

**SUB TOPIC THEME:
NO CONTROL – JUST
DEAL!**

Lesson Objective:

Understanding how fear's grip on us drastically affects our lives and relationships. Maybe we acknowledge its presence and influence and maybe we have worked so hard just to pretend it doesn't exist – the result is still the same. We are gripped by fear rather than



allowing ourselves to be held by the Lord. Fear of losing a parent is a very pervasive fear in the lives of military teens and it's important to show them how to recognize, process and surrender that fear to God.

Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. A print off of the feeling word list with faces. For a link: <http://www.shmula.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/chernov-faces-feelings.jpg>
2. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below)
3. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
4. A passion to see students' lives transformed in their ability to interact with the fear of losing a parent!

Instructive Prep:

While we don't mention it very often, the fear of the death of a parent is ever-present with military teens. If that were to happen, life would change dramatically and instantaneously for a teen and their family! That prospect is down right scary! The fear of this happening often gains a strangle hold on these teens that is hard to discuss and free them from since, unlike the average teen, it is a very real possibility in their lives.

This session is designed to look at ways teens can openly identify some of their emotions of feeling helpless and vulnerable and discuss the ways they can depend on God to guide them through all things. Leading kids toward a strategy of trusting Jesus Christ with these very real fears is the goal. Helping kids understand God's sovereignty and provision for his people in Christ is critical to teens developing life-long coping skills for the inevitable fears that will grip them.

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 pact with fellow group members). 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 goal is movement 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:

Being gripped by fear can really affect our lives. It's amazing when you look at stories and see how overcoming fear is the main struggle through it all. And many people try to handle their fear on their own! God is the true conqueror of fear and the truth is we don't have to conquer our fear of losing a parent or anything else that frightens us because God can do it for us. If we trust him then God will guide us through all things in life.

Intro Story:

This is a big chunk of the story of Gideon which is found in the book of Judges. As you read, notice all the times that fear holds power over Gideon and how God responds with both understanding and resolve to show his supremacy over every fear Gideon has.

Gideon

Once again the people of Israel sinned against the LORD, so he let the people of Midian rule them for seven years. ² The Midianites were stronger than Israel, and the people of Israel hid from them in caves and other safe places in the hills. ³ Whenever the Israelites would plant their crops, the Midianites would come with the Amalekites and the desert tribes and attack them. ⁴ They would camp on the land and destroy the crops as far south as the area around Gaza. They would take all the sheep, cattle, and donkeys, and leave nothing for the Israelites to live on. ⁵ They would come with their livestock and tents, as thick as locusts. They and their camels were too many to count. They came and devastated the land, ⁶ and Israel was helpless against them.

⁷ Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help against the Midianites, ⁸ and he sent them a prophet who brought them this message from the LORD, the God of Israel: "I brought you out of slavery in Egypt. ⁹ I rescued you from the Egyptians and from the people who fought you here in this land. I drove them out as you advanced, and I gave you their land. ¹⁰ I told you that I am the LORD your God and that you should not worship the gods of the Amorites, whose land you are now living in. But you have not listened to me."

¹¹ Then the LORD's angel came to the village of Ophrah and sat under the oak tree that belonged to Joash, a man of the clan of Abiezer. His son Gideon was threshing some wheat secretly in a wine press, so that the Midianites would not see him.

¹² The LORD's angel appeared to him there and said, "The LORD is with you, brave and mighty man!"

¹³ Gideon said to him, "If I may ask, sir, why has all this happened to us if the LORD is with us? What happened to all the wonderful things that our fathers told us the LORD used to do—how he brought them out of Egypt? The LORD has abandoned us and left us to the mercy of the Midianites."

¹⁴ Then the LORD ordered him, "Go with all your great strength and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I myself am sending you."

¹⁵ Gideon replied, "But Lord, how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least important member of my family."

¹⁶ The LORD answered, "You can do it because I will help you. You will crush the Midianites as easily as if they were only one man."

¹⁷ Gideon replied, "If you are pleased with me, give me some proof that you are really the LORD. ¹⁸ Please do not leave until I bring you an offering of food." He said, "I will stay until you come back."

¹⁹ So Gideon went into his house and cooked a young goat and used a bushel of flour to make bread without any yeast. He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, brought them to the LORD's angel under the oak tree, and gave them to him. ²⁰ The angel told him, "Put the meat and the bread on this rock, and pour the broth over them." Gideon did so. ²¹ Then the LORD's angel reached out and touched the meat and the bread with the end of the stick he was holding. Fire came out of the rock and burned up the meat and the bread. Then the angel disappeared.

²² Gideon then realized that it was the LORD's angel he had seen, and he said in terror, "Sovereign LORD! I have seen your angel face-to-face!"

²³ But the LORD told him, "Peace. Don't be afraid. You will not die." ²⁴ Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and named it "The LORD is Peace." (It is still standing at Ophrah, which belongs to the clan of Abiezer.)

²⁵ That night the LORD told Gideon, "Take your father's bull and another bull seven years old, tear down your father's altar to Baal, and cut down the symbol of the goddess Asherah, which is beside it. ²⁶ Build a well-constructed altar to the LORD your God on top of this mound. Then take the second bull and burn it whole as an offering, using for firewood the symbol of Asherah you have cut down." ²⁷ So Gideon took ten of his servants and did what the LORD had told him. He was too afraid of his family and the people in town to do it by day, so he did it at night.

²⁸ When the people in town got up early the next morning, they found that the altar to Baal and the symbol of Asherah had been cut down, and that the second bull had been burned on the altar that had been built there. ²⁹ They asked each other, "Who did this?" They investigated and found out that Gideon son of Joash had done it.

³⁰ Then they said to Joash, "Bring your son out here, so that we can kill him! He tore down the altar to Baal and cut down the symbol of Asherah beside it."

³¹ But Joash said to all those who confronted him, “Are you arguing for Baal? Are you defending him? Anyone who argues for him will be killed before morning. If Baal is a god, let him defend himself. It is his altar that was torn down.” ³² From then on Gideon was known as Jerubbaal,^[c] because Joash said, “Let Baal defend himself; it is his altar that was torn down.”

³³ Then all the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the desert tribes assembled, crossed the Jordan River, and camped in Jezreel Valley. ³⁴ The spirit of the LORD took control of Gideon, and he blew a trumpet to call the men of the clan of Abiezer to follow him. ³⁵ He sent messengers throughout the territory of both parts of Manasseh to call them to follow him. He sent messengers to the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they also came to join him.

³⁶ Then Gideon said to God, “You say that you have decided to use me to rescue Israel. ³⁷ Well, I am putting some wool on the ground where we thresh the wheat. If in the morning there is dew only on the wool but not on the ground, then I will know that you are going to use me to rescue Israel.” ³⁸ That is exactly what happened. When Gideon got up early the next morning, he squeezed the wool and wrung enough dew out of it to fill a bowl with water. ³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, “Don’t be angry with me; let me speak just once more. Please let me make one more test with the wool. This time let the wool be dry, and the ground be wet.” ⁴⁰ That night God did that very thing. The next morning the wool was dry, but the ground was wet with dew.

Gideon Defeats the Midianites

One day Gideon and all his men got up early and camped beside Harod Spring. The Midianite camp was in the valley to the north of them by Moreh Hill.

² The LORD said to Gideon, “The men you have are too many for me to give them victory over the Midianites. They might think that they had won by themselves, and so give me no credit. ³ Announce to the people, ‘Anyone who is afraid should go back home, and we will stay here at Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand went back, but ten thousand stayed.

⁴ Then the LORD said to Gideon, “You still have too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will separate them for you there. If I tell you a man should go with you, he will go. If I tell you a man should not go with you, he will not go.” ⁵ Gideon took the men down to the water, and the LORD told him, “Separate everyone who laps up the water with his tongue like a dog, from everyone who gets down on his knees to drink.” ⁶ There were three hundred men who scooped up water in their hands and lapped it; all the others got down on their knees to drink. ⁷ The LORD said to Gideon, “I will rescue you and give you victory over the Midianites with the three hundred men who lapped the water. Tell everyone else to go home.” ⁸ So Gideon

sent all the Israelites home, except the three hundred, who kept all the supplies and trumpets. The Midianite camp was below them in the valley.

⁹ That night the LORD commanded Gideon, “Get up and attack the camp; I am giving you victory over it. ¹⁰ But if you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah. ¹¹ You will hear what they are saying, and then you will have the courage to attack.” So Gideon and his servant Purah went down to the edge of the enemy camp. ¹² The Midianites, the Amalekites, and the desert tribesmen were spread out in the valley like a swarm of locusts, and they had as many camels as there are grains of sand on the seashore.

¹³ When Gideon arrived, he heard a man telling a friend about a dream. He was saying, “I dreamed that a loaf of barley bread rolled into our camp and hit a tent. The tent collapsed and lay flat on the ground.”

¹⁴ His friend replied, “It’s the sword of the Israelite, Gideon son of Joash! It can’t mean anything else! God has given him victory over Midian and our whole army!”

¹⁵ When Gideon heard about the man’s dream and what it meant, he fell to his knees and worshiped the LORD. Then he went back to the Israelite camp and said, “Get up! The LORD is giving you victory over the Midianite army!” ¹⁶ He divided his three hundred men into three groups and gave each man a trumpet and a jar with a torch inside it. ¹⁷ He told them, “When I get to the edge of the camp, watch me, and do what I do. ¹⁸ When my group and I blow our trumpets, then you blow yours all around the camp and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon!’”

¹⁹ Gideon and his one hundred men came to the edge of the camp a while before midnight, just after the guard had been changed. Then they blew the trumpets and broke the jars they were holding, ²⁰ and the other two groups did the same. They all held the torches in their left hands, the trumpets in their right, and shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” ²¹ Every man stood in his place around the camp, and the whole enemy army ran away yelling. ²² While Gideon’s men were blowing their trumpets, the LORD made the enemy troops attack each other with their swords. They ran toward Zarethan as far as Beth Shittah, as far as the town of Abel Meholah near Tabbath.

²³ Then men from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and both parts of Manasseh were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. ²⁴ Gideon sent messengers through all the hill country of Ephraim to say, “Come down and fight the Midianites. Hold the Jordan River and the streams as far as Bethbarah, to keep the Midianites from crossing them.” The men of Ephraim were called together, and they held the Jordan River and the streams as far as Bethbarah. ²⁵ They captured the two

Midianite chiefs, Oreb and Zeeb; they killed Oreb at Oreb Rock, and Zeeb at the Winepress of Zeeb. They continued to pursue the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was now east of the Jordan.

Intro Questions:

1. On a daily basis, how often does fear, particularly the fear of losing a parent, influence the way you behave?
2. Do you ever recognize and acknowledge in that moment that it is fear driving you?

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Go oldest to youngest – and yes days and hours count! (don't forget to factor in time changes too)

1. Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the fear of losing your parent? What did you do?
2. What emotions do you most often feel when you think of one or both of your parents dying? Sadness, anger, denial, etc. *(employing the feeling word list here would be helpful)*
3. What fears do you see Gideon and his men experiencing throughout this story? How does God respond to them?
4. What ways have you experienced God responding to your fear? Perhaps through finding a friend to talk to, or a special moment with a parent? Take a moment and list as many things, big or small, that you can think of right now.
5. Write your own questions:

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES

Knowing that you are afraid and that God is there for you is important. Sometimes, though, we know the right answers and how we are supposed to act and yet still find it extremely difficult. Read through this Psalm and consider how praising the Lord in times when fear has gripped you can bring you closer to Jesus our saviour and the peace he offers us all. Notice that praising does not mean ignoring your fear.

PSALM 40

A Song of Praise

40 I waited patiently for the LORD's help;
 then he listened to me and heard my cry.

² He pulled me out of a dangerous pit,
 out of the deadly quicksand.
 He set me safely on a rock
 and made me secure.

³ He taught me to sing a new song,
 a song of praise to our God.
 Many who see this will take warning
 and will put their trust in the LORD.

⁴ Happy are those who trust the LORD,
 who do not turn to idols
 or join those who worship false gods.

⁵ You have done many things for us, O LORD our God;
 there is no one like you!
 You have made many wonderful plans for us.
 I could never speak of them all—
 their number is so great!

⁶ You do not want sacrifices and offerings;
 you do not ask for animals burned whole on the altar
 or for sacrifices to take away sins.
 Instead, you have given me ears to hear you,

⁷ and so I answered, "Here I am;
 your instructions for me are in the book of the Law.

⁸ How I love to do your will, my God!
 I keep your teaching in my heart."

⁹ In the assembly of all your people, LORD,
 I told the good news that you save us.

You know that I will never stop telling it.
¹⁰ I have not kept the news of salvation to myself;
 I have always spoken of your faithfulness and help.
 In the assembly of all your people I have not been silent
 about your loyalty and constant love.

¹¹ LORD, I know you will never stop being merciful to me.
 Your love and loyalty will always keep me safe.

¹² I am surrounded by many troubles—
 too many to count!
 My sins have caught up with me,
 and I can no longer see;
 they are more than the hairs of my head,
 and I have lost my courage.

¹³ Save me, LORD! Help me now!
¹⁴ May those who try to kill me
 be completely defeated and confused.
 May those who are happy because of my troubles
 be turned back and disgraced.

¹⁵ May those who make fun of me
 be dismayed by their defeat.

¹⁶ May all who come to you
 be glad and joyful.
 May all who are thankful for your salvation
 always say, “How great is the LORD!”

¹⁷ I am weak and poor, O Lord,
 but you have not forgotten me.
 You are my savior and my God—
 hurry to my aid!

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. List the actions taken by the Psalmist and the actions taken by God. What do those lists tell you about what things we should be doing in our lives to address our fear and what we can expect God to do? (use Student response sheet)
2. After that, make another list about things you *wish* God would bring into your life to address your fear. Share as many of those as you feel comfortable with your group and together pray specifically for God to grant those things, with the

understanding that he often knows better than we could what we *really* need. (use Student response sheet)

3. Develop your own group list of the five best ways to deal with the fear of losing a parent. Decide when and how to use them. (use Student response sheet)
4. Actively pray together after group members have shared their struggles with fear and the ways they want to see God act in their lives. Make a commitment to pray for each other every day this week! (use Student response sheet)
5. Write your own challenge:

STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. WHAT METHODS DO YOU USE TO EXPRESS OR COVER UP YOUR FEAR OF LOSING YOUR PARENT? Mark all that apply.
 - a. Distractions: like sleeping, reading, drawing, playing computer games, listening to music, playing with pets and trying not to think about the situation.
 - b. Sports/Exercise: like running, swimming, team sports, and lifting weights.
 - c. Lashing Out: primarily verbal with increased arguments and yelling; also stuffing emotions to protect other family members.
 - d. Friends: confiding in friends
 - e. Self-Harm: like snapping yourself with a rubber band, cutting, burning with a cigarette
 - f. Isolation and/or avoidance of the parent or whole family
 - g. Spirituality: like prayer, Bible study, counseling
 - h. Other: _____

2. LIST THE ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE PSALMIST AND THE ACTIONS TAKEN BY GOD. WHAT DO THOSE LISTS SHOW YOU ABOUT WHAT THINGS WE CAN BE DOING IN OUR LIVES TO ADDRESS OUR FEAR AND WHAT WE CAN EXPECT GOD TO DO?

3. MAKE ANOTHER LIST OF THINGS YOU *WISH* GOD WOULD BRING INTO YOUR LIFE TO ADDRESS YOUR FEAR.

4. DEVELOP YOUR OWN GROUP LIST OF THE FIVE BEST WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE FEAR OF LOSING A PARENT. DECIDE WHEN AND HOW TO USE THEM.

5. WRITE DOWN GROUP MEMBERS' PRAYER REQUESTS: