



GOALS

- For students to learn what God can do to meet the deepest needs of their unbelieving friends.
- For students to consider the role they can play in connecting their spiritually need friends with everything God offers through Jesus Christ.
- For students to recognize a friend who needs help and develop a step to reach out.

MATERIALS: Group

- Variety of colored pencils
- Whiteboard and markers

MATERIALS: Each Student

- Student journal pages
- Scripture sheet, Psalm 107
- A Bible
- A pen

SESSION INTRO

Prayer

Psalm 18:19 tells us that God rescued us because He delighted in us! Thank God for delighting in you and for rescuing the ones in your group who've called out to Him. Pray that through this session your students will gain insight that will better help them reach out to their friends.

Open

Open your session with a discussion on "before and after" by asking:

What's a favorite "before and after" project you've been a part of? Examples include: painting/improving a house, restoring a car, re-organizing your room or a desk, decorating a room, restoring a piece of furniture, turning a mid-term "C" into a final-grade "A."

After a few minutes of discussion, share a personal example from your faith journey of "before and after"—something that changed when you came into relationship with Jesus.

Helping students recognize that things change when people come into relationship with Jesus is a crucial piece in recognizing the role they can play in the lives of their unbelieving friends.

After you have shared your story set up today's session with this:

Today we will take a look at four different groups of people. We will spend our time studying their "before and after" salvation story. By looking closely at these stories we will be better able to recognize that turning point in the life of any Christian which can best be summed up with the phrase, "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble."

DIGGING IN

Share that the psalm describes four stories of spiritual journey, all four of which are similar to journeys today. Share the stories below and ask students to choose two that they'd like to explore further. Make sure you have a fairly equal amount of students exploring all four stories.

STORY 1: People who are **spiritually searching**

STORY 2: People who are in **spiritual darkness**

STORY 3: People in **spiritual rebellion**

STORY 4: People who are **spiritually up and down**

Share that they are going to study their respective stories by rewriting the passage in today's language. Invite students to move to a place of solitude or to explore the passages where they are seated. You may also want to give the option of working in groups. But before they disperse, share the following instructions:

Today's psalm gives us a "before and after" look at four different groups of people who experienced salvation. We know they experienced salvation by reading Psalm 107:2, which tells us that the subject of the psalm is going to be "those he redeemed from the hand of the foe."

Ask students these questions to be sure they understand before moving on.

Who is the "he" in this verse?

Who is the "foe" he redeemed us from?

Share that students will have about 10 minutes to explore their two stories from the psalm and rewrite each story in today's language. The following questions may serve as a guide to help the rewrite:

What would this psalm sound like today?

Where would these people be wandering?

What would they be searching for?

What might their cries sound like?

What would the turnaround look like?

After about 10 minutes call your group back together.

DIGGING DEEPER: Story 1 (Psalm 107:4-9)

Invite someone who chose Story 1 to read the passage from the Scripture sheet first and then have all the students read their "modern version." After they've finished, ask the entire group the following questions. Be sure to record their thoughts on the board.

What were these people like at first?

What was the big turning point in their lives?

Why would you call this a turning point?

What did God do for them when they cried out to Him?

After you've worked your way through these questions challenge your students to picture one person in their life who might be in this spiritual predicament. Discuss:

How is this person exhibiting "hunger" and "thirst"?

Are they wandering through life with no direction? (i.e. as if they were a desert wasteland?)

Based on this passage, what does God want to do for them?

DIGGING DEEPER: Story 2 (Psalm 107:10-16)

Now follow the same format with Story 2. Have someone read the passage from the Scripture sheet then invite those who chose Story 2 to read their modern versions. When it comes time for discussion, ask the same four questions you posed for Story 1, but tailor your last questions to the subject of Story 2. For example, during the discussion of Story 2 you'd want to ask:

Can you think of any friends who could be described as “in darkness or deepest gloom?”

What about friends who are like “prisoners suffering in iron chains”?

Have you ever experienced something like this?

How might you be able to share your experience with the people you know who are currently living in this reality?

How did someone reach you while you were in this spot?

DIGGING DEEPER: Story 3 (Psalm 107:17-22)

Now follow the same format with Story 3. Questions specific to the subject of Story 3:

Can you think of friends who are paying the consequences for rebelling against God?

Do you know someone who has hit rock bottom due to poor decisions?

What hope does this passage give to people in this predicament?

DIGGING DEEPER: Story 4 (Psalm 107:23-32)

Now follow the same format with Story 4. Questions specific to the subject of Story 4:

Can you think of any friends who are going through a lot of ups and downs in their lives? What about friends whose lives are really rough and who are looking for peace?

What are some of the ways we work to find outside peace in our lives?

Have you ever settled into a place of false peace? (False peace is something that calms for a little, but eventually leaves. This is not the peace that passes all understanding that God promises.)

TAKING IT INWARD

Be sure to point out to your students that in this Old Testament psalm, we learn that when a person cries out to God for salvation, God meets them exactly at the point of their deepest spiritual need. In the New Testament, we see the same thing about Jesus Christ.

Direct your students' attention to the Scripture passages under Taking It Inward on their journal pages. Ask your students to look up these passages and write down what Jesus can do for people based on what He says in these verses.

John 6:35

John 8:31-32, 34-36

Matthew 11:28; John 8:9-11

John 14:27; 16:33

Help your students internalize this psalm with one simple question inspired by verse 2, *Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story:*

So, what's your story?

To prompt discussion, ask if anyone relates to one of the four stories in Psalm 107. Or ask students to share their story in a “before/after” fashion.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

As you move toward the close of your session, ask a volunteer to read Psalm 107:43 from the Scripture sheet.

Use the questions and thoughts below to do what verse 43 suggests: *heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord.*

- **Brainstorm with your group on how to connect these truths about Jesus with friends who really need them.**
- **Challenge students to make a list of friends, neighbors or family members who are in any of these spiritual predicaments.**
- **Encourage each other with ideas on how to reach out to friends in these predicaments.**