

# Youth Group Lesson on Family

**Bible:** Joshua 24:15

**Bottom Line:** Family can be amazing and messy, but a family that loves God together can be an awesome thing for the world to see.

## LEADER PREP

God created us for relationship and there is no relationship quite like that of a family that is seeking God together.

Today's lesson might be the first picture that some students get of a family that could really change the world for God together.

Family can be a very dicey topic with youth because nobody's family is perfect.

Sadly, some of our teens' families are very far from perfect.

Family can also be wonderful and some of the students in your group might be a part of an amazing and godly family.

It's important to remember that sitting in your group could be students who have suffered at the hands of their family or ARE currently suffering, so pray even now that your words might bring them the healing and clarity that they need.

And for many of you, leaders, you might know in a very personal way the messiness of family.

Prayerfully ask God to give you the words to share to be honest, yet to not use the time with the youth as your own personal therapy.

Spend some time before this lesson thinking about the specific families of the students in the youth group and pray for those who you know might be struggling.

## **OPENING GAME – Family Charades**

Divide the group into 2 teams.

You could have older siblings on one team versus the younger siblings or some other random grouping.

Teams will send a member of their team to act out one of the following family 'relationships' using words or actions to get their team to guess the word first.

Leader will tell the 2 opponents the word they are to act out and then say 'Go'.

**Family Words:** Cousin, Brother, Grandpa, Godmother, 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin, Step mom, Mother, Uncle, Grandmother, Step sister

### **After the game, ask:**

Which family relationships would you add to the list that weren't mentioned in the game?

What family relationships do you think are the toughest for people in general?

Which family member would you like to be like in your life? Why?

## **TEACH – Youth Group Lesson on Family**

Find some funny family photos to project (if you don't have any go to <http://awkwardfamilyphotos.com/> and find some hilarious options.

It would also be funny to find some funny photos of your family to show.

**Say:** We are going to show some pictures of families

Raise your hand when you see one that might as well be your family.

*Have a good time with this activity.*

Families can be super funny, awkward, messy.... (add words that you think of when we talk about family.)

Give the students a chance to share their words, which will give you insight into where they might be in regards to thinking about family.

What emotions come to your mind when we talk about families?

Would it surprise you to hear that there are more dysfunctional families in the Bible than there are good ones?

There are some really messed up families in the Bible - brothers who sell their brother and then pretend that he is dead (Joseph), a brother who tricks his blind dad to think that he is his other brother (Jacob), a son who chooses his Dad's enemy over his dad (Jonathan), and then there are some really troubling stories in the Bible that we won't go into here, but just trust me...it gets really dark. You should read it!

But here is something to think about - why do you think that God created families?

What do you think God had in mind with moms and dads and children and grandparents?

There is one passage in the Old Testament that really does give an amazing idea of what God might have intended with families to look like:

### **Read Joshua 24:15**

Some of you sitting here might be the only Christian in your family, but this passage of scripture could be a reminder to you that YOUR family, when you are a parent, could be a picture to others of God's love.

*If you have a story from your life of someone in your family who might have come to faith, or a relationship that has been reconciled, share it!*

Ask yourself, if my family were asked to make a choice right now, would we serve God even if everyone around us was not choosing God?

What if your family didn't choose God, would you be able to say to them like Joshua did - "I am choosing God"?

Because for some of you, your family might not ever take the stand that Joshua made, but you won't always be the 'youth' or child in your family, right?

Someday, you will be the adult and maybe today you need to hear that YOU can be the one even right now to make that stand for your family, both now and in the future.

God can do amazing things in even the worst families.

Maybe some of us here have seen families changed by the love of God...and it is these stories that remind us to pray for our family, ESPECIALLY if your family is a hot mess!

Because God is in the business of redeeming lost lives.

Just like the Bible is full of stories of dysfunctional families and messed up people in them, the Bible also is full of stories in which truly messed up people are transformed into beautiful testaments of God's power.

Stories of lives changed and people who were hateful, selfish, and mean became true people of God.

Stories of forgiveness.

Stories of joy and redemption.

And God can do that in your family.

It might not happen tomorrow or the next day or even in a year, but begin praying even today for God to do amazing things in the lives of your family members.

Some of you might have amazing parents, and if you do, thank God and thank them because it can be really easy to take them for granted.

Ask anyone who has had parents who are less than great and they will tell you not to ever take them for granted.

Sure, they might nag you or not let you stay out until 2 am, but if they love God, love you and are trying....you are one of the lucky few.

Maybe things that are really tough and hard are going on in your family, and if that's the case, please find an adult that you trust to share these things with because it is never ok for family to hurt you on purpose.

Maybe your family is ok, but there is some tension, which is tough.

Maybe your parents are divorced or family members are sick.

These things can be really tough.

But know this: God sees your family issues and He is listening.

I want you to think of one relationship in your family that is not what it should be, and honestly, sometimes this is not your fault at all.

But picture them in your mind, and right now, let's pray for those relationships.

Pray with me:

God, I lift up (say the name of your family member to yourself right now).

Our relationship is (choose a word that would describe your relationship with them and say it now).

God, you are in the business of doing amazing things in people's lives, and I ask that you cover us in your love.

Help us to choose you, God.

Amen.

## **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Give the youth a chance to share the family member they prayed for if they feel comfortable.

Share about a family relationship that makes you happy. Why?

Share about family relationship that is a challenge to you. Why?

What dreams do you have for your family when you grow older and maybe have your own family?

What do you wish your parents knew or would do?

How could your family serve God and share his love as a family?

# Youth Group Lesson on Honesty

**Bible:** Luke 16:1-15

**The Big Idea:** The power of the truth.

## LEADER PREP

Honesty is one of those areas that students that we serve can see Christ very clearly or vice versa.

Teenagers really do watch us, and that's one of the reasons that honesty is so important.

Ask yourself *honestly* - what was the last lie that you told? (And if you are trying right now to reason with yourself that 'it was just a white lie or an omission' - yes, count that one).

I don't know about you, but this is one area in which God is constantly sharpening me.

When I go to God and really ask him to search my heart, my words, and to let me know how I might have failed - these are the times that I have been not only truly humbled, but I also find that I hear God more clearly.

He helps me to grow in ways that simply were not possible before.

Each of us can probably think of a story of a teenager that we've known who was dishonest and it caused them a lifetime of hurt.

This lesson today just might be something that a student will remember in a key time in which they can make a decision to be honest and save them and others from hurt.

## OPENING GAME - You Lie

### SUPPLIES

Boxes with crazy and creative things to put in boxes for the game (see below)

Room divider or sheet

This game originated on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*.

Click here to see a very funny  
example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8vNn0WfUnY>

## **HOW TO PLAY THE GAME**

Choose 2 contestants, one to be the guesser and the other to either tell them the truth or a lie.

Set up a divider between 2 contestants facing one another.

You could even have 2 other youth volunteers hold up a sheet leaving the top open for the 2 contestants to be able to see one another's faces.

Try to come up with the most random and strange items to put in shoeboxes.

Have the first contestant choose a box.

They will explain or lie and give a made up explanation to the other contestant of the contents of their box.

Their opponent will guess whether they are telling the truth or lying.

This game could go on as long as you wish and you could even show them the clip of Jimmy Fallon and Emma Stone at the end.

### **After the game, ask:**

How could you tell when the contestants were lying?

Who surprised you the most with their 'performance' in this game?

How is this game like real life?

Why do you think that people lie?

## **TEACH – Youth Group Lesson on Honesty**

*Share a story from your life, funny or serious, in which you told a lie and the consequences that followed.*

This game and my story show a funny side of lying and being dishonest, but let's be honest: It really is a big deal.

Think about a time recently that you have lied.

I am not going to ask you to share and don't worry, your parents aren't hiding in the back to catch you.

Just think about a lie that you've told: Why did you lie?

What were you afraid would happen if you didn't lie?

Now, whether others figured out that you lied—you knew right?

See, that's the lie that you can tell yourself about lying: That no one will know.

But, that's not true is it? Because *you* know.

Maybe it doesn't matter to you, but I would argue that it does.

I need 2 volunteers to help act out a parable that Jesus told:

**Read Luke 16:1-8a.**

*Choose a person to be the rich man and another to be the manager.*

*Read the Scripture and have students act it out as you are reading.*

*When you get to the part where they bring in other debtors, just have the manager grab people from the crowd!*

*Have the volunteers sit down.*

Jesus told parables to share deep kingdom ideas in simple ways.....so what do you think that Jesus was trying to say with this parable?

I am going to have you get into groups of 5-6 and I want you to come up with 2 theories of what you think Jesus was trying to teach: and yes, one will be a truth and the other will be a lie.

We might all be completely confused by the time this lesson is over, but have fun with it.

*Give the group about 5 minutes to think of their theories and then, if time allows, give them a chance to present their theories to the large group.*

*Try to guess which is the truth, and which is the lie, or if there are more than 6 groups, have groups pair up to try to guess on each others' theories.*

Jesus actually does go on to give us more clues into what he was trying to get at with his parable:

**Read Luke 18:8a-15**

So, which of our theories do you think was the closest to what Jesus was trying to say?

Ok, here is *my* theory on what Jesus was trying to teach - creatively:

Honesty doesn't make sense to the world.

The world deals in money and profit, getting ahead and protecting yourself, and covering your back.

And when we desire those things more than we desire for God to be first, we let those things master us.

We begin to say, do, and think things are ok that we never would have before, and sometimes we even come up with rationalizations that sound good to us.

They probably sound good to the world and others might even tell you that what you are doing is just fine.

By the world's standards it might be fine, but those aren't the standards that matter to God.

Can you think of an example in our culture in which lying is actually 'ok'?

*Give the groups a few minutes to think of examples to share.*

And here is a really important question: if nobody knows, is it really lying?

Is it still ok if no one knows or no one else is hurt?

Because Jesus is saying that even the small things matter.

If you are not honest with a small thing like an answer on a test or telling your parents what time you REALLY got home, can you be trusted to be honest when the stakes are much higher?

What do you think Jesus would say in those instances?

Does it matter?

I believe that the answer is 'yes'.

Because if we played that game for days and days on end, training ourselves to lie and how to not give away that we are lying....lying does get easier.

There are probably some of you in this room who can really convince someone that you are innocent. Right?

Jesus is basically saying that as his children, we are to live differently.

He even pointed to the Pharisees, the leaders, and basically told them that they are fooling everyone but not God...because God knows the heart.

Today, I hope that you take some time to look into your own heart.

Don't worry about the person who is here that you know has lied this week, because that is not the point, here.

The point is to be honest with yourself about how you have been dishonest.

Not to beat yourself up, but to start today being honest.

God knows the truth and he is actually looking for people He can trust to be honest with themselves.

The more we lie, the more we dull the ability to hear His voice and be led by His example.

Take some time tonight to be quiet and honest with God and then, this week, when you are tempted to lie, remember that when you are honest in small things...God can trust you with big ones.

It says more about you and your character than you can ever know.

Close in prayer.

## **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

On a scale of 1 to 10, how honest are you right now?

Can you think of another example of how our culture seems to make it easy to tell lies?

Is it ever ok to lie? If the answer is yes, how do you know when it is ok or not?

What do you think Jesus meant when he said that “if you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones” (Luke 16:10)?

# Youth Group Lesson on Labels

**Bible:** 1 Samuel 16:7

**Bottom Line:** We are so much more than the labels that we or others give to us.

## LEADER PREP

We all label others whether we want to admit it or not.

To prepare your heart for this lesson, though, you need to really ask God: What are the labels that I give to others that I need to be aware of in my own life?

As leaders, it can be very tempting to try to quickly figure out who are the students that are leaders? Who are the troublemakers?

We do it with parents of students: Are they the high maintenance parent or the trustworthy parent?

Yet, before we can ask the youth to examine the way that they label others, we must honestly ask ourselves: Am I part of the problem?

Today's scripture is a not so gentle reminder that God often chooses the ones that we tend to overlook.

Samuel was a leader and even *he* would have passed over David.

Samuel thought that he found the next king based on who was the strongest, oldest, etc.

We do the same thing in ministry, don't we?

When the seniors graduate, we begin to wonder who will be the next set of leaders.

Let this lesson be a reminder to see others as God sees them - at their heart.

Because it would be a true tragedy to skip over the 'Davids' in our midst because we are looking and labeling on our own.

No one person can be summed up with a simple category, yet we attempt to define others and ourselves in these simplistic and one dimensional labels every single day.

As leaders, we must first be aware of the tendency to label others and quickly try to 'sum them up' and also be a gentle and loving voice to the students we serve because God sees their heart.

He sees so much more than the things that the world is choosing to define them by.

And God also sees those things in them that they are simply blind to because of the ways that they have chosen to let others label them.

Our prayer is that through this lesson, students will see that God does see the richness of each and every person and that He has such amazing things planned for every person if they simply allow Him to be the one who defines who they are in Him.

And God wants to give us new labels that He gives from seeing who we really are.

## **OPENING GAME – Label Mania**

### **SUPPLIES**

Label Sticker sheets (1 sheet per student)

Pens/markers (1 per student)

Large roll of paper or post it pad on a stand

Cardstock with 'God's labels' - words written on each piece and extra cardstock to write more.

\*Note the list of the labels that is in the teaching part of the lesson and write these labels one per cardstock paper, but feel free to add prayerfully other labels that would fit your group.

**Say:** For today's game, I need your help.

Each of you will have a sheet of stickers and a pen.

I will give you about 5 minutes to fill this page with the labels that we give to ourselves and to others.

What am I talking about?

Well, when I was a teenager, I labeled myself as \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank). And I labeled others with these words: \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank).

Your labels can be serious or funny even, but write one 'label' per label and you will use these for the game.

*Give the students 5 minutes to make their labels. Be sure to walk around and help those who might struggle and give them funny labels to add!*

## **HOW TO PLAY THE GAME**

**Say:** Now that you've written down your labels on your labels (☺), everyone get ready because we are going to play a game called "Label Mania" and it will be just as crazy as it sounds. When I say "Go", you will run with your label sheet and try to stick a label on another person.

Of course it goes without saying, but maybe it still needs to be said, that these labels should not be placed on someone else in any place that a bathing suit would cover, ok?

Also, avoid violently placing your label as we do have a lesson afterwards.

Once all of your labels are gone, you can still play by taking off the labels that are on you and placing them on someone else.

I will call "time" when I think that we are close to total mania!

*Say "Go" and let the mayhem begin.*

*End the game when you can tell the mania is truly setting in.*

*Tell the youth to keep their labels on them and have a seat.*

## TEACH – Youth Group Lesson on Labels

Now that we have experienced true labeling mania, let's look at some of these labels.

I am going to have each of you come up, read all of the labels that are stuck on you, and place them on the large pad of paper.

Ask for a volunteer each time and have them come and place all of their labels on the pad for all to see.

Some of these labels are funny, but some of these are really harsh, right?

Are there other labels that you would add that you know people use to label others?

*Add these label to the post it paper.*

Labels are real.

And the hurt that some of these labels inflict is real too.

Raise your hand if you've been labeled in a way that hurt you.

Now ask yourself, have you labeled others in ways that hurt them?

Why do you think labeling others is so common?

*Give students a chance to think and share about this, as it will give some good insights into the cultures that they are living in at school.*

Here's the sad thing - labeling others is nothing new.

*Share about the labels that used to be around when you were a teenager. For some youth ministers of a 'certain age', using a clip from The Breakfast Club or Clueless movies might be great to use here.*

The Bible is full of stories in which others quickly labeled someone and God showed that he had other ideas.

Take the story of King David, for example.

King David was THE king that the Jewish people would point to hundreds of years after his life as THE king; yet, he wasn't anyone's first choice.

Hey, he was WAY down on the list as he had older brothers who were perfect candidates.

So when God told the prophet, Samuel, to go and anoint the king from the sons of Jesse, Samuel went down the list of 7 seven brothers and God said these words to Samuel when he thought he'd found the king in one son who really impressed him:

### **Read 1 Samuel 16:7**

One by one, Jesse's sons came until there were none left and Samuel still hadn't found the king.

He asked if there were any other sons and Jesse says "Well, the baby is out in the fields' as if David wasn't even on the radar with Jesse as a possibility.

But God had chosen David when no one, not even David's dad had ever considered him.

Maybe you are a "David" - the one everyone underestimates.

This scripture is a reminder to you that God sees your heart.

And God just doesn't see us as the world sees us, does he?

It's as if God is saying "throw these labels out the window" because he sees our heart.

*Share a personal story about someone you've seen in ministry who was underestimated or a 'misfit' who God saw something awesome in them.*

And here is the important thing to remember about how God sees us: He labels us by our heart.

And by 'the heart' it really does seem like this is just a way of saying that God sees who we truly are at our depth.

And not the person that we fear others will see.

No, God sees the amazing potential in us.

When we might look in the mirror and see words like “the shy one” or “the popular one”.... God sees things such as “the one who loves others greatly” or “leader”.

Around the room are more of the labels with new words on them that I pray might be new for you.

Labels that could only come from God who loves you.

Labels like: Beloved, Child of God, Mighty Leader, Listening ear, Friend to the friendless, Beautiful, Precious, Righteous, Blameless, Chosen

Can you think of other labels that God might give to us?

*Write these labels down as well and place these labels around the area where you are speaking.*

*(Please add labels that you prayerfully feel are applicable to your group.)*

I want you to take some quiet time and I will lead us in a prayer in which we ask God how he sees us.

For some of you, these words might be slow coming.

But know this, God sees amazing things in each and every one of you.

And for some of you, it might take a Samuel, someone who loves God and listens to God, to remind you that you are NOT forgotten.

To remind you that God does have great plans for you that will absolutely amaze you.

I pray that each of you might get a small glimpse today of what God sees when he looks at your heart.

**Pray a prayer such as:** God, you see our hearts. You also see those labels that we have allowed ourselves to hear and think are true from others. But it is YOUR opinion that matters most. So, erase those labels we might have on us that don't come from you. And help us to let you write new labels on us. Amen.

**Say:** As you leave, please come forward to choose a new label or write your own to take with you.

And remember, God sees the heart.

He sees you and He loves you.

Close in prayer.

*Leader: Be available to help youth find or write labels that God would give them, as some youth will have a tough time with this.*

*This would be a great time to pray with them and share with them the beautiful and amazing things that you see in them.*

## **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

What are some of the labels that people give to others at your school and in society today?

What are the labels that others give you or even that you give to yourself?

What label did you chose or write that you feel comes from God about you today?

Where can you put this label to help be a reminder to you about how God sees you?