

## DEVOTION

## Disappointments

*Teenagers will explore disappointments with friends.*

**SUPPLIES:**

*Bibles, 50 straws for every two people, and tape*

**TIME:** 25 to 35 minutes

**H**ave teenagers form three groups. Give each group a Bible and **SAY:** We have quite a bit of information in the Bible about how the Apostle Paul struggled through his friendships. Let's look at some of his interesting moments with his friends.

Have one group read Acts 15:30-41, another Galatians 2:1-16, and another 2 Timothy 4:6-18. After group members read their Scripture section, have them discuss the following questions:

- Which of the characters in the story you read is most like you?
- How might the situation have been resolved if it involved you and your friends?

After three to five minutes, gather the group back together and **ASK:**

- How was the situation in your passage like or unlike problems that friends have today?
- When have friends disappointed you? When have you disappointed others?
- How healthy is Paul's reaction to each situation?
- Does friendship among Christians require extra effort to overlook people's faults and to forgive them when they hurt you? Why or why not?
- How can you be a better friend?

Have teenagers form pairs and give each pair approximately 50 straws and some tape. **SAY:** You have five minutes to build the best fence you can with your straws and tape. Go! Call time after five minutes or when most pairs are finished. **ASK:**

- How sturdy is your fence?
- How is this activity like building a friendship?
- What are the "building parts" that hold your friendships together?

Close with a prayer celebrating the strengths in

teenagers' friendships and encouraging teenagers to continually find ways to build on their relationships.



## ILLUSTRATION

## College Acceptance Error Disappoints Applicants

*Youth will discuss a real-life story about an error that caused major disappointment for many people.*

**SUPPLIES:** Bible

**TIME:** 10 to 20 minutes

**R**ead this true story to your group:

Cornell University sent a congratulatory email to 1,700 students who'd applied for early admission to the school. "Greetings from Cornell, your future alma mater!" read the message in part. "Congratulations on your acceptance into the class of 2007!" Unfortunately, the email was erroneously sent to 550 students who'd already been rejected from the school.

Some of the students were overjoyed, thinking that the admissions office had changed its mind, at least until a few hours later when the school realized its error and hastily sent out an explanation and apology "for any confusion and distress this message has caused." According to the second email, the mistake was the result of a "systems coding error," and the school apologized for not upholding its goal of treating all applicants "with sensitivity and respect."

"I know mistakes can happen, but this kind is devastating to the student and family," says Susan Wilmer, director of college counseling at the Brooks School, where one student received the erroneous message. "The apologies of the university don't quite cover the disappointment of my senior."

**DISCUSSION IDEAS:**

- How would you feel if you'd received this erroneous email?
- Have you ever had an experience where you received good news only to realize later that it was a mistake or misunderstanding? If so, how did it make you feel? disappointed? angry?
- Do you think Cornell owes the students more than the apology email? If so, what?
- How do you typically deal with disappointment?
- How would you try to help a friend if he or she had to suffer this kind of disappointment?
- Sometimes people say disappointments are "blessings in disguise." What do you think about that phrase?
- Have you ever experienced a disappointment that turned out to be a blessing in disguise? Explain.
- What biblical characters suffered great disappointments? How did they handle their disappointments?
- What kind of lessons have you learned from the disappointments in your life?
- How does God use disappointments to teach us spiritual lessons?

**SCRIPTURE LINKS:** Ruth 1:20-21; 2:11-12; 1 Samuel 1:1-20; Mark 10:17-22; Romans 5:3-5; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; and Philippians 3:7-9.

**OBJECT LESSON**

## Pizza Power

*Students will experience disappointment by having pizza served in a trash can.*

**SUPPLIES:**

a clean new trash can, pizza, self-stick note pads, pencils, and Bibles. Smudge the outside of the trash can with dirt or grease to make it appear dirty.

**TIME:** about 30 minutes

**F**orm a circle. Show teenagers the pizza, and **SAY:**  
I decided we deserved a treat today, so I brought pizza for everyone! Take a piece as I pass it around.

Dump the pizza out of its box and into the trash can. Then pass the can around and see if anyone takes a piece of pizza. Afterward, explain that the trash can is actually new and clean inside, so it's safe to eat the pizza. Pass the pizza around the circle again.

As teenagers enjoy the pizza, **ASK:**

- How did you feel when I dumped the pizza into this trash can?
- How was this experience like disappointing situations you face in real life?

Form pairs and have teenagers read Job 1. Have one partner read the passage and the other summarize it. Tell partners to switch roles every four verses.

Have pairs discuss the following questions one at a time. Allow discussion time after asking each question, then have volunteers share their insights with the whole group. **ASK:**

- How does your disappointment about the pizza compare to Job's disappointments in this passage?
- How would your reaction to disappointing circumstances compare to Job's?
- What can we learn from Job to help us deal with disappointment this week?

Distribute self-stick note pads and pencils. Have teenagers each think of one disappointing situation they're facing, write it on a self-stick note, and paste it to their foreheads. Then read aloud Psalm 33:20-22 as an encouragement. Next, have teenagers write Psalm 33:20 on a new self-stick note, paste their Scriptures on their partners' heads, and say, "Our hope is in the Lord!"

Encourage teenagers to take their notes home as reminders that hope is possible even in disappointing circumstances.

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

If teenagers' disappointments seem to be turning into depression, refer to this resource from Group Publishing for ways to minister to them:

*The Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry Counseling*