

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

ONE'S A LONELY NUMBER

Topic: Loneliness

Purpose of this Session:

Adults tell young people the teen years are the best years of their lives. Adults forget these years can be very lonely in the midst of the carefree fun. This TalkSheet offers your group the chance to talk about their lonely feelings, the causes and cures of loneliness and how God can help.

To Introduce the Session:

Tell the students they are going to make up a progressive story about loneliness. Begin the story by saying, "Skip was getting ready to go to school, when. . ." then let a student proceed with the plot, continuing around the group. The only rules are the story should be kept clean and be about loneliness. You will end up with a lonely story and a good lead-in to the discussion.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Ask the students to share and explain their choices. Ask if any other words came to mind and make a master list of all the words thought of.

Item #2: Young people often assume if they are bored or alone, then they are lonely. They need to understand they don't always have to be entertained or be with a crowd. In fact, they can be entertained or with their friends and still feel lonely.

Item #3: Focus on "b" and talk about being alone and being lonely. A person can be alone and not be lonely. Also focus on the fact that Christ felt lonely. (See Matthew 13:53-57, Luke 4:24-30, Mark 14:22, 27, 31, 50, Mark 15:1-34.) In today's world, young people believe they must be entertained constantly. They suffer from stimulus overload and don't know how to deal with periods of being quiet or being alone. Help them understand they need times of "aleness" and that these "lonely" times are not bad. They can be very healthy. Learning to be content when alone is one of the first signs of real maturity.

Item #4: Have the students share their choices and explain why they ranked them in the order they chose. Ask how loneliness could be remedied for each type of person.

Item #5: Help the students understand Elijah's situation. After they have had some time to write their postcards, have them read them aloud. Ask if they have ever felt like Elijah. Brainstorm practical and concrete solutions to loneliness. Some possible solutions are prayer, not comparing oneself to others, enjoying solitude, reading a psalm, talking with parents, and reaching out to help others.

To Close the Session:

Help the students understand when they are lonely, Christ is with them. They may feel lonely, but they are never alone. Encourage them to remember to take advantage of their lonely times by taking time for prayer.

Emphasize that the main reason we experience a feeling such as loneliness is our gregariousness. God created us to have good and close relationships with other people. We were created to live in families and in community with others. That's why it's important to protect our relationships and to do whatever we can to improve them. Close by using a community-building activity. Hundreds of them can be found in the *IDEAS* series published by Youth Specialties.

Outside Activities:

Have the students schedule an hour of their time in a "lonely place", away from everyone, without radio, television or any other distraction. Have them concentrate on being alone with themselves, just sitting and thinking or praying. Have them share their thoughts about the experience afterward.