

Artist:

Imagine Dragons

Song: I Bet My Life**Album:** Smoke and Mirrors**By:** Eric Gargus
e4christ@aol.com**Theme**

Faithfulness

Teaching Point

Real love overcomes failures.

Opening Questions

What are some ways a friend might let another friend down? Is someone your age capable of loving a person after being let down by him/her multiple times? How do you notice society replacing grace and forgiveness with revenge and shallowness?

Discussion

In "I Bet My Life" Imagine Dragons take the listener to a place many of us have gone or will go—a relationship where one person continually lets the other person down. A question that must be asked at some point is, when is enough really enough? Maybe the opening lyrics resonate with your parents, a close friend—or a boyfriend/girlfriend situation where you waited and waited for that text and never got it: *I know I let you down, didn't I? So many sleepless nights where you were waiting up on me.* Gave an example of this from a movie or TV show—or in real life (keep it anonymous). Which side of the situation is hardest on a person?

In the second verse is a bold realization from the one who's let down the other: *I've told a million lies but now I tell a single truth: there's you in everything I do.* What qualities in a faithful friend makes a rebellious person realize that the friend really cares about him/her unconditionally? Is there anyone in your life you know you can count on even when you mess up? Who and why?

The chorus is a repetition of the rebellious one's declaration: *I bet my life on you.* Who would you "bet your life" on? Explain why. Is even the most faithful friend 100% reliable? Why or why not?

Jesus had close friends let Him down. Peter denied knowing Him for fear of being arrested or worse. Judas betrayed Him into the hands of those who wanted Him dead. Before He was arrested, His close friends kept falling asleep when He repeatedly asked them to stay awake and pray for Him. To risk loving anyone deeply is to risk being let down.

Conclusion

Are you usually the one who is doing the letting down, or the one being let down? There is only One who will never fail you. The bad news is, you will fail that One every day of your life. Do you want to experience real, unconditional love? Do you want to live a life of real, unconditional love for those you are close to? Follow the example of the Perfect One, Jesus Christ. Read Proverbs 18: 24 and 1 John 1:9.

Artist:

James Newton Howard

Song: The Hanging Tree (feat. Jennifer Lawrence)**Album:** The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 1**By:** Jane Wells, author of *Bird on Fire*, and *Glitter in the Sun*, birdonfireblog.com/teachmockingjay1**Theme**

Zeal

Teaching Point

Is there anything you believe in enough to lay your life down for?

Opening Questions

Think about the scenes in *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1* when actress Jennifer Lawrence sings "The Hanging Tree." What is happening? What happens to the song? (It becomes the anthem of the rebellion.) Can you think of a historic example of a song becoming the anthem of a movement? (ie. Civil Rights movement, "We Shall Overcome.")

Discussion

When you watch movies like *Mockingjay*, or learn about the immense bravery of young people during the Civil Rights movement, do you feel your heart stir, as though you want to join in? Do ever feel that your life is shallow and filled with things that aren't going to make much of a dent in history? The difference is ZEAL, defined as "great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or objective." It is conviction so deep and strong it drives you to action against all odds—just like the rebels in *Mockingjay* who knew they were sacrificing their lives to destroy the dam.

Zeal is what gave the marchers in Selma the courage to stand up against police dogs and fire hoses. It is the strength that gave dignity to the 21 Egyptian men killed simply for being Christian. Zeal can give ordinary teenagers the power to change the world, and it is a quality we should build in our lives.

Romans 12:11 says, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." But, how do we do that? If we zoom out and read the whole paragraph (verses 9-13), we begin to see some very simple instructions for doing so. Hate evil, cling to goodness. Honor each other. Be joyful, patient, and faithful. Share. **Proverbs 19:2** tells us to educate ourselves—zeal without direction is just a lot of noise!

Find a need, whether it's feeding the hungry or overthrowing a corrupt government. Learn where you can make a difference. Then do it. Be zealous in doing good and you will make a difference!

Conclusion

You were made on purpose in the image of a creative and zealous God. You have skills and passions designed to share His hope with the world! Think about the things you do that make you deeply happy, and then pray about how to use that skill set or activity to serve God.

Artist:

Mark Ronson

Song: Uptown Funk (ft. Bruno Mars)**Album:** Uptown Special**By:** Doug Ranck
dranck@fmcbsb.org**Theme**

Self-Image/Uniqueness

Teaching Point:

Since we are the handiwork of God, we can feel confident in His work in and through us.

Opening Question

If you were to evaluate how you feel about yourself right now with a scale of 1 being low and 10 being high, what number would you assign yourself?

Discussion

Maybe you have heard the quote, "When you compare, you always lose." I have not found who said it but I like it. Rating ourselves in comparison with someone else is easy to do but never healthy. We look at another person and assess them to be better in certain areas or lacking in others. Either way, we lose and they lose as well.

In this song, we hear the writer communicate a high rating of himself in appropriate and inappropriate ways. A few highlights include, *I'm too hot, call a police and fireman—Girls shout out your hallelujah—make a dragon retire.* We would say he thinks rather highly of himself! He is confident in his manliness, and he is not afraid to let the world know about himself.

God's Word gives us a balanced perspective on this, reminding us that what God has made is good and He is the one who made us—not us! **Psalm 139:13-16** says it best, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

God has knitted us together. We are who we are through the work of His hands. What we do with what He has made is up to us. We are charged with taking care of this "temple" and honoring it physically, socially, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. As we keep our eyes on our Creator, we can trust Him to help us think neither too highly or lowly of ourselves. We can celebrate God's wonderful work in the lives of others and ourselves!

Conclusion

In what area of life do you struggle with pride in yourself? In what area of life do you struggle with thinking too negatively of yourself? What is one step you can take to keep these more in balance?