

LESSON 3: MOVING FORWARD IN FREEDOM

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

1. LEADER PREPARATION**LESSON OVERVIEW**

The journey to freedom is an ongoing process. It will never be truly complete until we are in heaven with Jesus, but along the way we can find the freedom that he so longs to give us. As we go through difficulties and struggles, Jesus uses those moments to refine us and shape us into the people he wants us to be.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- 1. WHAT:** We can help students understand that Jesus cares about their journey and desires greatly to give them freedom in their struggles.
- 2. WHY:** Understanding who God is, who we are, and how we fit in helps us along the way through difficult times.
- 3. HOW:** When teenagers see who God is and what our future with him is all about, they can find purpose and meaning as they continue moving forward in freedom.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 1:3-12

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

John 15:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 3:1

TEACHING PREP

**LEADER
TIP**

Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.

Read 1 Peter 1:3-12.

We all have times in life when we struggle. That struggle is different for each of us, and it may even seem like it is a bigger deal to some than others. No matter what, the struggle is real. Tragedy, heartbreak, pain, hurt, and other painful moments can lead us down a dangerous path if we don't embrace Jesus' "rescue" during those times. So many will turn to others for answers and not listen to what Jesus has to say. Many will self-destruct as a result of life's struggles.

Jesus' intent for us during hard times is not to self-destruct. He has a plan for us and wants us to grow from the difficulties. That growth is where we find the freedom that Jesus came to give us. We don't have to turn back toward destructive behavior that blurs the truth of what he has for us.

Your students can discover how Jesus wants to refine them like gold as they walk through difficult times. That is where they can grow and become stronger in their faith. Knowing that Jesus is walking alongside us through it all is so important. We cannot miss that. That is where freedom is found.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

TEXTS OR TWEETS

Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- Are you still moving forward in freedom? Let's discover how we can stay focused on Jesus even if tough times come back. See you tonight!
- How do life's troubles reveal our true character? Come to group this week ready to talk about it.

PARENT EMAIL

Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We've wrapped up our "Staying Free" series, and it has been a great time of sharing together. In our final conversation, we talked about how we all struggle through difficult times in our lives. We looked at who God is, who we are in Christ, and how we fit in—important questions that we continue to answer as we move forward in freedom.

When we look to Jesus and remain rooted in the truths of Scripture, we discover an ongoing source of freedom, even in the middle of troubled times. Our desire is to help teenagers understand how much Jesus values them and that he can help them grow when they go through those times.

As you go throughout the week, help reinforce this teaching in your teenager's life by asking these kinds of questions as you have the opportunity:

- Talk about some ways you more clearly understand who Jesus is, compared to a few months ago.
- How does a Jesus-centered understanding of who you are help you keep moving forward in freedom?
- What is one way I can pray for you this week?

Praying for you and your family!

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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

LEADER
TIP

Preview the following video for your group: youtube.com/watch?v=Z52rcLOWJ38 (or another video clip of a gold-refining process). You will need an Internet connection and a computer or tablet to display the video for your participants. This brief clip shows one stage of the gold-refining process. The audio is not great, so we recommend that you play some other music in the background as it plays.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, show the video, and then ASK:

- Give us some examples of how our culture places a high value on gold.
- When gold first comes out of the ground, it is impure—why is it such a big deal to purify gold?
- In what ways does this brief video remind you of your life as a follower of Jesus?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *This video offers a brief glimpse at how gold is refined to make it as pure as possible. There are a lot of steps to that process, including burning, melting, pouring acid, and other stages. Imagine life being like this. You are burned by someone you care about. It hurts. Something terrible happens in your family. You cry. Things go on that don't seem to make sense. You hold on to Jesus. You trust him. You listen to him. You grow. You become stronger. You discover that the end result is that you are closer to Jesus because of those difficult times, and your faith and trust grew because of those experiences. You are like gold—purified gold.*

TEACHING POINTS

LEADER
TIP

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read 1 Peter 1:3-12 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so several people have a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Who likes to go through difficulties? Not me. The idea of having hard times in life is not thrilling. Unfortunately, it's something we all have to go through. No one is immune to it. What we do with that difficult stuff is what determines how we come out in the end—it's the key to continuing our journey to freedom.*

1. STAY FOCUSED ON WHO GOD IS

ASK:

- *Talk about some ways you more clearly understand who Jesus is, compared to a few months ago.*
- *What does this passage reveal to you about who God is?*
- *Look at verse 5—give us a recent example of how God has protected you physically, spiritually, or relationally.*
- *How does a solid understanding of who Jesus is help you keep moving forward in freedom?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *This Scripture points us toward God's character: God is merciful, God protects us, God loves us, and God promises the incredible reward of heaven. God offers freedom and forgiveness through Christ. God so deeply wants to see us through the difficult times that he reminds us what he has done for us—and what our future holds. Jesus is trustworthy, and we can hold on during those times, knowing that we can trust all his promises to be true.*

2. STAY FOCUSED ON WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST

ASK:

- *Choose three words that best describe who you are—and tell us why you chose those words.*
- *When do you have the toughest time remembering your true identity in Christ?*
- *How do life's troubles reveal our true character?*
- *When you consider how Jesus truly views you, what is easy or difficult to accept?*
- *Verse 3 talks about living with "great expectation"—what are your "great expectations," related to your relationship with Jesus?*
- *Look at verses 6-7—how has your character grown or been sharpened by trials or challenges in life?*
- *How does a Jesus-centered understanding of who you are help you keep moving forward in freedom?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Jesus sees you in a way that no one truly can. He sees beyond your faults and mistakes. He sees beyond any poor choices you've made in the past—and will make in the future. He sees you as his beloved. He loves you so deeply—and just as importantly, Jesus LIKES you! That's pretty awesome! There is freedom when we remain focused on who we are in Christ.*

3. STAY FOCUSED ON WHERE YOU TRULY FIT IN

ASK:

- *Why do we all value fitting in with a group of people?*
- *How are you finding meaningful opportunities to fit in with other members of God's family—not in ways that change or conform who you are, but in ways that are consistent with your God-created uniqueness?*
- *Tell us about your current understanding of Jesus' mission for your life.*

- *How does a Jesus-centered understanding of where you fit in help you keep moving forward in freedom?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *It is easy to feel like we don't fit in. We are surrounded by messages about how we should live our lives, what we should wear, how we should look, and what we should watch, listen to, and read. It can be overwhelming—and we can often feel like we don't hit the mark in many of those areas, causing us to feel like losers or loners. But God created us to fit into his plan and mission for our lives. God created the body of Christ as a place to serve and belong. God brings people into our lives who will love us and who need our genuine, authentic love. Your life has purpose and meaning. All of this helps us find freedom and keep moving forward in freedom. [NOTE: Consider sharing a short story of a time when you felt like you didn't fit in and how God ended up moving you in a way to fit perfectly into his mission for your life—or how God brought you to a place of meaningful relationship with other followers of Jesus.]*

EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three to discuss these questions.



ASK:

- *Look up these verses and discuss what each Scripture reveals about how God sees you: John 15:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 3:1.*
- *Which of those verses is most meaningful to you, and why?*

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

LIVING IT OUT

ASK:

- *This week, how can you discover more deeply who Jesus is? who you are? where you fit in?*
- *Where do you need Jesus' help in finding freedom from your struggles?*
- *How can this group encourage and support you on the continuing journey to freedom?*

SUMMARY



Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation” (1 Peter 1:3).