When we invade your land, tie this red cord to the window you let us down from. Get your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's family together in your house. If anyone goes out of the house, his death will be his own fault, and we will not be responsible; but if anyone in the house with you is harmed, then we will be responsible. However, if you tell anyone what we have been doing, then we will not have to keep our promise which you have made us give you.” She agreed and sent them away. When they had gone, she tied the red cord to the window.

The spies went into the hills and hid. The king's men looked for them all over the countryside for three days, but they did not find them, so they returned to Jericho. Then the two spies came down from the hills, crossed the river, and went back to Joshua. They

told him everything that had happened, and then said, “We are sure that the LORD has given us the whole country. All the people there are terrified of us.”

Joshua 6:22-25

The Fall Of Jericho

Joshua then told the two men who had served as spies, “Go into the prostitute's house, and bring her and her family out, as you promised her.” So they went and brought Rahab out, along with her father and mother, her brothers, and the rest of her family. They took them all, family and slaves, to safety near the Israelite camp. Then they set fire to the city and burned it to the ground, along with everything in it, except the things made of gold, silver, bronze, and iron, which they took and put in the LORD's treasury. But Joshua spared the lives of the prostitute Rahab and all her relatives, because she had hidden the two spies that he had sent to Jericho. (Her descendants have lived in Israel to this day.)

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Rahab gave up a little, to gain a whole lot more. The Bible says that her family still lives among the Israelites, and years later she even becomes mentioned in the lineage of Jesus (Matthew 1:5)! What might you have to give up to find something better? Maybe it is letting someone else get their way? A little pride, fear? What is it for you? (See Student Response Sheet)
2. Maybe something that holds you back is feeling like you have nothing to contribute. This is why I like the story of Rahab. In case you didn't catch it, Rahab was a prostitute; she probably didn't feel like she had much to offer, yet God used her anyway, and she saved her whole family! Each of us has something to offer; it all looks different. What is it for you? Learn from Rahab; take initiative! (See Student Response Sheet)
3. Take some time and make a list. What are fun things you can do with your friends? New things, fun things? Building memories together is one of the best ways to build relationships within a group. (See Student Response Sheet)
4. Are there other people in your life you want to be able to relate to better? How can you better relate to them? If you don't know, ask for advice, wisdom and in everything you do, pray that God would guide you and help you build stronger relationships with those around you.
5. Write your own challenge:

STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. Have you ever found yourself in the position Brandi did? Slowly blocking people out little by little? How did you change your behavior? Do you think there are others in your group of friends who would like to share more? How can you encourage this?

2. Have you ever found yourself having a hard time relating to others who are older or younger than you? What are different ways you can connect to others who are different from you in age or any other way?

3. Have you ever been in community and just wanted more? Had a hunger for something greater? What did it feel like? What did you do? Looking back, is there anything you would do differently? A person you would talk to?

4. Rahab gave up a little, to gain a whole lot more. The Bible says that her family still lives among the Israelites, and years later she even becomes mentioned in the lineage of Jesus (Matthew 1:5)! What might you have to give up to find something better? Maybe it is letting someone else get their way? A little pride, fear? What is it for you?

5. Maybe something that holds you back is feeling like you have nothing to contribute. This is why I like the story of Rahab. In case you didn't catch it, Rahab was a prostitute; she probably didn't feel like she had much to offer, yet God used her anyways, and she saved her whole family! Each of us has something to offer; it all looks different. What is it for you? Learn from Rahab; take initiative!
6. Take some time and make a list. What are fun things you can do with your friends? New things, fun things? Building memories together is one of the best ways to build relationships within a group.
7. Write down Group Members Prayer Requests: