



CONNECTED

11-14yrs

Session title:

YOU ARE NEVER ALONE



AIMS

- For each young person to understand God is always with them.
- For each young person to explore the presence of God.



MEMORY VERSE

**'I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS,
TO THE VERY END OF
TIME.'** MATT 28:20



GAME 1 (10 mins)

Divide into teams if you have a large group (more than 10). Each group should form a circle of chairs. One person stands in the middle, the others sit on a chair. The aim is for everyone to move to their left without the person in the middle gaining a seat. Should the person in the middle gain a seat, anyone without a seat has to stand in the middle of the group and the game starts again.



CATCH UP (10 mins)

Refer to the teaching notes for guidance on how to run this section.



TESTIMONY (5 mins)

In advance, ask someone who is happy to share to talk about a time when they have felt alone. It could be a leader or a young person in the group.





INTRODUCTION

(5 mins)

Today I want us to think about what it means to be lonely and how knowing God can make a real difference to the way we feel. When we feel alone, we can feel like we are the only person who feels that way but loneliness is a reality for many of us. When mental health charity Young Minds spoke to 2,000 school age young people they found around a third of pupils say they have no-one to talk to at school when things get tough. The report suggests loneliness is the main problem among 15 – 17 year olds. Within that age group 35% of males said that when they were stressed in school they had no-one to talk to, compared to 31% of females. Young Minds is calling for more support for young people and says the situation is a 'ticking time bomb'.³

You don't have to be on your own to be lonely, you can also experience loneliness in a crowd:

(Have a leader or a young person read the following poem. If you are asking a young person, as part of your preparation give this to them in advance of the session.)

ALONE IN A CROWD

She wanders through the crowd
It is as though she wasn't even there
No one acknowledges her presence
She is but a breath of air.

Have you ever felt alone in a crowd?
Wished you could be part of the scene
Felt as if everyone looks passed you
Wondered what it would be like to be heard.

She opens her mouth but no sound is heard
She walks but leaves no footprint in the sand
She feels no warmth within her heart
She hears no one call her name.

Next time you walk the busy street
Look for the wisp for it may be her
As you admire a beautiful sunset
Listen for the rustle of her words.

There is nothing more painful
As being alone in a crowd
Nothing so crushing
As having no voice.

See her, hear her, feel her love
She has so much she wants to give...

Alison Smith



DISCUSS

- What do you think about the statistics we heard? Do you think they reflect what young people experience?
- Do you know people who might feel like the person in the poem sometimes?
I think everyone has felt alone or lost in a crowd at some point in their lives, but it's not something God wants us to experience. I'd like you to look at this passage from the Bible.



BIBLE STORY

(15 mins)

READ 2 KINGS 18:1-6

THE MESSAGE (MSG)

*What does Hezekiah do right in this story?
What is God's response?*

In the next bit of the story Hezekiah is about to mess up. Listen and tell me how?

READ 2 KINGS 18:9-16

*What did Hezekiah do wrong?
Does it say God leaves when Hezekiah messes up?
(No, things don't go well when Hezekiah makes bad decisions, but it doesn't say God leaves Hezekiah when he messes up)*

READ 2 KINGS 19:1-7

READ 19:14-15

Where does Hezekiah go and what does he do in response?

READ 2 KINGS 19:35

What does God do?



TALK

(5 mins)

Hezekiah does some great stuff in his life, but he also messes up. We've just read an extract from the story which runs from 2 Kings 18-20. It's worth reading the whole thing at home to see how Hezekiah is highly thought of by God and yet he still messes up. He gets it right some of the time but in the good and the bad God is with him.

How do you think Hezekiah felt when he was faced with the invading Assyrian army? (scared, alone).

He may also have felt alone when he was the only person saying to take down the idols that people were worshipping. We can feel alone when we face big challenges in our lives too.



DISCUSS

(5 mins)

- Do you think God's presence made a difference to Hezekiah's loneliness?*
- Do you think knowing God could make a difference if you feel lonely?*
- Has it made a difference to anyone when they have felt lonely?*



TALK CONTINUED

Loneliness is something I think we all face at sometime in our lives. God is always present so you can never be alone, wherever you are, He's everywhere. God is all around you, His presence is here right now filling up this room. He sits alongside you, wants to talk to you and share your life. The thing is although He is here He won't ever force you into a relationship with him.

You get to choose whether or not you have anything to do with God. You choose whether or not to acknowledge that He is here. Many people feel or experience God but they often don't understand what's happened. I have non-Christian friends who have cried when they've gone to church, without it being for a sad reason. Others have experienced great peace when I've prayed for them. Some have even been healed when I've prayed for them (use your own personal examples). Yet they choose not to acknowledge that it's God they experience. God could be the one constant in their lives, but they choose to ignore him.

We have the same choice, we don't have to feel lonely. We can know God is with us all the time. In Matthew 28:20 Jesus tells the disciples He will be with them till the very end of time. Jesus makes a promise so they know they will never be alone. That promise is there for us too. It's one I often repeat to myself, especially if things are going badly and I need to know I'm not alone. I need to know God is with me in the mess and when everything is going right. It helps me to know in my head and to experience God being with me too. (Share a time when you have felt God's presence.)



RESPONSE (5 mins)

**WORSHIP:
SONG OF SOLOMAN,
JESUS CULTURE**

Now, you can choose to explore this idea with God if you would like. I can't tell you to do this, as I said it's a choice whether or not you want to acknowledge God. If you choose to meet with God in this time He will meet with you, because he's faithful and He is right here. If you decide you want to acknowledge God then this is about just you and God. We are going to listen to a song: you have two options - you can sit, or lie as you listen. I'm going to ask God to help us know He is present in the room as you relax and listen to the song. There are many ways that God might let you know He is close; You may feel it on your skin; you may feel love; feel really happy; you may just know deep down that He is here or, he may do something else.

Let the youth find their own space in the room. Encourage them not to be near, or touching anyone else so it is just them and God. Be as flexible as possible: some of my youth love being under tables or sat on a window ledge.

God thank you that you are here, come and fill this room with more of you. Help us to focus on you. Help us to know you are here.

Give the youth the entire song to focus on God and then as you are moving towards the end of the song say: *Some of you are having a great time with God, so feel free to stay put and keep going. However, if you feel you want to move and do something else with God there are some paper and pens for you to come and draw what you think it looks like to have God all around you (have the song on repeat, or choose another that fits in advance so there is a smooth flow between the songs).*



REFLECT AND SHARE

(5 mins)

Break into small groups. Ask the young people if they are happy to share what God did? And then ask, *how did that make you feel?*

Trust that God will have moved in the room, this is often a stepping out moment for us as leaders. Reassure your young people if some feel that they didn't quite connect:

We don't all feel, see, hear or know God is in the room in the same way. It can be different for each of us. Even if you think nothing happened we can trust God is here and with us. It's also something that can take practice and we will try lots of different ways over time so you can find what's right for you.

Ask if sensing or knowing God was in the room is something they would try if they felt lonely?



GAME 2

(5-10 mins)

Split your youth into groups of four. Then give each group a pack of cards. Ask them to lay the cards out face down in a grid format. Have them take off their socks.

The first person chooses the cards to turn over. The aim of the game is to pair the cards together.

The catch is they can only turn over a card using their toes. And they must turn it back over using their toes (**tip**: this takes the toes of both feet). Then, the next person takes their turn. Set a time limit based on what is appropriate for your session and see how many pairs they can find.

The team with the most pairs at the end of the time wins.





ACTION

(5 mins)

Ask: *can you think of other people who might feel lonely?* (old people, friends, people who live on their own, homeless people.)

There are so many people who feel alone, sometimes because they are on their own but sometimes because they feel alone even in a crowd. Yet God can be with them too, He is everywhere. There will be people in our town who feel lonely today.

You have two options here:

OPTION 1

Explain to your young people that you are going to go out into the local area and pray. When one of the group thinks or feels you should stop the whole group. Pray for the people in the nearest building that they will know God is with them. If you have time, repeat.

OPTION 2

Ask them to picture their road and imagine walking down the road, paying attention to the houses in their road. As they walk down the road ask them to choose a house to stop outside. Then pray that the people living in the house will know God is with them.

Finish in prayer: *Thank you God that you are with us always till the very end of time. Help us to know you are near when we feel alone. Be with anyone who feels alone today, let them feel your presence and know that you are near.*



RESOURCES

- x1 pack of card for every four young people in your youth group
- Youth Bibles
- Paper
- Felt tip colouring pens
- Song: 'Song of Solomon' – Jesus Culture
- Masking tape or chalk