

# New Challenges & New Opportunities

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### About This Study

In this study, students will explore three stories of people who were taken from a place of comfort and found themselves in a new environment where they had to face adversity. The main purpose of this three-part study is to remind students that they will face challenges in high school and that God will give them the gift of His presence and various tools to address these challenges.

### Ways to Use This Study

This study could be used as part of a retreat for your eighth graders entering high school or as a stand-alone Bible study as a small group. This study is targeted specifically for those entering high school.

## Part One: Standing Up

### Opening Discussion

- What excites you about going to high school?
- What do you think will be different about high school compared to middle school?
- What concerns you about going to high school?

Leader Notes: [Explain that in the next three sessions you'll be learning about people in the Bible who had to deal with some drama because they were in a new place.]

### Main Study

Read together Daniel 1:1-7.

Daniel and his fellow exiles were taken from their homes in Israel because they were the best of the best. They were intelligent and strong. These are the kind of people you might think would have had an easy time in a place like high school. Even though these young men were the best and brightest, they were by no means high up on the social ladder when they arrived in Babylon. They were coming from a kingdom that was basically defeated and they had a different religion and culture than that of the Babylonians. These men were outsiders. These were the "new kids" in school.

Read together Daniel 1:8-16.

- What did Daniel and his friends do to stand up for their beliefs?

Leader Note: Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deuteronomy 14:3-20 go into the unclean food that might have been offered as a part of the king's diet for Daniel and his friends. It's not clear why the exiles would have denied drinking any wine unless they were ascribing to biblical teaching on not consuming too much wine or if they wanted to separate themselves further from the Babylonian culture.

- Have you ever had to make a decision where you were standing against others? How did you react in that situation?
- Daniel and his fellow exiles had no authority to question what the king wanted them to do. The decision to eat only vegetables was a bold one. Later on in Daniel, we find that going against the law of the king would lead Daniel's three friends to be thrown into a fiery furnace (God protected them) and Daniel being thrown into a lion's den (and God protected him). Daniel and his friends could speak with confidence because they knew that God was with them.

Break up youth up into small groups (3-4). Have each group come up with a scenario where they might have to stand up for their beliefs in high school. Stress that we can stand up for what we believe in by making the smallest decision, such as not spreading a piece of gossip we hear.

Read Romans 8:38-39.

- God was with Daniel and his friends because God doesn't leave. God continues to stay with us no matter where we are and no matter what we go through. What are some verses that can be reminders for you of God's presence in your life as you go to high school? [Allow students to work with others if they need help making a list.]

## **Part Two: Temptation Can be in Your Face or Crouching Around the Hall...**

### **Opening Discussion**

- Has anyone ever snuck up on you and scared you? What's the key to sneaking up on someone?
- As you prepare to go to high school, has anything surprised you about what's going to be different in high school?

### **Main Study**

This session we're going to be talking about Joseph. Joseph, like Daniel, was someone who was taken away from his family and found himself in a new situation where he had to deal with some hard situations. The story of Joseph begins with his brothers being jealous of the love their father has for him. This leads them to throw Joseph into a well and then sell him into slavery (and you thought your siblings treated you badly). We're going to pick up the story with Joseph in Egypt as a slave for an officer of the Pharaoh.

Read Genesis 39:1-23.

- What does verse 2 say about where God was when Joseph was in Egypt?
- Does God's presence in our life guarantee that nothing bad will happen to us? Why or why not?
- What temptation does Joseph have to endure while at serving at Potiphar's house?
- What strategy did Joseph use to avoid temptation?

Have youth break up into small groups. Have each group come up with an alternate way Joseph could have avoided sinning with Potiphar's wife.

- Joseph resisted temptation, but he still had to deal with the results of Potiphar's wife's sin. What are some ways that doing the right thing can sometimes lead to hard situations?
- Sometimes temptation is bold and in your face, easy to spot. Other times, temptation is subtle, just waiting for you to make a mistake for it to try to grab hold of you.

Option: Use the sneaky cat video to talk about the sneakiness of temptation. How does this video make you think about how temptation can be sneaky?

[[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_D17mqazDHC&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_D17mqazDHC&feature=related)]

Read Genesis 4:7.

God describes sin as something that is crouching behind your door, ready to pounce once you open the door to temptation.

We could look at Joseph's story and think that it's not worth denying sin because of the bad things that could happen to our reputation. Let's look at the end of the story again.

Read Genesis 39:20b-23.

- How can we be succeeding with God even if things don't seem easy for us?

Read Matthew 5:11-12.

Jesus reminds us at the Sermon on the Mount that even when we are persecuted because of Him, we are blessed because we have a great reward in heaven. How can you be reminded of that reward when you go through trials?

## **Part Three: You Need Friends**

### **Opening Discussion**

- What are some things it would be impossible to do alone?
- What are some things it's easier to do by yourself?

Break up students into two groups. Have one group create an activity that is difficult or impossible to do without other people. Have the other group create an activity that is difficult or impossible to do with other people. Give the groups 10-15 minutes to create their activity and then test it out on participants from the opposite group.

### Main Study

Read Joshua 2:1-11.

- What hard situation did the spies find themselves in?
- Why might Rahab be considered an unlikely candidate to help out God's people?
- Rahab is mentioned two times in the New Testament (once in Hebrews and once in James) as being commended for her actions in helping the two spies – we don't even know the names of the two spies.
- Think about the friends you have now – how did you meet? Did you look through a list of potential friends and pick the ones you have now as your ideal friend candidates?
- What are some ways you can prepare yourself to look out for people who can help you do God's will in high school?

Have students break up into small groups. Have groups make a list of things they'd like to see in a friend who could help them live out their faith in high school.

Read Hebrews 12:1-2.

- Who is included in your great cloud of witnesses? Who do you know will be around you as you enter high school to help you when you struggle?
- This passage tells us to look at Christ and what He's done for us when we need endurance and strength. What are some ways you can remember what Christ has done for you as you enter high school?