Lesson 5 / April 2, 2017

God Is In Our Corner

By Lea Vaverchak

Students will discuss their failures and learn how God responds when we mess up.

Materials:
☐ Boxes of spaghetti noodles (1 box per team of 3-4 students)
☐ Bags of marshmallows (1 bag per team of 3-4 students)
☐ Timer or stop watch app

Put students into groups of three to four. Give each team a box of raw spaghetti noodles and a bag of marshmallows. Tell them their job is to create the highest tower they can in five minutes using the materials you’ve supplied. Use a timer or stop watch app on your smartphone to time the process.

When the time ends, their towers must be able to stand on their own without any support. Be sure not to give them any help or advice. When time is up, judge who has succeeded and who has failed at the task.

➢ How did it work out for you? Did you make any mistakes or would you do things differently if asked to give it another go? Explain. (Answers may include: We couldn’t get the tower to stay standing on its own; we didn’t make the tower tall enough; we accidentally knocked the tower over a few times, etc.)

➢ How did you treat your teammates in this task? Did you get upset if they didn’t listen to your ideas? Did you forgive them if they messed up, or didn’t have the best idea? (Answers will vary but may include: We all got along great; I got impatient with them when they made a mistake; I could have listened to their ideas more, etc.)

➢ How are you feeling about your success or failure in this task? (Answers: Even though we won, I think I could make it even better with more time; I’m upset we lost; I want a second chance to make it better!)

➢ Can you think of any ways you’ve failed in the past in life and wish you could have a “do over”? Tell us about it. (Be sure to share a personal experience of your own so your preteens know this is a safe place to share.)
Mistakes are a part of life. Failures come and go. Today we’re going to learn about the Author of second chances. How does Jesus respond when we mess-up? What does He think about our mistakes? Does He give second chances? Let’s find out.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher’s guide; your Step 4 appears below.)
Today we learned failure happens to everyone, even Jesus’ disciples. We saw how Peter denied knowing Jesus three times and yet Jesus was compassionate toward Peter and forgave Him. Peter’s life wasn’t over! He could continue to follow Jesus and serve Him. Peter went on to help lead God’s church. That is amazing forgiveness.

Mistakes and failures are inevitable in life. We want to do the right thing, we mean to, but sometimes we make a bad choice, forget our priorities, or just get lazy. Teachers know students need lots of encouragement throughout their school day. Teachers can be our biggest cheerleaders, reminding us to do our best and reach our potential. Sometimes knowing that support is there can be the difference between success and failure. Let’s watch the following video clips of two different teachers setting their students up for success.

Barry White Jr. is a fifth grade teacher at Ashley Park PreK-8 School in Charlotte, NC. He has used personalized handshakes as a way to connect with each of his students and encourage them in their day.

Play the following clip:
Length of video [1:02]:
Teacher Has Personalized Handshakes With Every One of His Students
http://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/teacher-personalized-handshakes-students/story?id=45190825
Heather Finch is a second grade teacher at St. John Elementary school in Memphis. She wanted to create connections with her students so she changed the lyrics to a popular song to encourage them in their education. They sing and dance to the song every day. Listen to the lyrics, and see if you can pick out some positive things they’re singing. If students can’t understand the lyrics, they can be found at the end of this step under Additional Resources.

Share the following video [0:45]:
JuJu on that Beat Morning Song
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk-z6WCvjjA

➢ How does a personalized handshake and a positive song and dance help students become successful? (Answers may include: It helps start their day on a positive note; gets their minds focused on what’s important; reminds them their teachers care about them; every day is a new day with a second chance available, etc.)

➢ How do you think these two teachers respond to students when they fail? (Answers: They probably give them second and third chances; they give them more encouragement; they show them compassion and help them figure out how to fix the problem, etc.)

➢ How do responses to our failures and mistakes influence us? (Answers: When responses are positive and upbeat, we will be willing to try again.)

It’s important for us to remember every day that our failure isn’t fatal. It doesn’t mean our lives are over, and it doesn’t mean that our confessed sin will keep us from God. He loves us so much.

Let’s create a daily reminder of God’s love, compassion, and forgiveness. Since God is our ultimate teacher and He’s in our corner rooting for us every day, what kind of handshake or song would He have us sing in His classroom?

Have students partner with a friend and choose to create a handshake or song and dance to remind them of what they’ve learned in today’s lesson of God’s forgiveness, mercy and love. If students choose a handshake, they might recite today’s verse as they shake their partner’s hand in a fun way. Or at the end of the handshake shout something like, “Failure isn’t fatal!” or “I’m forgiven!”

If preteens choose to write a song (dance moves are optional), tell them they can choose a popular song to rewrite with new lyrics or just use a known tune like “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” They can use the notebook paper provided to record their lyrics.

Encourage students to teach their siblings or parents their new handshakes or songs, so they can do them together each morning. They might also teach friends at school.

Have partners share what they’ve created.

➢ How will starting off your day with a positive handshake or song and dance help you? (Answers may include: It’ll focus my mind on what’s important—God’s love for me; it’ll remind me that God will always forgive me when I ask Him; It’ll put me in a good mood because I’ll feel encouraged, etc.)
God made sure the story of Peter’s failure of denying Jesus was included in Scripture because God wanted us to know He forgives. No sin is too scary or too great for God. If we truly repent of our sins and ask for forgiveness, He will show compassion on us and forgive us, just as He did Peter.

As you go through your week, start your day on a positive note. Post your song lyrics by your bedroom mirror to read each day or rehearse the words you say during your handshake as you get ready for school. Sing your song, dance your dance, or shake hands with your sibling or friends and focus yourself on Jesus. Then, pray and ask God to lead and guide your day. He is your Encourager. He is in your corner. In the words of Ms. Finch’s morning song, “It’s gonna be a good day!”

Depending on time and supplies, you might give the teams a second chance at creating a new and stronger tower from the materials in Step 1.

Pray to close.

Additional resources:
  Morning Song [Lyrics]
  https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1Cg3arcicAAS1l2eXhFeEF1aUU/view

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