

SESSION 1: LOOKING BACK

Background Info

As seniors move toward graduation, it is only natural, and good, for them to want to look back and celebrate their past. They have grown from children into young adults — a passage of life that needs to be acknowledged and fêted. When you give them a chance to talk over some of the significant milestones of their life, you will be reinforcing the importance of their journey.

Make sure that your young friends look back on their past relationships and activities in a positive way that gives God the credit and praise for bringing them to this point. It would be easy to merely laugh over how skinny they were, or how fumbling they were in their first attempts to drive a car, etc. But in looking back, you want your Grads to see the hand of God in their experiences, and for them to give Him glory because of it.

Warm Up

Free For All ⚠️ Create and hand out – or email – “Free For All” sheets to everyone. Make sure everybody has a pencil, too. On the “Free For All” sheet have ten items listed... descriptions that the students find someone who fits and get his or her signature for that item. When you say “GO!” the race is on to see who can get the ten signatures the quickest. The winner should be richly rewarded – their day at the theme park tomorrow paid for, etc. Here are ten items you can use as examples:

- A person who became a Christian this last year
- Someone who volunteered at the Rescue Mission last year
- Two people who had to go to the Camp Nurse
- Someone who was on the inner tube trip our Sophomore year

- A person who was on the winning team of last year’s Summer Camp week-long competition
- Someone who was “kidnapped” as an incoming high schooler by the upper-classmen of the youth ministry
- A person who got sick from drinking the water on the Mission Trip
- Someone who stayed up all night (not sleeping at all) at the Lock-In our Junior year
- The person who never had any money when the youth bus stopped at Taco Bell for dinner

Show & Tell Instruct the seniors to bring an important article of clothing with them to this session: something they wore in their first year of high school. (You may need to contact a few parents to “help” their kids find and bring the clothing!) Then, they should show that piece of clothing to the group, and explain to them why it was important to them back then. As the leader, try to get the students talking about what life was like for them at that age — what was important to them, what they worried about, etc.

Student Interviews

On the *ConGRADulations* website are videos of graduating seniors answering the questions, “What was the craziest thing that happened to me in high school?” “If I had one thing to say to graduates, it would be...” “How am I going to use my gifts and talents to impact my world?” “What national event will I remember 20 years from now?” Show these interviews to your group, and then ask the same four questions of your students.

The Songs

Three of the songs from the *ConGRADulations* playlist fit in well with this subject. Each has a different take on the issue, so choose which one (or two, or all three!) to use, and play it (them) for your group. Generate some discussion

around the role that their friends have had in their development.

- **For KING & COUNTRY**, “Together”
- **We Are Messengers**, “Love”
- **Andy Mineo**, “I Don’t Need You”

Bible Study

⚠️ Make sure your students have the Student Guide – you might need to email the pdf to them. Have the Grads work through the first two items: “Looking Back” and “Victories.” Then have them share their “answers” with the rest of the group.

Lead them in a 15-minute Bible study/discussion of **Ecclesiastes 4:7-12**. Solomon looked around and deduced that one of the most difficult situations that people face is being alone. His simple premise is: “*Two are better than one.*” He gives three reasons why our friends have been, and will continue to be, important to us:

We’re More Productive (v.9) Think of some jobs, goals, or assignment you’ve had where you were better working with someone rather than working alone. What strengths do you need from others to cover for your weaknesses? What strengths do you bring to a relationship?

We’re More Resilient (v.10) No one can be strong all the time. We are all going to fall, fail, or blow chunks! Who are some people who have helped you in difficult times? How did you get back on your feet?

We’re More Protected (v.11) We need people who will protect us when we’re in someone’s crosshairs. Do you have a loyal friend who will back you up when people “dis” you? How have your friends defended you? What is an area of your life where you could use some protection?

Wrap Up

Have the group find a friend to pray with, thanking God for their relationship, for the things they’ve experienced together, and for the future that He has planned for them.