

SUB TOPIC THEME: Feeling Insignificant

Lesson Objective:

Helping students who are experiencing feelings of insignificance and unimportance, perhaps for the first time. Taking time to dissect and understand what those feelings are specifically, where they come from, how to address them, and what the Lord has to say about them. Focus on speaking God's love and identity into the situation. This should be a foundational tool to help prevent further pain by rooting their identity in Christ rather than the world.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. A way to measure the length of hair, from scalp to end.
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 transformed in their understanding of God's adoration for them!

Instructive Prep:

This subtopic is geared toward the younger students who, perhaps inexplicably, are experiencing insecurities, and the fear, pain, and anger that comes with it, for the first time. Sometimes these emotions are rooted in traumatic situations, but everyone at some point in their life encounters these feelings of insignificance. Our goal here is to help them learn how to encounter, interact, and reconcile these emotions. The way to do this is by showing them the truth of their identity in Jesus Christ and not in the world around them. By solidifying their confidence in this true identity, the pain that comes from the natural process of growing up will be less daunting and they have a better chance of traversing through with fewer long term scars. While this small group study can certainly be tweaked for the students that are further along the path, please be aware of this original focus so that you can best adapt it to your group.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: learn, feel, do and what next. The goals are for students to (1) learn something new, (2) connect at an emotional level to some degree, and (3) participate in doing something during the study (like making a hand gesture as a weapon). Finally, (4) 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:

Feeling insignificant is a universal experience. At some point in your life, for some reason, you will feel this way. It's no fun and it's not easy to deal with but, unfortunately, that's the reality of this world. Maybe you know why you are feeling insecure, because of something someone said or that you did, but perhaps you just woke up and that's what smacked you in the face when you got out of bed. Regardless of why or how you came to feel unimportant, it's vital for you to know one thing – IT IS NOT TRUE!!!! This opinion you have of yourself right now is not correct and should not influence how you act and feel. God created you and he adores you. He has a purpose intended for you and a life of fulfillment prepared for you. He values you so much that he has carefully crafted every part of you in and out and he adores every inch of you. In fact, knowing you inside and out and knowing that you would mess up and sin (even things you haven't done yet) God forgave you ahead of time and Jesus Christ sacrificed himself through an excruciatingly painful death to make sure that your eternity with him was preserved. That is the truth of who you are and how significant you are to the Creator of the Universe.

INTRO STORY:

Now read the story of Gideon in Judges 6&7. As you read, pay attention to how Gideon changes throughout the story and why that is. Also notice how God interacts with him.

Gideon

6 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, 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

⁷ 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."

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Today we are going to have the person with the longest hair go first. So measure a strand from the longest section (bangs count!) and then begin!

1. Draw a line down the center of your paper and list the way that Gideon or other people viewed him and then the way God and the Angel, God's messenger, viewed him. (use Student response sheet)
2. What are some ways that the Lord showed his opinion of Gideon and how he sustained him through it all?

3. How do you perhaps see God doing the same thing in your life?
4. Draw another line and put the way Gideon felt in the beginning vs. how he felt at the end on either side. Put a star by one or two that jump out as something you would like to feel in your own life.

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES

Romans 10:8-11

Consider the ready availability of God's salvation and a true relationship with him. That speaks greatly to how much he values you.

"What it says is this: 'God's message is near you, on your lips and in your heart'—that is, the message of faith that we preach. ⁹ If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved. ¹¹ The scripture says, 'Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.'"

Romans 8:15&16

"For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead, the Spirit makes you God's children, and by the Spirit's power we cry out to God, 'Father! my Father!'" ¹⁶ God's Spirit joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are God's children. "

Philippians 4:6&7

"Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. ⁷ And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus."

Zephaniah 3:17&18a

"The LORD your God is with you;
his power gives you victory.
The LORD will take delight in you,
and in his love he will give you new life.
He will sing and be joyful over you,
as joyful as people at a festival."

1 Corinthians 1:9

God repeatedly says he adores us and desires good things for us. Why do we doubt?

“God is to be trusted, the God who called you to have fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.”

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. What things in your life do you let dictate your opinion of yourself? Which are speaking things consistent with God (the truth) and which are not?
2. Develop a strategy together for ways to identify negative and lying influences in your life. Make the decision to deny them power over your feelings and identity and then strategize about how you will do that.
3. Consider how you act when you are feeling insignificant or unimportant. Identify four destructive things that are present during those times. Now spend some time in prayer and reflection, asking God to speak his truth and love into your life and show you how to be his messenger to others rather than spreading the pain. (Use Student Response Sheets)

STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. Draw a line down the center of your paper and list the way that Gideon or other people viewed him and then the way God and the Angel, God's messenger, spoke to him. (use Student response sheet)
2. What are some ways that the Lord showed his opinion of Gideon and how he sustained him through it all?
3. How do you perhaps see God doing the same thing in your life?
4. Draw another line and put the way Gideon felt in the beginning vs. how he felt at the end on either side. Put a star by one or two that jump out as something you would like to feel in your own life.

