

The Letter

Theme: Honesty with God

This has to do with the idea that we can express displeasure toward God and God is able to handle that raw honesty. God actually welcomes it. If you choose to do this exercise, it is important that you and your staff are comfortable with this concept.

Things you should know:

You will need paper and writing utensils.

You will need a paper shredder or a bonfire for the end.

You may want to play instrumental music as students write their letters.

Introduction:

God wants our honesty, no matter how we feel or what we think. God, in fact, already knows what we are thinking and feeling deep inside. Being honest with God about difficult thoughts and feelings can bring healing and take away the power these thoughts and feelings have over us in terms of how we see ourselves, others, and God.

Two examples of this in the bible:

- Jesus' crucifixion when he cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (in other words, "God, where did you go? Why did you leave me?")
- Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when he expresses his honest desire to find a different way to complete his mission on earth, one that doesn't include the cross.

In both of these situations, Jesus was totally honest with God. If you add these examples to others we find the Bible (including the Psalms, Moses, Job and Jeremiah), it seems clear that God wants and welcomes our honesty.

Today- we are going to write a letter to God expressing the things in your life that are or have been hurtful, troubling, and difficult. No one else will read your letter. Write how these things make you feel about yourself and about God. Ask God any questions you have about these events, such as where was God when these things took place? Or why did these things have to happen?

After you have written the letter, go back over it one more time and ask yourself if there is anything you want to add or say in a stronger way. Allow your students to spread out to write their letters. Tell them when it is time to regroup. (no particular time limit- just get a feel for when everyone seems to be done).

Part two- activity:

Have the youth close their eyes and hold onto their letters as you read the following meditation:

*You are sitting at a large wooden desk. You lean back in your chair and reread the letter you have just written to God. You easily recall the pain of these circumstances you have written about. You allow yourself to feel whatever you are feeling. As you are reading over your letter, Jesus walks into the room. He takes a chair across the desk from you. He sits there silently for a few moments, and then he says, "I understand you wrote me a letter. Would you like to read it to me?" **(Pause a moment)***

*You slowly begin reading the letter to Jesus, looking up from time to time to see his expression, to look into his eyes, to see what he might be feeling as he sits and listens to every word. When you are finished, Jesus thanks you for your honesty and asks if there is anything else you would like to say. Jesus sits and waits for your response. **(Pause a moment)***

Once you are finished, Jesus asks you to close your eyes. Then, after a few seconds, Jesus tells you to open your eyes. You open them and discover you are no longer behind the wooden desk. You are in a beautiful place. A place of comfort, safety, warmth, and beauty. You drink in your surroundings and feel yourself relax. You look at Jesus. His eyes communicate love, understanding, and sadness over what you have gone through and the struggles of your life. Now Jesus begins his response to you. What does Jesus say? Listen to his words and beyond his words- to his tone, his heart. Look deep within his eyes. What is Jesus saying to you?

Discussion Questions:

- What was it like to write such an honest letter to God? How did you feel as you wrote it?
- What surprised you in your letter?
- How did Jesus receive your letter? What did you sense from Jesus as you read your letter?
- What did Jesus say to you after you shared your letter?
- What about Jesus' response surprised you?
- How did Jesus response make you feel about your letter? About yourself?

Offer the opportunity for the youth to either burn their letters in a fire or put them through a shredder.