



## Asking for a Friend

### **Week 1: Anxiety and Depression**

**What we want students to learn:** Jesus is my place of freedom.

**What we want students to do with what they've learned:** Be patient in this midst suffering. Believe that a new day is coming.

**Scripture Focus:** Hebrews 12:2 and Romans 8:31-32

### **The Main Point**

You know the questions that you really want to ask, but you don't actually want anyone to know you asked them? Maybe you do a quick google search and then delete your search history, just in case. Maybe you ask someone a question and begin with "hypothetically..." Or, you approach someone to ask out of desperation, "so, my friend was wondering..." When it comes to your "asking for a friend" questions, what do you wish you could ask? During this series, we will be unpacking topics that many students deal with regularly, yet are afraid to ever ask questions about. We will learn about real life stories of people who struggled to find freedom in some of these areas. Then, we will see what God's Word has to say. During this series, we will discover where true freedom rests.

### INTRODUCTION

- **If you got to pick what we talked about at church each Wednesday, what would be the number one thing you would want to talk about?**

This ice-breaker serves two purposes. 1.) This will allow you, as their small group leader to see what your students are currently struggling with and what they hunger to know more about. 2.) During this series, we are going to do our absolute best to discuss topics that students are struggling with currently.

PRAY as you begin small group tonight that students would learn that God wants to come to them right where they are.

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### LESSON

Tonight we are going to talk about anxiety and depression. Whether you have faced or are currently facing anxiety or depression, or know someone who is currently facing it, we are all connected to these topics in one way or another.

Tonight, we aren't going to discuss the "cure" to these, rather we are going to discuss the perspective we get to have during these times because of Jesus.

- **Share about a time when things felt "dark" in the world.**

- **Think about a time you were in a difficult situation. What did you feel?** (*Leaders – this doesn't have to be a global crisis. It could've just been a bad day.*)
- **What holds you back from being honest with God about your pain?**

**Hebrews 12:2** - Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God

- **What did Jesus do in the midst of a difficult situation?**
  - *Jesus didn't deny the difficulty. Jesus chose to believe that while that day was difficult, joy was coming.*
- **Why is it sometimes difficult to remember that God loves you in the middle of difficult situations?**

**HIGH SCHOOL ONLY** Maybe you aren't the one facing a difficult situation, which can include depression and anxiety. But, maybe you have friend who is. How can you be a friend to them in this season?

- **When someone close to you is going through a difficult situation, are you more likely to act like everything is normal, talk too much, or avoid them altogether?**
- **Why do you think it's sometimes easier to be a fixer than a friend?**
- **What might it look like to be present with someone when they're going through a hard time?**

## LIFE APPLICATION

Read the following verses as a group and then discuss them using the following questions.

**Romans 8:31-32** (NIV) - What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

- **How can you know that God is for you?**
- **How does knowing God is for you help you face dark times differently?**
- **This week, what's one thing you can do to go to God with how you feel?**

## CLOSING ACTIVITY

### MIDDLE SCHOOL ONLY

Since middle schoolers may have a difficult time describing and understanding their emotions, try this activity to get them thinking about the many emotions we feel through life's ups and downs. First, have students talk about as many feelings as possible that someone might experience in their life. Then choose a few different feelings and, as a group, talk about the circumstances in someone's life that might cause them to feel each of these emotions. By going through the exercise, students will connect events they may go through in life with the many feelings that go along with them.

### TAKE IT OUT

Close small group out with prayer requests. Pray specifically that your small group would experience true freedom in Jesus in the midst of any and every circumstance.

After prayer, be sure to remind them of any upcoming group serving activities or student events and **THE WEEKEND!**

## SMALL GROUP LEADER RESOURCE

We recognize that these subjects are weighty. We don't want to give you a topic like this with no resources to accompany it. Below you will find a list of common symptoms of depression. Now, this list is **NOT** meant to be a way to "diagnose" someone. However, we want to equip you with some "indicators" to look for as you lead your small group. If you suspect that a student, based on tonight's discussion, may be suffering with depression, talk to your coach.

- Isolating from others
- Losing interest in things once found enjoyable
- Trouble sleeping, specifically too much but at times too little
- Change in appetite
- Often feeling drained or tired
- Often irritable or rebellious
- Declining school performance

In addition, below is a link to a podcast from *Parent Cue* which is a podcast for parents. In this podcast, the guest, Dr. Chinwe Williams discusses "How to Recognize the Signs of Teen Depression and Suicide." If you want to take your level of preparation up a notch for small group, check out this podcast.

<http://theparentcue.org/pcl-72-how-to-recognize-the-signs-of-teen-depression-and-suicide/>