

SUB TOPIC THEME:
GOD AS FATHER: And Church as Family

LESSON OBJECTIVE:

Since (or Because) God is our heavenly father through Jesus Christ, then that makes other believers our spiritual family. With that being true, then we have a responsibility to others in the family, and we need to understand and act the way this family (the body of Christ, the church) needs to operate in the world toward non-family members.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Computer or internet connection to watch the YouTube video
2. No equipment needed for an exercise that will be determined by personal height.
3. Some paper, markers, pens, etc.
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 positive influence on friends!

Instructive Prep:

Military teens obviously move around a lot, unless they are guard or reserve families. One of the benefits of being part of God's family is that this family is everywhere you will be stationed. Learning to connect as a teen to this worldwide family who claim God as their heavenly Father means always belonging! And because we belong, we know we are loved and have purpose. These are powerful concepts for a teen to grasp, and it will certainly add to their sense of resilience.

This session is designed to discover what it means to be part of God's family – benefits, attitudes and responsibilities. Having God as our father sets us free to be his children in the fullness of what that means. Different words are used for this concept of God's family in Scripture to include such terms as the body of Christ, the church, brothers and sisters, fellowship of believers, children of God, etc. Learning what it means to be in *this* family should change how we

see ourselves and those around us – to see things as God, our Father, sees them – and act out of that vision.

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 hand gesture as a weapon). 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, we are moving 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:

Sometimes as teens we don't have a sense of belonging to anyone or a sense of our own importance in the world. Knowing first of all that, through Jesus Christ, God claims us as his children makes a huge difference because we belong to him and his family, the church or body of Christ. Next, we can be assured that he has something he wants us to do alongside members of the family of believers that makes a difference in the world. This gives us significance and purpose, and a personal unity with other children of God.

INTRO STORY:

So many people like to talk about the church as a bunch of hypocrites, and I'm sure there are plenty of them there. But they also exist in professional sports and politics and education and on and on. I'm not sure why the church gets tagged with that word. PEOPLE are hypocrites!

One thing that seems to be lost in that kind of name calling is the incredible good works that members of God's family have been responsible for over the years that have absolutely altered society for the better. For example, William Wilberforce in the movie *Amazing Grace* fights for years to break the back of the slave trade and the sugar cane trade in Great Britain that brought dignity and respect to millions of people. Mother Theresa, of course, with her order of nuns has brought love and healing and comfort to so many of the undesirable and untouchable in India and now around the world (the least of these). Countless movements against child labor laws and racial injustice (Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.) and environmental destruction and human abuses (sex trafficking and lack of female education/literacy) and thousands of orphanages have been led by the church because of people who work for what is on God's heart. Don't forget mission movements around the world that have brought not only social justice but the good

news of Jesus Christ to millions of people who would otherwise not have heard of the life-giving message.

In a story call *The Hiding Place*, a Dutch family named the ten Booms was living in Haarlem, Holland, as the Germans attacked and occupied the Netherlands. In their small clock shop (which is still there and can be visited today – I recommend it!), they had a rather nice life, even if things were rationed. Deeply committed to Jesus Christ and their loving heavenly Father, they became uncomfortable with how the Jews of their town were being treated as the Nazis made them wear yellow stars and began rounding them up and taking them away. Over a few weeks, they became a significant part of the underground movement, led by Christians committed to fighting the injustices because the Jews were God’s chosen people and on God’s heart. They built a false wall on the third floor of their house as a hiding place for Jews trying to escape the Nazis. There was peril with every knock on the door, and their lives were seriously in danger.

One day the raid came. All of the Jews in their house escape to the hiding place and were not found; however, the ten Boom family was loaded up and taken to a concentration camp for their involvement with the Jews (they had multiple ration cards in the house even though no Jews were discovered). While in the concentration camp, the father and one sister died, and another brother shortly after, and the other suffered deep pain and degradation. The story is told through the eyes and ears of Corrie ten Boom, the survivor. Multiple Jews owed their very lives to members of God’s family who offered grace and peace and mercy. God’s children have always been about sacrifice in love because it has been modeled for them in Jesus Christ. They have been set free to set others free.

OK, there may be hypocrites in the church, but the darkness and evil in the world has been stopped and pushed back in so many ways throughout human history because of the loving acts and sacrifice that are done every single day by the body of Christ, the church, God’s family!

Watch these video clips from the movie, *The Hiding Place*, to grasp the depth of the ten Boom’s love for God and Christ and the sacrifice they were will to make for him as members of his family.

<http://vimeo.com/20822031>

<http://vimeo.com/20831623>

<http://vimeo.com/20835947>

Intro Questions:

1. When you think of the church, do you think more of hypocrites or world-changers?
2. Would you like to visit the ten Boom house in Haarlem, Holland, to see the actual location and room where this took place?

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Use the students' height to determine who goes first. The shortest person wins, and if there's a tie, then go to age – the older person wins. Then go around the circle counterclockwise. For the second question, use the next tallest, go clockwise, etc.

1. Who is the most hypocritical person you know, and what field or group or organization would you associate them with? Is it the church?
2. What are some ways that members of the body of Christ, the church, have changed things throughout history (there are plenty of examples)? Do you know some people in your chapel or church or youth group who have done something you think is significant? (see Student Response sheet)
3. Would you have been willing to give up your way of life and possibly your family's well-being in order to hide the Jews in WWII? What are some things you would be willing to give your life for (not necessarily death, but commit your life to). Write out what that is. (see Student Response sheet)
4. What about the video clips stood out to you the most?
5. Write your own questions: _____

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES

As you read down through these passages, a portrait of the church emerges that describes who we are, what makes us God's children and how we are to invest our lives. Use this section as a sort of a 'mosaic' building experience to gain a view of what the Scriptures say about God's family, the body of Christ, the church. No matter where you are as a military teen, you can belong to the church and share acts of God's love with others!

Philippians 2:1-4

¹ Your life in Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness and compassion for one another. ² I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind. ³ Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. ⁴ And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own.

1 Corinthians 16:13-16

¹³ Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be brave, be strong. ¹⁴ Do all your work in love. ¹⁵ You know about Stephanas and his family; they are the first Christian converts in Achaia and have given themselves to the service of God's people. I beg you, my friends, ¹⁶ to follow the leadership of such people as these, and of anyone else who works and serves with them.

Ephesians 4:11-16

¹¹ It was he who "gave gifts to people"; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. ¹² He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ. ¹³ And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature. ¹⁴ Then we shall no longer be children, carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful people, who lead others into error by the tricks they invent. ¹⁵ Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head. ¹⁶ Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love.

1 John 3:13-18

¹³ So do not be surprised, my friends, if the people of the world hate you. ¹⁴ We know that we have left death and come over into life; we know it because we love others. Those who do not love are still under the power of death. ¹⁵ Those who hate others are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life in them. ¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for others! ¹⁷ If we are rich and see others in need, yet close our hearts against them, how can we claim that we love God? ¹⁸ My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.

James 2:14-17

¹⁴ My friends, what good is it for one of you to say that you have faith if your actions do not prove it? Can that faith save you? ¹⁵ Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. ¹⁶ What good is there in your saying to them, "God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!"—if you don't give them the necessities of life? ¹⁷ So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead.

1 John 2:12-14

¹² I write to you, my children, because your sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ. ¹³ I write to you, fathers, because you know him who has existed from the beginning. I write to you, young people, because you have defeated the Evil One. ¹⁴ I write to you, my children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who has existed from the beginning. I write to you, young people, because you are strong; the word of God lives in you, and you have defeated the Evil One.

Acts 2:43-47

⁴³ Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. ⁴⁴ All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. ⁴⁵ They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. ⁴⁶ Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. Make a list of the different key components to what it means to be a part of God's family. Use these three categories:
 - Who are we:
 - Why are we:
 - How are we to act:
 - (use Student response sheet)

2. Discuss with the group some of the possible 'faith in action' things that you could take on together to push back the darkness in the name of Christ within your community, and across the world. Make a list of these possibilities and a

plan to implement at least two of them. (See if you can involve others in your chapel or church, too)

3. Write your own challenge: _____

STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE CHURCH FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE WORLD:

SOME PEOPLE WHO YOU KNOW THAT HAVE DONE SOMETHING YOU THINK IS SIGNIFICANT:

2. WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU ARE WILLING TO GIVE YOUR LIFE FOR:

3. LIST KEY COMPONENTS YOU SEE FOR WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MEMBER OF GOD'S FAMILY:

a. WHO ARE WE:

b. WHAT MAKES US HIS CHILDREN

c. HOW ARE WE TO ACT

4. LIST POSSIBLE 'FAITH IN ACTION' (FIA) IDEAS FOR YOU TO IMPLEMENT. DECIDE ON TWO OF THESE TO DO AS A GROUP: