



S1.Lesson 9: Worry

Middle School Lesson Plans

Supplies: Journals; tv or laptop to show movie clip (movie clip link is available at rfour.org/curriculum.html); at least 64 green beans (go with 70 to be safe); one or two big bags of skittles; two cups (paper or otherwise) at least 16 oz big; a very open-mouthed bowl that easily allows access to 4 hands at one time. A stopwatch of some sort and a pen and paper or some other way to keep score.

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING ACTIVITY - Green Bean/Skittle Relay

TELL

- Find a partner
- Decide which one of you is coffee and which of you is chocolate.
- (give them 30 seconds to figure it all out)
- OK, those who are Coffee are now on the Coffee team which lines up over here. Chocolate team lines up over here
- The first two people on the two teams must each take a total of 16 green beans and put two green beans between each finger (and finger and thumb) on each hand.
- Now when I say go, the first person in line for Chocolate and for Coffee will run down to this bowl of skittles and without dropping a green bean or moving a green bean from between their fingers, they will grab as many skittles as possible and bring those skittles back to their team.
- Upon return, the person will drop the skittles in their team's cup.
- Once that person drops the skittles in the cup, then the next person on the team can go to the skittle bowl.
- While that person is getting skittles, the person who just returned will be giving the next person the green beans to put between their fingers.
- Each team gets 1 point per skittle IN the cup.
- The team that finishes first gets 1 point per second that they beat the other team
- Each team loses 2 points for each dropped green bean
- Any questions?
- ...Go!

DO Green Bean/Skittle Relay

ASK

- Do you think the relay would be easier if you didn't have to hold on to green beans?
- Do you think if everyone on your team had just dropped the green beans and took heaping handfuls of skittles that you might have won or won more easily?

TELL

- We're going to talk about worry today and how it can get in the way with our relationship with God.
- Think of worry as "thoughts that grow from a lack of trust."
- For example, if you don't trust your preparation for a test, then you'll worry about the test.
- The problem with worry is that it can preoccupy us.
- Think of those green beans as worry thoughts.
- Each bean takes up space.
- And each bean kept you from holding on to the things that would've helped you play the game better.
- Let's look at today's scripture story. Listen for ways people in the story are not trusting....

READ Jonah Chapter 1 (from The Message)

Jonah 1 - 1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah (who was a prophet – someone who speaks for God to the people). God told Jonah, **2** "Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah set out to for Tarshish which was in the opposite direction from Nineveh. **3** Jonah was afraid of Nineveh and was also afraid that God would forgive Nineveh. So Jonah found a ship going to Tarshish; he paid his fare and went on board.

4 But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. **5** Then the sailors were afraid, and each cried to his god. **7** Then the sailors said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know whose fault this is." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. **8** Then the sailors said to Jonah, "Tell us why this is happening?" Jonah told them and the men were even more afraid, and said to him, "What is this that you have done!"

11 Then the sailors said to Jonah, "What can we do so that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea was growing more and more stormy. **12** Jonah said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you." **13** Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. **14** Then they cried out to the Lord, "Please, O Lord, we pray, let this be the right thing to do because we do not want to do it." **15** So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. **16** Then the men offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. **17** But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. In the belly of the large fish, Jonah prayed to God. Then the fish spat Jonah up on a beach.

ASK/TELL

- In verse two, what is God's plan?
- In verse two, what is Jonah's plan?
- In verse three, what worry-thoughts do you think Jonah is holding on to that is causing him to not listen to God?

- In verse 7, the sailors have their own worry-thoughts, right? What are they trying to do? (They are looking to place blame on someone.)
- Still in verse 7: Looks like Jonah is the one to not trust
- So in verse 12, Jonah finally realizes he's been hanging on to the wrong thoughts. So he tells the sailors to let go of him (throw him into the sea)
- But sailors STILL are not trusting Jonah. So what do they do (verse 13 and 14)?
- Verse 14 is a good verse because it shows how we can express worry-thoughts in prayer. The sailors express why they are distrustful (because we do not want to do it), but then because they've said it, then they do what Jonah has told them to do.
- In verse 15, both the sailors and Jonah finally let go of their distrust and what happens? (the storm stops)
- Let's watch our film clip from Finding Nemo. In it, the two fish, Nemo's Dad and Dorrie have been swallowed by a whale. Watch for how worry-thoughts affect Nemo's Dad.

WATCH Finding Nemo clip

- Nemo's dad seems pretty worried, doesn't he?
- What are the reasons for his worry:
 - He says "I promised him (Nemo) that I wouldn't let anything happen to him."
 - And he says to Dorrie, "how do you know something bad isn't going to happen?"
 - He also doesn't trust that Dorrie can talk "whale."
 - Nor does he trust that the whale has good intentions for them.
- What does Nemo's Dad eventually have to do? (he has to trust the whale)
- And what is the result of trusting the whale? (He gets shot out of the whale and the last thing he says in the clip is, "We're ALIVE!")
- Often times, we think we're supposed to hang on to those green beans/thoughts because if we don't, then we'll get punished or in trouble (like in the game) or someone will get hurt (like Nemo's Dad thinking that Nemo would get hurt).
- But that's not the full story.
- By holding onto the worry-thoughts or green beans (or the whale's tongue), we are hampered in our ways to live more closely to the way God designed us to live.
- For Jonah, his worries caused him to run away and get stuck in a storm.
- For Nemo's Dad worry kept him from being able to trust his friend Dorrie and the whale.
- If we can put a name to what we're worried about, then we give those worries to God. We can tell God in prayer, in the moment, "God, I hand my worries over to you. Help me to pay attention to what's in front of me. Show me your way in this moment."
- For Jonah, when he finally does this, the storm stops and the sailors live and Jonah gets a second chance.
- Nemo's Dad gets free of the whale.
- And we would've carried more skittles.
- But remember, letting go of worry is not easy.

- That's why we need God's help to do it best.

If there's time....

Journal

- List some things that you worry about.
- What are you not trusting that cause these worries?
- Then write a note, asking God to help you let go of these things that you are worried about.

CLOSING PRAYER

NOTE: On next page, a map helping to see the geographical directions of Tarshish and Nineveh. Feel free to use it (or not) however you choose.

