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STORM WATCH(1): SMALL GROUP DIALOG

WEEK 1: STORM WARNING

Bottom Line: Even during the storms, God is in control.

Scripture References: John 16:33, Matthew 5:45; Genesis 2:4-6; Matthew 8:24-27; John 11:32;
Matthew 14:22-33

Storms can be incredibly terrifying. We feel out of control, and we never know how much damage the storm is going to do. This week we are setting up a series that will take a look at the out-of-control, hard times we all face in life. Your goal this week is to help students begin to talk about the storms they have experienced. Let them see that everyone has storms.

You may be surprised this week to learn that a student is enduring something you may never have imagined. It may be something that you need to bring to the attention of your youth pastor so they can find professional help. Remember that your role is to listen and guide this student, advocate healthy relationships at home, and pray for the student throughout the week. You may not be able to fix the situation. But you can be present for him or her in the middle of the storm.

Create meaningful conversation. Adjust questions as needed, and don't feel like you need to answer all of them.

1. What did you think of the talk this week? What did you hear the speaker say?
2. Have you ever been in a tornado, hurricane, earthquake or really big storm? What happened?
3. What does it look like to "have a storm in your life"? Why is a "storm" a good description for those events?
4. Have you ever been through a difficult time that you would call a storm? What was it like?
5. The speaker said we are all in one of three places. Which one of these best describes you right now?
 - a. You are currently in the middle of a storm.
 - b. A storm is coming and you don't know about it.
 - c. Or you are just walking away from a storm that has blown through.
6. Would you say that you believe God is in control?
7. Do you feel like God is in control even in the middle of your storm?
8. Let's read John 16:33. How can this help us remember God is in control—even in the storms of life?
"I've told you all this so that trusting me, you will be unshakable and assured, deeply at peace. In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I've conquered the world" (The Message).

CLOSING CHALLENGE:

Pay attention to the dynamic of your group, and choose a way to pray for each other that seems authentic and helpful. You may want to split into pairs, so the students can pray specifically for the storms in each other's lives. Or if you only have one or two students going through a storm, have the group divide and pray over them. Follow up this week with students who shared about a storm they are experiencing right now.



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STORM WATCH(2): SMALL GROUP DIALOG

WEEK 2: THE EYE OF THE STORM

Bottom Line: God may use storms to get your attention and draw you closer to Him.

Scripture References: Jonah 1:1-10; Psalm 22:1-2, 24; Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

WHY? Why do bad things happen? Why doesn't God fix it? This week we will be approaching the most difficult question that we all ask. But relax; you don't have to have the answer. Your goal this week is to help students know that it's okay to be transparent in front of God. It's okay to struggle with God. But don't stop there—let students see that sometimes it is our struggling that helps us see ourselves better. Sometimes it is our struggling that helps us see God better. And sometimes our struggling draws us into a deeper and more genuine relationship with God.

Create meaningful conversation. Adjust questions as needed, and don't feel like you need to answer all of them.

1. What did you think of the talk this week? What did you hear the speaker say?
2. Do you pray and spend more time with God when things are going really well or when things are going really bad?
3. Have you ever been mad at God when something bad happened? Did you feel comfortable honestly yelling out to God?
4. Have someone read Psalm 22:1-2. What was David trying to say? Can someone sum it up?
5. Is it okay to take your "why me?" prayers to God?
6. God gave us nerves so we would be able to have a sense of touch. Can you think of bad things that we experience because we have nerves? Can you think of good things we experience for the same reason?
7. What is another thing in life that gives both joy and pain?
8. The speaker said that it's okay to ask why, and it's okay to hurt. But we should look to the next thing and try to see what's next. How might God be changing you through the storm?
9. What might God be showing you about Himself through the storm?
10. How might your relationship with God be changed by the storm?

CLOSING CHALLENGE:

Being able to share your storm story with other people helps others know they're not alone, and that people do survive a storm. Pass out the "Storm Story" sheet and encourage students to write out their personal storm story from The Storm Watch XP. You may want to give students until next week to finish. If you allow this extra time, you may want to also e-mail the template to students during the week as a reminder. Encourage them that the storm doesn't always have a resolution or a lesson learned—knowing God is with us in the storm is sometimes the only thing we have to hang on to. (If they prefer, students can write their stories anonymously.)



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STORM WATCH(3): SMALL GROUP DIALOG

WEEK 3: THE AFTERMATH

Bottom Line: God can use the storms of life in ways we would never expect.

Scripture References: Acts 27; Isaiah 43:1-2; Psalm 119:11; Romans 8:28

Storms are the events that shape us. Without storms we would have trouble with things like compassion and mercy and even love. Storms strip away all the masks we put on ourselves and show us who we really are, and the craziest part about that process is that if others are watching—they are likely to see. Your goal this week is to move students from looking not only at how the storms affect their lives, to looking at the effect of the storm in the lives of those around them. Help them see how the storm they have been talking about may be used to encourage and influence others.

Create meaningful conversation. Adjust questions as needed, and don't feel like you need to answer all of them.

1. What did you think of the talk this week? What did you hear the speaker say?
2. Have you ever known someone who went through a terrible storm? How did they handle their situation?
3. Do you think differently about the person after watching them go through this situation? Do you think differently about God?
4. Read Acts 27:29-31. Have someone sum up the situation.
5. When everyone was afraid because of the storm and their bad situation, Paul was steady. Why do you think Paul had confidence in the storm? (Read Philippians 4:12-13.)
6. How do you think Paul influenced others? Who did he influence?
7. Think about the storm you are in right now, or a storm you have been through in the past. How has that storm changed you? How is it changing you?
8. How could your experience with the storm help you encourage and influence the people around you?

CLOSING CHALLENGE:

Since this week is about influencing others because of our past and present experiences, allow your students to think about their circle of influence. Give them an index card or a piece of paper and have them write down the names of the people who are looking at them and watching the way they live. If they are going through a storm right now, who are the people that may be watching them? Don't let them write down categories "my band friends", "my family." Instead have them be more specific. They might be amazed to see all the people they have the potential to influence. When they are finished, don't let them compare their lists. Give them time to pray over the names on their list, asking God to work through them to encourage and influence these people.