

Separation/ Loss in Friendship



MOVIE:
Forrest Gump

Lesson Objective:

Separation and loss are all too familiar to the military community, but they are realities that we need to absorb and to which we need to apply God's truth. God understands our longings and offers his comforting presence to us.

Intro to the Movie:

Forrest Gump is a simple man with a lower than average IQ but very long on good intentions. He struggles throughout childhood with his best and only friend, Jenny. His 'mama' teaches him the ways of life and leaves him to choose his destiny (like a box of chocolates).

Forrest joins the army for service in Vietnam, finding new friends called Lt. Dan and Bubba. He wins medals, starts a table tennis craze, creates a famous shrimp fishing fleet, inspires people to jog, creates the smiley face, writes bumper stickers and songs, donates to people and meets the president several times. However this is all irrelevant to Forrest who can only think of his childhood sweetheart, Jenny, who has messed up her life pretty badly and eluded him on several occasions.

It's at this point that we can understand this as a story of separation and loss in friendships for Forrest. He can never quite catch up to Jenny and always has that nagging sense of separation from her and what 'might' be for them. Along the way he loses Bubba, his friend from the war, which takes a toll on him. Even as a simple man, Forrest feels deeply, and the heartache is very real.

(The 3D lenses) Look for themes such as childhood friendship, wartime friendship, separation, longing, disconnection, loss from death, and personal feelings of anguish.

Discussion Group Questions:

1. If **you** were cast in this movie, which of the main characters would you rather be and why?
2. How do you understand Forrest, as basically a sad person or a happy person?
3. Which seems harder for Forrest, loss of Bubba through death or ongoing separation from Jenny? Which is harder for you to deal with?
4. How have you handled loss or separation in a friendship?
5. Consider these statements and discuss what you think about the personal longing they represent:
 - Some *friendships* do not last, but some friends are more loyal than brothers. (Proverbs 18:24)
 - All who are with me send you greetings. Give our greetings to our *friends* in the faith. God's grace be with you all. (Titus 3:15)

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: *Separation and loss are all too familiar to the military community, but they are realities that we need to absorb and to which we need to apply God's truth. God understands our longings and offers his comforting presence to us. God lost his son, too!*

Bullet Objective:

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

PCS is just another word for separation. What would being a military brat be like if it weren't for the moving all around and leaving friends and vice versa? Seriously, someone has described being part of a military community like a parade. If you're in the military, it's like being in the parade and the scenery always changes because you keep moving. If you're a civilian on a military base, then it's like watching the parade from a fixed spot, but everything still changes as people go passing in and out

of your life. Either way, the only constant thing is change! And this movement creates heartache and longings to be with certain friends again. Some of us have even experienced the loss of a friend through death.

This we can be sure about, this is truth....God understands that pain. In fact Scripture tells us God watched his only son die, and Jesus experienced the pain of abandonment. He does understand.

God has even included many expressions of this human experience in the Bible, and one is found between best friends Jonathan and David. They had been committed, loyal friends for some time as young men, and one day David gets word that Jonathan and his father, Saul, have been killed in battle. David writes this mournful song called a *lament* (in fact, there is a whole book in the Bible called *Lamentations*).

Listen to David's pain and sorrow of loss and ultimate separation from his friend:

David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan

(from 2 Samuel 1:17-27) ¹⁷David sang this lament for Saul and his son Jonathan, ¹⁸and ordered it to be taught to the people of Judah. (It is recorded in *The book of Jashar*.)

¹⁹“On the hills of Israel our leaders are dead!

The bravest of our soldiers have fallen!

²⁰Do not announce it in Gath

or in the streets of Ashkelon.

Do not make the women of Philistia glad;

do not let the daughters of pagans rejoice.

²¹May no rain or dew fall on Gilboa's hills;

may its fields be always barren!

For the shields of the brave lie there in disgrace;

the shield of Saul is no longer polished with oil.

²²Jonathan's bow was deadly,

the sword of Saul was merciless,

striking down the mighty,

killing the enemy.

²³Saul and Jonathan, so wonderful and dear;

together in life, together in death;

swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.

²⁴Women of Israel, mourn for Saul!

He clothed you in rich scarlet dresses

and adorned you with jewels and gold.

²⁵The brave soldiers have fallen,

they were killed in battle.

Jonathan lies dead in the hills.
²⁶I grieve for you, my brother Jonathan;
 how dear you were to me!
 How wonderful was your love for me,
 better even than the love of women.
²⁷The brave soldiers have fallen,
 their weapons abandoned and useless.”

But God also comforts us and helps us through the tough times. And he wants us to help others, too. Here is what the apostle Paul has written:

(2 Corinthians 1:3-7) ³Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes! ⁴He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God. ⁵Just as we have a share in Christ's many sufferings, so also through Christ we share in God's great help. ⁶If we suffer, it is for your help and salvation; if we are helped, then you too are helped and given the strength to endure with patience the same sufferings that we also endure. ⁷So our hope in you is never shaken; we know that just as you share in our sufferings, you also share in the help we receive.

And then he says:

(from 2 Corinthians 4:8-9) ⁸We are often troubled, but not crushed; sometimes in doubt, but never in despair; ⁹there are many enemies, but we are never without a **friend**; and though badly hurt at times, we are not destroyed.

Truly, this is a special place that God understands and provides the comfort and help of his presence. Christ is very near us when we feel the ache of separation and loss. Trust him to provide comfort and help.

Challenge:

1. With the idea of comforting or helping others do one of two things: if you have been helped through a time of deep heartache, offer to help someone else. If you need someone to help you through a current heartache, ask for it.
2. This week read more about David and Jonathan's friendship and how much they meant to each other in 1 Samuel 19 and 20..

*Pray for God's purpose and power to put it into action and transform lives.
 Remind them of the online personal journey for further involvement with this topic of
 Separation and Loss in Friendship.*