

Breathe

Module: Message of Jesus

Lesson 5: Face-to-Face with Jesus and Fully Accepted

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- identify how Jesus' acceptance was shown in 3 different Bible stories
- identify something in their lives that holds them back from feeling accepted

Materials Needed:

- Bibles (1/student required)
- Paper cut into 1/8s (1/student)
- Lined paper (1 sheet/student)
- Pens or pencils
- Printout (3 pages in total)
- Garbage can

Pre-lesson preparation:

- Set up chairs in a circle for all students and leaders minus one (for the Minds On)
- Set up three separate stations (use Appendix A) with chairs where you will:
 - Station 1: Printout, page 1 taped to wall or chair, stack of lined paper, pens
 - Station 2: Printout, page 2 taped to wall or chair, stack of lined paper, pens
 - Station 3: Printout, page 3 taped to wall or chair, stack of lined paper, pens

Minds On: (15 minutes)

Game: Guilty Pleasures

Let the students know that when you say “go” they will head towards the chairs set up in the large circle. Everyone will take a seat with the exception of one person who will not have a chair. The person who doesn’t have a chair will stand in the middle. They will go first. This is an activity of admission and acceptance.

Tell the students they are going to play a game called “Guilty Pleasures”. The person in the middle will share something mildly embarrassing or nerdy about his or herself that they think someone else might share too, for example, if you love My Little Pony, you will say “I have a guilty pleasure... I still love “My Little Pony”. Everyone who has the same guilty pleasure will stand up, and try to find a different chair. The person who misses a chair has to share their “Guilty Pleasure”. If only one person stands, just switch spots with the person in the middle. If no one stands, the person in the middle has to go again.

The students who do not “like” the same things, also have a role to play. These students have two responsibilities: 1. they are not to make fun of what people say, and 2. they are to cheer for the admission of nerdiness. (e.g. Person in the Middle: “I still eat Dunkaroos”. Students: Woot! Yeah! Wahoo!) Have a couple of leaders, or yourself, go first to set the standard of “nerdiness” or “embarrassment”. Monitor the activity yourself and play it as long as the students are still enjoying it. Help students with some prompters if they are having trouble thinking of anything. (e.g. Is there a TV show that you still watch that you watched when you were really young? Do you still sleep with a teddy bear?)

When you feel as though the activity has served its purpose (probably no longer than 7-8 minutes), stop the activity and bring the students to the normal meeting area or set-up.

Ask a couple of questions:

1. Was anyone surprised by anything that you said that someone else agreed with?

2. How did you feel about yourself when someone agreed with you?
3. Why do you think it is important for us to feel accepted?

Allow the students to explore these questions briefly.

Prompt:

We all want to be accepted. We all want to be a part of something. We all want to know that we are loved for who we are. With Jesus, we always have that love and acceptance.

Action: (50 minutes)

Prompt:

In a few minutes, we will have the opportunity to look at the stories of people who came face-to-face with Jesus and experienced his acceptance despite all else.

Leader's Note:

Students will have the chance to address something that is holding them back from being willing to experience full acceptance from Christ – not because of Jesus, but because of their own unwillingness to forgive themselves.

Tell students that when you say “go” they will move to the station you point them to. At each station, students will find the story in their own Bible, read it, and jot down their answers to the questions posted on the worksheet on the lined paper provided. Tell students that they will use their lined paper to answer questions from all stations, but that they do not have to answer every question provided.

Station 1: John 8:1-11 Adulterous Woman

Station 2: John 4:1-30 Woman at the well

Station 3: Luke 19:1-10 Zacchaeus

With your three pre-set stations, divide students into three groups: light-coloured shirts, dark-coloured shirts, and bright-coloured shirts and send one group to each station.

Coaching Tip: Self-Pacing

Students will be taking their time through each station and pacing themselves. If a student only finishes one station, that is okay. If a student finishes all three, that is okay. Let them know this is not a race, nor do they have to get to all three. Allow your students to go at their own rate. As students do this, have all leaders interspersed throughout the stations. Allow students to ask questions to the leaders, but otherwise, students will be moving from station to station on their own. The students will have 35-40 minutes to work through the different stations on their own.

Once your time is up have students gather back together. Ask them to take a moment to think about one idea that struck them most out of the stories, partner up with a friend (allow them to choose) and share that one thing. Once they share with their partner, have them come back together as a large group. See if any volunteers would be comfortable sharing in the larger group and perhaps take two or three answers. Ask the group if they wrote down anything that was surprising to them, challenged them, or that they thought about for the first time today.

Prompt:

Jesus encountered people from different walks and different backgrounds. Even though many were considered bad people and sinners, Jesus saw them as children of God. He looked past how others saw them to how God sees them. Jesus even loved those who had a hard time loving themselves. He embraced the unloved and loved those who no one else loved. He still does. Jesus loves each of us fully and completely. He accepts us as we are.

Consolidate/Debrief: (10 minutes)

Breathe In

Have students sit in a circle. Place a garbage can in the centre of the circle.

Prompt:

As we think about the different people we read about tonight, and the different ways that people felt blocked from being really accepted by God, consider yourself for a moment. On the small pieces of paper provided, write down a way or ways that you feel blocked from being fully accepted by God. (e.g. I feel like God can't love me because of the things I've done. I feel like God can't love me because of the things I think about. I feel like God can't love me because I feel like no one can.)

Pass out a blank piece of paper and pen to each student, and give them a few minutes to write down a response. Take a moment and have the students reflect on what they wrote. Pray together. Pray that each student would no longer feel a barrier to God. Pray that they would feel loved and fully accepted. Once you finish praying, have the students tear up or crumple up their paper and throw it into the garbage.

Breathe Out

As students head out into their week, challenge them to show the same grace to others. Challenge them to take the things that they hold against other people, tear them up, and throw them out (metaphorically, of course!). As students go to school, home, or anywhere in-between, encourage them to see others the way Jesus sees them, and urge them to get rid of the excuses or reasons they make for not loving others.

Station 1: The Adulterous Woman

READ: John 8:1-11

WRITE: Your thoughts to the following questions:

1. Was there anything in this story that you read this time that you didn't notice before?
2. How do you think the woman felt when Jesus spoke to the people who tried to have her stoned? When he spoke to her?
3. Have you ever been stuck in a situation when people were judging you for something? How did it feel?
4. Have you ever been in a situation when you were judging someone else? How do you think they felt?
5. How do you think this face-to-face encounter with Jesus affected the woman's life?

THINK: Is there a situation in your life that you feel like Jesus wants to tell you that he doesn't condemn you, and to "Go and sin no more"?

PRAY: If you had an answer to the THINK section, pray about that. Hand over that sin to God.

If you didn't have an answer to the THINK section, pray about the times when you have judged other people. Ask God to help you to not be so quick to judge and to be filled with love instead.

Station 2: The Woman at the Well

READ: John 4:1-30

WRITE: Your thoughts to the following questions:

1. Was there anything in this story that you read this time that you didn't notice before?
2. Jesus knew all about this woman, and made it clear to her that he did, but he did not judge her. Why do you think Jesus pointed out her sins to her?
3. Jesus took time to talk to this woman that others probably overlooked quite often. (He even took the time to tell her his secret: "I AM the Messiah!") Why do you think he did that?
4. How do you think this face-to-face encounter with Jesus changed this woman's life?

THINK: Have you ever had a time when you overlooked someone else because you thought that they were not "cool" enough (or smart enough, old enough, young enough, pretty enough, etc.)?

OR

Have you ever experience a time when you didn't feel like you were "cool" enough (or smart enough, old enough, pretty enough, worthy, etc.)?

PRAY: Take time to pray that God would help you to not measure up people this way (including yourself!), but instead, to see each person as a child of God – a bro or a sis!

Station 3: Zacchaeus

READ: Luke 19: 1-10

WRITE: Your thoughts to the following questions:

1. Was there anything in this story that you read this time that you didn't notice before?
2. Just for fun: Do you know the words to *Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man*? If you do, when the group gets back together, you and others who know it can sing it for everyone else!
3. Zacchaeus was called "a notorious sinner" by the people. How do you think that made him feel?
4. Despite the fact that Zacchaeus had wrongly taken money from people, Jesus is his guest and shows him love and acceptance. How do you think this face-to-face encounter with Jesus changed Zacchaeus?

THINK: Have you ever labeled someone kind of like that? Maybe as a loser? Dirty? A jerk? How do you think that affects a person? Have you ever been labeled in this way? How does it make you feel?

PRAY: Take time to pray for people who have been labeled wrongly. Ask God to help you help others not feel restricted to those labels. Pray that God allows you to help others encounter him face-to-face.