

ONE IS THE LONELIEST NUMBER



1. Circle the following words that describe loneliness.

depression	time with God	quietness
rejection	happiness	fright
hurt	peace	fun
boredom	sadness	enjoyment

2. Which statement do you think is the most **true**?

- Being alone is the same as being lonely.
- Being bored is the same as being lonely.

3. Would you **agree** or **disagree** with the statements below?

- a. Everyone is lonely at times.
- b. If you're with other people, you won't be lonely.
- c. If you feel lonely, it's your own fault.
- d. Jesus felt lonely.

4. Who do you think are the most lonely people? Rank the following from **most lonely (1)** to **least lonely (6)**.

- ___ Widows and widowers
- ___ Famous people
- ___ Divorced people
- ___ Young people
- ___ Old people
- ___ Christians

5. Take a look at **1 Kings 19:9-18**. If you were to write a comforting note to Elijah, what would you say?

ONE IS THE LONELIEST NUMBER [loneliness]

THIS WEEK

Young people hear that the teenage years are the best years of their lives. But these years can be very lonely, even 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.

OPENER

Before this session, you may want to ask your kids to find examples or stories of loneliness—song lyrics, video clips, poems, stories from a magazine or book, et cetera. Then read, play, or show these examples in the group. What message does each one give about loneliness? What words or characteristics about loneliness come to mind from each example? How is the author or artist feeling and why? How did he or she get over the loneliness, if at all? You may want to make a master list of these characteristics to refer to later.

THE DISCUSSION, BY THE NUMBERS

1. Ask the kids to share and explain their choices. Ask if any other words came to mind and add these to a list of all the words.
2. Young people often assume that if they're bored or alone, then they're 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.
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 rejected, and nothing feels as lonely as being rejected. (See Matthew 13:53-57; Mark 14:27, 31, 50; and Luke 4:24-30.) Kids today think that they must be constantly entertained. In a visual, materialistic culture, they're overloaded and don't know how to deal with being alone. Communicate with them that everyone is differently—some people handle being alone different than others. Remind them that everyone—even teachers, parents, and you—feel lonely sometimes. These alone times aren't bad—they can be healthy. Learning to be content in any circumstance is a sign of real maturity.
4. How is loneliness healthy for some people? Have them share their choices and explain why they ranked them in the order they chose.
5. After they have had some time to write their notes, have the kids read them aloud. Have they ever felt like Elijah? What are some practical

solutions to loneliness? There are lots of ways to do this—calling a friend, reading a magazine, trying a new activity, spending time with God (God talk!) What else do your kids suggest?

THE CLOSE

God created us to be in close relationships with other people. We were created to live in families and in community with others. That's why it's important for us to build friendships and protect our relationships.

Christ experienced loneliness. You may want to read a few verses that show Christ being alone. He understands their every emotion and every need. Your kids may feel lonely, but they aren't ever alone. Who can they turn to when they feel down? Encourage them to find one person who they know will encourage them—including you, their teacher, school counselor, or other adult.

MORE

- How do they handle alone time? Challenge your kids to spend a half hour of their time alone, away from everyone—no TV, Internet, radio, or any other distraction. Have them concentrate on being alone with themselves, just sitting, thinking, or praying. What was hard about being alone? What did they do to keep themselves occupied?
- You may want to take time and talk about loneliness versus depression. There is an alarming rate of depression among Americans, including young people. Some of your kids may deal with depression—either their own or a relative's. Loneliness and depression are not the same thing. Make sure that your kids know the difference between being lonely and being depressed. Constant loneliness leads to depression, depression leads to withdrawal and further loneliness. Depression, although it varies person to person, is a chronic, emotional disorder with symptoms of mood swings and suicidal thoughts. For more information and links, check out www.depression.com or www.depression.about.com/health/depression/.