

**SUB TOPIC THEME:  
WHEN THEY'RE JUST NOT  
THE SAME**

**Lesson Objective:**

*To teach kids how to interact with their parents, even if they are just not the same, by dialoguing with them about what it means to be respectful of their parents and also treat them with love. This can be especially challenging if the parent, or parents, in question are not Christian and/or are overwhelmed by their physical and emotional injuries. By studying the Scriptures and striving daily to seek to better understand God's love and purpose for them, teens will begin to more fully comprehend how to handle their situation at home. More than that, they will be able to bring the light and love of God into their family and let his will guide the situation. Help teens understand the balance between respect and safety, as well as the appropriate boundaries between them and their mom or dad. One particular way to do that is equipping them with a safe environment where they can voice their concerns, process their emotions, find answers to their questions, and hear and experience the love of Jesus Christ*



**Set Up Info:**

**Supplies Needed:**

1. A tape measurer (at least 6.5' long)
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 love and presence in their lives!

**Instructive Prep:**

Experiencing the return of a parent who is just not the same as the parent who left can be disorienting, frustrating, and bewildering for most kids. This is not what they expected to happen and, despite how often they heard about it or how “common” it may seem in the military community, they most likely will feel totally incapable of dealing with it. Along with this confusion comes a variety of responses – anger, indifference, depression, guilt, to name a few. Teens normally find their identity and self-worth through those closest to them in life, so when their mom or dad is suddenly incapable of speaking positively into their lives, and perhaps even speaking negatively, it will be a challenge for them to maintain healthy self-esteem.

This is where the importance of a foundation in Jesus Christ becomes crucial to their lives stability and resilience. By investing in kids as youth leaders, instructing them as to how to glean wisdom from the Scriptures, and exploring ways of talking and communing with God, we equip these young people with the tools to living life connected to the Lord – a life that will find fulfillment, stability, and love by living according to his purpose. Love is the most important concept because it restores and transforms. If kids begin to daily, hourly, each minute experience existing within the love of Christ, they will soon begin to communicate that love to their parents, other members of their family, and the rest of the people in their lives. God’s love is what will ultimately bring healing, and it is learning how to receive and pass on that love which will bring resilience into teens’ lives.

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 list or drawing a picture). 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:**

*Usually our Small Groups use a movie clip or a story to bring a different perspective to what’s going on in your life. This topic, however, has a lot of different angles to it, and we want you to have the chance to consider and discuss as many aspects as possible during your time together. To facilitate that, we have made the story section into a collection of verses with some specific issues they each address. Some are more practical and every day, while others cover bigger life philosophies. It can be confusing and complex which is why we want you to talk about it here together, rather than struggling with it on your own. Use this time to be honest about what you think, but also open your hearts and minds to the instruction of your leader and God. It can be tough to obey the Lord, but the struggle is always worth it.*

*Having a parent return home just not the same can be one of the most hurtful, frustrating, enraging, and disorienting things a kid experiences. Maybe you say it doesn’t matter, whatever, you’re off to college soon; or perhaps you desperately want to help them. Wherever you are at right now, take a few minutes now and consider the possibility that there’s another way to do things. I want you to look through some Scripture and talk about how what it says applies to your own life. Each of your stories is unique and sometimes God’s Word can be hard to digest, so use this group setting and later conversations with your leader to really process what God is instructing you to do.*

**Intro Story:**

*Struggling with how to treat someone who is hurt, or angry, or just a pain in the butt can be a frustrating thing. Often you may go through many different reactions over time, like compassion, irritation, detachment, and so on. That's normal and natural and you should allow grace for yourself as well as your mom or dad. What's important to remember, though, is how Jesus Christ calls us to live our lives – in love and servitude of each other, and respect for those in authority over us.*

*Take a look at these first two passages in 1 Peter and consider how they apply to your life.*

**1 Peter 3:8-17**

To conclude: you must all have the same attitude and the same feelings; love one another, and be kind and humble with one another. Do not pay back evil with evil or cursing with cursing; instead, pay back with a blessing, because a blessing is what God promised to give you when he called you. As the scripture says,

“If you want to enjoy life and wish to see good times, you must keep from speaking evil and stop telling lies. You must turn away from evil and do good; you must strive for peace with all your heart. For the Lord watches over the righteous and listens to their prayers; but he opposes those who do evil.”

Who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you should suffer for doing what is right, how happy you are! Do not be afraid of anyone, and do not worry. But have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honor him as Lord. Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect. Keep your conscience clear, so that when you are insulted, those who speak evil of your good conduct as followers of Christ will become ashamed of what they say. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if this should be God's will, than for doing evil.

**1 Peter 5:5-7**

In the same way you younger people must submit yourselves to your elders. And all of you must put on the apron of humility, to serve one another; for the scripture says, “God resists the proud, but shows favor to the humble.”<sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, then, under God's mighty hand, so that he will lift you up in his own good time.<sup>7</sup> Leave all your worries with him, because he cares for you.

*Now God doesn't just give us a command and then leave us to figure out how to do it. He gives us help across the board. And often his help covers both the little things like "don't hit your sister" and the bigger things like "learn how to live each day sharing the love of Jesus Christ." As you read through these next verses, think about what instructions you notice that are big, small, or both.*

**Ephesians 3:14-19** *Here Paul spells out the way to begin on a lifelong path of following God and living according to his purpose.*

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I fall on my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name. <sup>16</sup> I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves, <sup>17</sup> and I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, <sup>18</sup> so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love. <sup>19</sup> Yes, may you come to know his love—although it can never be fully known—and so be completely filled with the very nature of God.

<sup>20</sup> To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of: <sup>21</sup> to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time, forever and ever! Amen.

### **Philippians 2:1**

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 another.

*There are tons of ways people react when they are hurt, angry or frustrated. Think about the responses you have had just in the last week. Now compare those to how God calls us to act toward those around us.*

### **Ephesians 4:25-32**

No more lying, then! Each of you must tell the truth to the other believer, because we are all members together in the body of Christ. <sup>26</sup> If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin, and do not stay angry all day. <sup>27</sup> Don't give the Devil a chance. <sup>28</sup> If you used to rob, you must stop robbing and start working, in order to earn an honest living for yourself and to be able to help the poor. <sup>29</sup> Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you. <sup>30</sup> And do not make God's Holy Spirit sad; for the Spirit is God's mark of ownership on you, a guarantee that the Day will come when God will set you free. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. <sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ.

**Micah 6:8**

No, the LORD has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.

**Galatians 5:22**

But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. There is no law against such things as these.

**Intro Questions:**

1. What verse did you like the most?
2. Was there a particular word or concept that was repeated the most?

**Personal Reflection Questions:**

*Measure each teen’s height and have them answer the questions from tallest to shortest.*

1. Have you found yourself struggling with any of the negative emotions or actions mentioned in the verses above? Write down your top three. (use Student response sheet)
2. What are some things that God promises us if we follow and obey him? Do they seem possible? Do they seem worth it to you?
3. How do you feel when you think about respecting your parents? Has it changed since they’ve gotten back?
4. Take a minute and write down the ways you have disrespected your mom or dad recently. Discuss the pros and cons of giving taking a chance and trying to respect them in the way God instructs. (use Student response sheet)
5. Each of you write your own question and take turns asking and answering them together as a group:

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**Life Application:**

1. What are some of the big and small things listed in the verses that you want and/or need to begin doing regularly in your life? How do you think that would make a difference? (use Student response sheet)
  
2. Make a list of specific things you can do to show respect for your parents. Make a plan to start doing them, and discuss accountability and safety awareness as a group. (use Student response sheet)
  
3. If you haven't made the decision outlined in Ephesians 3 to have Christ make a home in your heart, take a minute to consider why that is. Regardless of how you are committed to God, quietly write, draw, or just think about where you and the Lord are at *right now*. If you feel comfortable, share this with the group, or with your youth leader later. (use Student response sheet)
  
4. Write your own challenge:

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**STUDENT RESPONSE:**

1. What are some of the big and small things listed in the verses that you want and/or need to begin doing regularly in your life? How do you think that would make a difference? (use Student response sheet)
  
2. Make a list of specific things you can do to show respect for your parents. Make a plan to start doing them, and discuss accountability and safety awareness as a group. (use Student response sheet)
  
3. If you haven't made the decision outlined in Ephesians 3 to have Christ make a home in your heart, take a minute to consider why that is. Regardless of how you are committed to God, quietly write, draw, or just think about where you and the Lord are at *right now*. If you feel comfortable, share this with the group, or with your youth leader later. (use Student response sheet)
  
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