

Separation/ Losing a Friend

SMALL GROUP LESSON



Lesson Objective:

Separation and loss in friendship can be very painful, yet God has given us his constant presence as encouragement, and he wants us to be an encouragement for others.

Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Computer or internet connection to watch the YouTube video
2. Map of the world or a globe
3. Copies of *Fire & Rain* by James Taylor (printed below)
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 pain from separation/loss of friends to a recognition of Jesus' presence.

Instructive Prep:

Most students can clearly identify with the pain of a friendship ripped apart because of PCSing and deployments. While a common experience, they all handle it very differently. Some sulk, some get busy, some fight, some write, some go for a run, etc., etc. The pain is real and, while you don't want kids to hurt forever, it would be even worse for them to become numb to it.

This session is designed to allow your students to talk about the hurt they feel in this area of their lives while attempting to move them *through* that to a more productive and healthier place. Eventually, God promises his presence and we can take from his word the idea found in Jude where the writer sees the distance between himself and his friends as an opportunity to encourage

them in their faith walk. If we can get kids to this point, they perhaps they will be able to focus on each other rather than staying in their own pain.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: *learn, feel, do and what next*. The aim is for students to learn something new, connect at an emotional level to some degree, and participate in doing something during the study (like pointing out all of the places they have lived). 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, the movement is 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:

This is a song from the 70s, but it has such a strong appeal due to the commonly felt emotions of loss and separation from a friend. Perhaps you can read through the words as a group after you listen to the song (both versions). Be prepared for some students to be emotionally touched by the song. It may stir up a lot for them.

INTRO STORY:

Fire and Rain by James Taylor

Just yesterday morning they let me know you were gone
 Suzanne the plans they made put an end to you
 I walked out this morning and I wrote down this song
 I just can't remember who to send it to

I've seen fire and I've seen rain
 I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end
 I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend
 But I always thought that I'd see you again

Won't you look down on me, Jesus
 You've got to help me make a stand
 You've just got to see me through another day
 My body's aching and my time is at hand
 And I won't make it any other way

Oh, I've seen fire and I've seen rain

I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end
 I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend
 But I always thought that I'd see you again

I've been walking my mind to an easy time
 My back turned towards the sun
 Lord knows the cold wind blows it'll turn your head around
 Well, there's hours of time on the telephone line
 To talk about things to come
 Sweet dreams and flying machines in pieces on the ground.

Oh, I've seen fire and I've seen rain
 I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end
 I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend
 But I always thought that I'd see you, baby, one more time again, now

Thought I'd see you one more time again
 There's just a few things coming my way this time around,
 Thought I'd see you, thought I'd see you fire and rain, now
 Thought I'd see you just one more time again.

Watch both of these versions:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOIo4lEpsPY> - the 1970 version

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T35WXF0mwI&a=vZNMNiJ35ZM&playnext_from=ML - a 2007 version

Intro Questions:

1. Which version do you like better, the young guy or the old guy? Why?
2. What do you think makes the song good enough to be popular 37 years later?
3. Have you ever written a poem or song or journal entry about your feelings?

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Have each student write down on the Student Response sheet all of the places they have lived (family has been stationed). Then have them point out on a map of the world (or globe) where they have been. Note the number of locations, and the one with the most answers first, with subsequent numbers answering in that order. For question two and following, start with the person who was second, then third, etc.

1. What sort of emotions well up in you as a result of hearing a song like this?

2. Does the song remind you of an experience of loss or separation at a specific time or with a specific person? Describe it.
3. What's your gut reaction to PCSing?
4. What do you think is Jesus' level of involvement with your situation of being a military brat? Does he care about your moving around so much or care about the possible pain of losing friends?
5. Write your own questions: _____

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES

The following passages are designed to set up a short progression of (1) understanding the presence of Christ as a constant, and (2) helping students see separation as something that can be used for encouragement of one another.

2 Corinthians 4:6-9

⁶The God who said, "Out of darkness the light shall shine!" is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ. ⁷Yet we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots, in order to show that the supreme power belongs to God, not to us. 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.

Comment: *As you can see, the promise of Jesus' friendship with us is very real. "Out of darkness the light shall come" is both a promise of his presence (Immanuel, God with us) and the mandate to show this magnificent light to others, to encourage them in Christ. ('encourage' carries the concept of filling the sails with air, thus making the journey possible)*

Jude 1-5, 17-25

¹From Jude, servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James— To those who have been called by God, who live in the love of God the Father and the protection of Jesus Christ: ²May mercy, peace, and love be yours in full measure.

False Teachers

³My dear friends, I was doing my best to write to you about the salvation we share in common, when I felt the need of writing at once to encourage you to fight on for the faith which once and for all God has given to his people. ⁴For some godless people have slipped in unnoticed among us, persons who distort the message about the grace of our God in order to excuse their immoral ways, and who reject Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord. Long ago the Scriptures predicted the condemnation they have received.

⁵For even though you know all this, I want to remind you of how the Lord once rescued the people of Israel from Egypt, but afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

...

Warnings and Instructions

¹⁷But remember, my friends, what you were told in the past by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸They said to you, “When the last days come, people will appear who will make fun of you, people who follow their own godless desires.” ¹⁹These are the people who cause divisions, who are controlled by their natural desires, who do not have the Spirit. ²⁰But you, my friends, keep on building yourselves up on your most sacred faith. Pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, ²¹and keep yourselves in the love of God, as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy to give you eternal life. ²²Show mercy toward those who have doubts; ²³save others by snatching them out of the fire; and to others show mercy mixed with fear, but hate their very clothes, stained by their sinful lusts.

Prayer of Praise

²⁴To him who is able to keep you from falling and to bring you faultless and joyful before his glorious presence— ²⁵to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, from all ages past, and now, and forever and ever! Amen.

Comment: *Jude writes as one separated from his dear brothers and sisters in Christ, and he writes with a sense of urgency for their encouragement. Several times he uses the word or concept of encouraging them in their faith (protected, remind you, the Lord rescued, remember, keep on building), and Jude ends with an encouragement crescendo in his closing praise! And he does*

all of this with bothers and sisters who are separated from him. This is a good example of how distance does not have to end a friendship, and, in fact, can strengthen it.

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. Since separation can be so hard on military kids, consider starting a Facebook group for friends focused solely on encouraging each other in Christ like Jude did. What would it take to do that (or something like that) and turn the tide of separation pain and loneliness for yourself and your friends?
2. Use the paper to write a journal entry or poem or song idea about Jesus' presence in the midst of your pain.
3. Spend some time discussing and planning a small group reunion somewhere in the future. Decide on the questions or commitments you all want to live by and are willing to be held accountable for when the reunion happens. How committed are you to actually seeing it occur?
4. Write your own challenge: _____

STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. PLACES YOU'VE LIVED (YOUR FAMILY HAS BEEN STATIONED); STATE OR COUNTRY.

2. JOURNAL ENTRY, POEM OR SONG:

3. SMALL GROUP REUNION PLANNING: