

TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY



**Resources for
Nazarene Youth Ministry**

by Bud Reedy

TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY

Ok ! You're a youth leader or someone who is interested in youth ministry. You are about to start a youth ministry or looking for ways to improve your current youth department. You'll need the tools to do the work.

This books is your complete resource for youth ministry, including :

THE PURPOSE OF TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY
PLANNING FOR TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY
LEADING TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY
PROGRAMMING TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY
BIBLE STUDIES
YOUTH SERVICE OUTLINES
YOUTH RALLIES
OPENING ACTIVITIES AND GAMES

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TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY

Resources for Nazarene Youth Ministry

Bud Reedy

Caribbean Nazarene Publications

Miami, FL

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THE PURPOSE OF TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY

A Parable

Once upon a time, two ships rested quietly in a secluded harbor. Although these ships looked very much alike on the outside, they were quite different. They were owned by two different companies: The McDill Transportation Company and the Smith Transportation Company.

One day, both companies decided to repair their ships and ready them for service upon the seas. And so, after many hours of labor and much expense, the vessels were ready to board their passengers and set sail. What a great day it was! Each ship literally bustled with activity and ceremony. Spirits ran high among both firms as the two ships sailed majestically out of the security of the harbor onto the vast, unknown sea.

Happily, both ventures were profitable for a while. As time passed, the McDill Company continued to show signs of success. But the Smith Company struggled constantly. Upon examination, it was discovered that the McDill Company insisted on regular maintenance and from time to time even added new types of services. The McDill Company was also known to put their ships in dry dock during slower months, cutting the number of its voyages and the number of passengers it carried annually. The Smith Company, on the other hand, thought such measures were too costly and insisted they sail every week of the year. Their strategy was to simply rake in more profit from the ticket sales, carrying as many passengers as was physically possible. This it was able to do for a while.

Several months passed. Slowly, certain trends began to develop. Fewer and fewer people sailed on the Smith's ship. The McDill ship, regularly dry-docked, continued to upgrade its facilities and program, striving to please its customers. Conditions on the Smith ship finally reached the point where the owners were no longer able to continue their voyages. Soon, they converted the Smith vessel from a passenger ship to one that carried cargo.

Now, what do you suppose was the difference between the two firms? Why did the McDill Company flourish and the Smith Company flounder? Such questions never have easy answers. But in this situation, as in most, it boils down to one particular issue: **purpose**.

The McDill Company understood that the purpose of their ship was to provide quality service, good facilities, and programs for its passengers. Therefore, to them, it wasn't important to just have their ship in the water for the sake of having it in the water. Their goal wasn't to see how many passengers they could cram onto their boat. Their goal was to meet the needs of their passengers, knowing "satisfied" customers make for a successful business.

On the other hand, the Smith Company had only one purpose in mind: profit. It began to see passenger quotas and trip frequency as all-important because those were the things that would turn a profit. They failed, not through lack of work but because they did not keep their purpose for existence in mind.

In the realm of youth ministry, there exists the potential for a similar dilemma. If youth leaders are not cautious, the purpose for the existence of the youth program can become unclear ... even lost. **And when** that happens, the things that should be a means toward an end, namely youth programs and activities, become an end in themselves. In this case, the measure of a "successful" youth ministry becomes the number and complexity of certain programs. Such an approach to youth ministry, though common, is usually unproductive. "Successful" youth leaders are those who understand the

purpose of youth ministry and who purposefully use their reason for being as the guideline for determining a youth ministry strategy.

What Is a Purpose Statement?

Simply put, the purpose of any organization is the general, comprehensive, long-range reason or reasons why that organization should continue to exist. Every organization should have such a purpose statement. That only stands to reason! And that statement of purpose should be kept before that organization at all levels of leadership. The purpose statement becomes the measuring stick for everything that organization does. Let's take a look at yours.

What Is Your Reason for Being?

Do you have a purpose statement? If not, here is a sample you may adopt, modify, or use as a guideline for writing your own! "The purpose of youth ministries shall be to build up its members in Christian faith and in holy character and to instruct them in the Word of God and in the doctrines of the church. It shall also be the purpose of youth ministries to bring others to Christ and to provide ways for equipping youth for the total mission of the church through worship, witness, ministry, discipleship, and fellowship." That's some purpose statement! It certainly fits the bill, doesn't it? It's general ... it's comprehensive ... it's the long-range reason why we are involved in **TOTAL** youth ministry ... it is a statement of our aspirations as youth leaders ... it is the direction most of us desire to go.

So here you are. You are a youth leader or someone who is interested in youth ministry. You are either preparing to begin a ministry to youth or you are looking for ways to improve the ministry in which you are presently involved. Whatever the case may be, it is important that you know the ultimate purpose of your ministry efforts. If you believe that, then you will want to take a look at the basic elements of this youth ministry purpose statement.

1. Our first purpose as youth leaders is **to build up youth in Christian faith**. Simply put, your task as a leader of youth is to move your youth from where they are spiritually to a deeper level of commitment to God. You no doubt realize that no two youth are at the exact same point in their spiritual journey. Stop for a moment and consider each member of your youth group. The typical group will have female and male youth, early, middle, and senior youth. In all likelihood you have youth from whole families and youth from broken homes. You have a few outgoing, aggressive youth as well as some who are shy and reserved, don't you? Some are actively involved in the church youth program and some are only minimally involved. Some are committed to the life of discipleship, some are not. The successful youth leader recognizes the individual needs of his youth and promotes programs to stimulate growth and Christian maturity in each of their lives, no matter where they are on the road to spiritual maturity. Building up youth in Christian faith requires that you:
 - a. *Model the mature Christian life.* Youth are followers. They tend to copy people they like and admire. Therefore, it is important that youth leaders be Christian models. According to Bill Muir, USA director of *Campus Life*, "Modeling the Christian life is somewhat like modeling clothes, except that we don't shed the Christian life like an article of clothing. When models are on display in a clothing store, they show the viewer what that particular item looks like on a real person. It's one thing to look at a dress on a rack and another to

see it on a person. Models are simply answering the unspoken question of the Group-'What might these clothes look like on me?' When we model the Christian life-style we are showing youth the real-life application and the meaning of words like 'love,' 'servanthood,' and 'obedience.'”

Paul showed that he understood the importance of consistent, Christlike leader/models when he reminded the Thessalonians: “*You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed*” (1 Thessalonians 2:10).

- b. *Spend time with your youth individually.* Most local youth leaders have the potential for developing meaningful, one-on-one relationships with their youth. No program or activity can ever take the place of personal contact with youth. Phone calls, notes and personal postcards, visits in their home and yours, and going places together are just a few ways youth leaders spend time with youth on an individual basis. It is in the context of these personal encounters that deep, abiding relationships are developed and maintained, and life change takes place.

As you look back over your years in youth ministry, you will come to realize that your most successful ministry with youth had little to do with meetings or programs, but rather with one-on-one times with individuals. It would be fair to say that Jesus' most meaningful times with His disciples were not in the large meetings by the seashore, but rather in the more intimate moments as they walked together, fished together, prayed together, and learned to know and love one another.

Paul reflected this approach to ministry when he said “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

- c. *Design and implement programs and activities in response to needs.* The individual contact you have with youth should result in a fresh awareness and/or confirmation of their needs. Larry Richards, in the book *Teaching Youth*, reminds us that youth have five central developmental needs or tasks to work through during the adolescent years. They are:
 1. A young person needs to develop a healthy self image.
 2. A young person needs to develop good social skills and friendships, learning how to relate to others.
 3. A young person needs to develop healthy attitudes towards, and relationships with, members of the opposite sex.
 4. A young person needs to make a personal religious commitment to self-chosen beliefs and moral values.
 5. A young person needs to develop and begin to live by self-chosen values and priorities.

With these adolescent developmental tasks in mind, the successful youth leader will evaluate all youth programs and activities by asking: “How will this program or that activity help my youth develop into more mature, well-rounded youth believers?” Programs are planned with this question in mind.

- d. *Measure success not just in terms of numbers but mainly in terms of individual spiritual progress.* You must not automatically assume that because your youth are “active” that they are growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no virtue in activity for the sake of activity. A youth can be involved in a church function every night of the week and still not experience real life change toward Christlikeness. You would be better off to measure your “success” not by the number of youth functions and the number of youth who attend them but by the “*work produced by faith, . . . labor prompted by love.... endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 1:3). These things, produced in the lives of youth disciples, are the real measurements of a successful youth ministry.
2. The second purpose of **TOTAL** youth ministry is **to build up youth in holy character**. As a youth leader, your task is not merely to entertain youth or to occupy their time in order to maintain their present level of spirituality. It is not enough that your youth merely tread water, so to speak. Your task is to find ways to challenge them to move ahead into the life of holiness and to encourage them, through the Word and by example, to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength and their neighbor as themselves. Youth believers, like believers of all ages, are “called unto holiness,” to consistent Christlike motives and attitudes and effective service to God. That must never be forgotten.
 3. Third, the purpose of **TOTAL** youth ministry is **to instruct youth in the Word of God**. If our task is to help youth develop into mature, Spirit-filled believers, then what should our tools be? Simply put, the Word of God. In fact, the most important tool at our disposal for reaching our desired end is the Bible. Why is that? Well, because:
 - a. Youth come to know who God is and what He is like from His Word (Hosea 6:6).
 - b. Youth discover the truth from His Word, the truth they need to know about themselves and the world in which they live (John 8:31-32).
 - c. Youth are taught, rebuked, corrected, trained, and equipped through encounters with the Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

If the above principles are true, then youth ministry must be built on a strong commitment to, and emphasis on, the Word of God. For a youth ministry to be Bible-centered means that the program itself is built upon biblical principles like worship, witness, discipleship, ministry, and fellowship. It is through these biblical activities that the kingdom of God is built. No new programs can ever take the place of these functions. They are God’s design for His Church and therefore must be included in our ministry to youth.

Being Bible-centered also means that youth are given every opportunity to examine, study, and respond to the Word as it applies to their lives. At rallies, camps, Sunday School classes ... and at many other youth activities, the Word of God should be explored because it is that sharp-edged sword of the Lord that changes people's lives, young and old alike.

Being Bible-centered also assures us that our youth program will be built upon the Bible's authority and not our own personalities. A youth program built upon the popularity and/or natural ability of a youth leader will be shallow and short-lived. But a program built upon the ultimate authority of God’s Word will last. “*It will,*” as Isaiah observed, “*not return to me*

empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

The Bible must have a central place in your youth ministry strategy, because it is not enough that your youth own a Bible - they must read it. (If they don't have a Bible, it's important that they memorize it.) It is not enough that they read it - they must understand it. It is not enough that they understand it - they must believe it. And it is not enough that they believe it - they must live it!

4. The fourth purpose of **TOTAL** youth ministry is **to instruct youth in the doctrines of the Church**. Our primary goal is to make disciples of our youth. That's what really counts the most. Yet we must not be timid in our efforts to instruct our youth in the doctrines of the Church. Much of this kind of instruction will take place informally and rather naturally as youth are exposed to regular preaching events, consistent adult models, and Sunday School classes. But instruction in the doctrines of the Church needs to be direct as well.

The study of doctrine is important because, as Dr. Richard Taylor has said: "We may have doctrine without salvation, but we cannot have salvation without doctrine. If we are saved by faith, we must have something to believe, and it must be the truth. We are not saved by believing error. Jesus said: 'If you continue in my word ... you shall know the truth (that's doctrine), and the truth shall make you free' (that's doctrine become experience). Our youth program should include times when youth are encouraged to ask the tough questions concerning doctrine. The sooner they understand that doctrine and accept that calling, the more likely they will be to respond as the Holy Spirit draws them to a time of personal commitment. Youth ministry shares in that important task.

5. The fifth purpose of **TOTAL** youth ministry is **to bring others to Christ**. Regardless of our fears or past experiences or attitudes or personal youth ministry philosophy, God's command remains the same: Go! Go teach ... go preach... go compel them to come... go be My witnesses. Evangelism is a part of our purpose.

No matter how warm our personalities, how complete our planning, or how adequate our programming, the majority of unbelieving youth will not come knocking at our church doors. We have to go to them. We must be very careful that we are doing everything we can to promote an evangelistic youth program. This can be accomplished only as we:

- a. Allow the Holy Spirit to place a burden upon our hearts for the unsaved youth in our communities (Galatians 6:2).
- b. Plan youth events with youth evangelism in mind (Matthew 28:19-20).
- c. Train the youth in our groups to evangelize their world (Ephesians 4:11-12). Young people must be reached with the gospel, and no one is in a better position to do that than Christian young people themselves. "Unfortunately," says John Musselman, "churches too often view youth as the 'future' of the church. Youth pastors and adult workers often plan for youth until they pass the adolescent period. Perhaps the church has been guilty of communicating to youth that they are on hold till a better, more mature day." We must be careful that we do not develop an entertainment mentality. The purpose of youth ministry is not to entertain, but to train youth to participate in reaching the world with the gospel.

6. Finally, the purpose of **TOTAL** youth ministry is to **equip youth for the total mission of the Church**. The Church must have a mission. In fact, as Reinhold Niebuhr has observed: “The church exists by mission just as a fire exists by burning.” When all is said and done, the purpose of **TOTAL** youth ministry is to “*prepare God’s people [specifically youth believers] for works of service*, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Our task as youth leaders is the preparation of our youth for works of service. By means of worship, witness, discipleship, ministry, and fellowship opportunities we provide youth with the training they need to be involved in ministry now and for a lifetime. Jesus made the importance of service abundantly clear through word and example: “... *whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*” (Mark 10:43-45).

Hold the Course!

When a pilot steps into the cockpit of a plane in preparation for a flight, he performs a very important ritual, one that his life and his passengers' lives depend upon. He carefully goes over a pre-flight checklist, making sure that all the plane's equipment and instruments are in proper working order. Once that task is completed, he radios the tower and requests that the traffic controller assigns him a “transponder code number.” The pilot then programs that number into an instrument known as the VOR navigation system. Now, the interesting thing is that as long as the pilot keeps the plane's VOR system tuned into his assigned code number, he will, with the help of a radio signal from ground control and the autopilot, stay on the proper heading. He will stay right on course. The wind may change and visibility may be limited, but he will not become confused or frightened because he knows that as long as the proper transponder code number appears on the instrument panel in front of him, he will reach his destination.

In all likelihood, the wind will blow upon your youth ministry program. Maybe it already has. There will be times of discouragement and difficulty. Maybe they're here now. At times your visibility will be limited and you won't know what's ahead or which way to turn. But if you base your youth program upon a purpose statement that is biblical, if you hold a steady course, if you keep that purpose statement in sharp focus, you will reach your destination. It may require some occasional course corrections. It will require maintenance, even repair. There will be those times when you feel ineffective, like just giving up. At those moments, remember the purpose for which you have been called ... ministry to youth. Hold the course! Lock into that purpose, and like Paul, “*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:13-14).

PLANNING FOR TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY

With the purpose of TOTAL youth ministry clearly in mind, it's time for you to consider a plan of action. *Planning is:* deciding in advance what should be done, why it should be done, where it should be done, when it should be done, how it should be done, and who should do it! Maybe you need a more technical definition of planning than that. According to Robert Bower, planning is “the process of examining the past and the present in order to construct the best means for achieving success in both the present and the future.”

Once a small boy asked his dad, “How far can you see, Daddy?” “Oh, I don't know, Son... 20 miles, maybe 40 miles on a clear day. How far can you see?” “I can see a lot farther than that,” said the boy. “I can see clear to the stars!”

Planning not only requires that we see that which lies directly ahead but also gives the opportunity to see over the hills of time to a long-range goal. Planning is an opportunity to consider what God can do in our lives and the lives of those to whom we minister.

The Importance of Planning

Plain and simple, planning is so very important to the success of your youth ministry efforts because without it, your goals and objectives for youth ministry will probably only be partially achieved, if at all. A lack of adequate planning most always produces a rather disorganized approach to programs and activities. And because planning does not always take place, God's resources, our time, talents, and treasures are sometimes mishandled ... even wasted. Failure to plan properly can be seen as the poor stewardship of that which God has invested in us to perform ministry. Therefore, planning is essential to successful youth ministry.

Resistance to Planning

Although we usually see the value in planning for youth ministry, there may be a part of us that resists such planning. Yes, there are some people who seem to be able to fulfill their purposes without planning. However, such people are few and far between. Others recognize the need to plan but do not do so because they would rather approach their work moment by moment, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead each step of the way. Again, that style of leadership works for some. But for most of us, planning is helpful and downright necessary. Therefore, it might be beneficial for you to consider how you may overcome resistance to planning.

1. *Realize that planning can be Spirit-led.* The notion that the Holy Spirit can only lead spontaneously or at the last minute limits His ability, doesn't it? The Holy Spirit is just as capable, and probably more likely, of inspiring your long-range planning as He is your last-minute details.
2. *Realize that God himself is the master planner.* The scripture tells that Jesus “was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake” (1 Peter 1:20). The Incarnation wasn't a last-minute idea! God had a long-range plan for the salvation of mankind!
3. *Realize that planning does not stifle creativity, but in many cases enhances it.* Planning causes creativity to be disciplined, and creativity seasoned with discipline is a great recipe for successful youth ministry.

Planning to Plan to Plan?

If you are one of the large majority of youth leaders who would benefit from Spirit-led planning, maybe it's time you planned to plan. How about it? Do you have a plan for planning to plan? If the answer is no, then you would do well to decide on an organizational strategy. The remaining parts of this section provide just that - a plan for TOTAL youth ministry.

LEADING TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY

TOTAL youth ministry will only be as successful as its leaders. Just like every other area of ministry, the church's youth program is dependent upon consistent, committed, spiritual leadership.

Qualities Needed for TOTAL Youth Ministry

What are the basic personal qualities necessary for effective youth ministry? From the Word and experience we discover that a good youth leader must have the following qualities:

1. *A vital, growing relationship with God.* Youth ministry is, without a doubt, more complex, more demanding in this than it ever has been before. The responsibility of helping shape the next generation of youth for leadership in the church ... of discipling them into a mature Christian walk ... and equipping them for a lifetime of ministry and service ... these are responsibilities of considerable weight and consequence. Our churches are in desperate need of youth leadership that is spiritual. Our leaders must be clearly and undeniably within the experience of salvation. Our leaders must have a vital, growing relationship with God. No amount of talent or personality traits can ever take the place of this irreplaceable characteristic. A vital, growing relationship with God will bring stability and authority to your youth ministry efforts. Without it, youth ministry tends to become shallow and ineffectual. What we need more than polished programs and excessive youth ministry budgets are Spirit-filled youth leaders who love God, who have a sense of His direction and calling upon their lives, and who are growing in grace and in Christlikeness (Ephesians 4:14-15).

2. *A genuine love of young people.* Effective youth leadership is not limited by geographical location, formal education, or age. Many successful youth programs are being led by people with little or no formal education. Age is not necessarily a barrier to effective youth ministry. But most successful youth leaders have this characteristic or quality in common: a burden ... a compassion.. . a love for youth. Without this, no matter how strong his natural gifts and/or abilities, a youth leader will find it very difficult to succeed (1 Corinthians 13:1). Genuinely caring for youth and their concerns is much more important than a preoccupation with program details. It's more important than arranging equipment, finding volunteers, or planning next week's program. Most youth are less interested in the program a leader has planned for a given occasion than with how he or she treats them when they come together. More than anything else, our youth need love and acceptance. As their youth leader, you may be their only source.

But beyond loving youth, it is also important that youth leaders like them. There is a difference. A person may truthfully say he loves youth and yet not enjoy being around them. To like youth is to enjoy their presence. Youth know if they are truly liked or if they are merely being tolerated.

3. *A willingness to be an example to youth.* Much of the good that is accomplished for the kingdom of God is caught rather than taught. The youth leader needs to be someone youth can look up to, someone after whom they may pattern their lives. A holy life lived in a consistent manner ... Christlike attitudes ... a Christian life-style ... these are qualities that youth long to see in their leaders and to which they are most likely to respond. Paul understood this aspect of his ministry to the believers in Philippi: "*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-put it into practice*" (Philippians 4:9)

4. *Enthusiasm.* Enthusiasm is one of those characteristics that is obvious when it is present in a person's life and even more so when it is not. An enthusiastic youth leader is one who believes in what he is doing and who communicates in a variety of ways that he enjoys what he is doing! He has a

positive view of himself, his church, his God, his ministry, and of the people God has put into his life. Youth enjoy being around such people. Paul challenged the people in Philippi to think upon those things that were noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). As youth leaders, we would do well to build our ministries upon that which is positive.

5. *Dependability.* Nothing will undermine a youth program and disillusion a group of youth faster than a youth leader who promises big things and doesn't deliver. A youth leader must make dependability, punctuality, faithfulness, and availability very high priorities. When a youth observes that his youth leader is committed to him and to the other youth in the group to follow through with the group's plans, that leader has done a great deal to earn their trust and respect. And once a youth leader has a group's trust, he is in a position to have a real impact on their lives.

Paul told the believers who lived in Galatia that, among other things (like love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, and self-control) the result or fruit of the Holy Spirit's presence in a person's life is faithfulness (Galatians 5:22). A Spirit-filled, Spirit-led youth leader is as good as his or her word.

6. *Prayerfulness.* Youth ministry can be extremely demanding. It requires courage, endurance, good judgment, wisdom, and tact. There are very few, if any, youth leaders who are naturally gifted with all these things. But through prayer and trust in God, they are available. The successful youth leader will:

- a. Pray for the courage and resolve to provide real spiritual leadership to the youth of his charge.
- b. Pray for the endurance necessary to see his ministry through, even when discouragement comes.
- c. Pray for good judgment when difficult decisions and decisive action are required.
- d. Pray for wisdom to act with a good measure of common sense.
- e. Pray for the tact necessary to deal with the complex situations and demanding people that come with the ministry.

James makes a wonderful promise in his letter to all believers all over the world: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

Recruiting Leaders

If you have been called upon to provide leadership for your local church, zone, or district organization, it's time that you admitted something to yourself. You just can't do the whole thing by yourself - no matter how much talent, time, and energy you have. You need help. And besides, why work alone when there may be others who are willing and qualified to assist you? So many youth leaders work so hard that they sometimes burn out, not realizing the value of a team effort. Successful youth leaders realize how important it is that they share their ministry to youth with others. In so doing, they reach more youth than any one person could alone. They multiply their ministry. With this in mind, you may want to recruit some help to assist in your ministry to youth. Here are a few guidelines for recruiting the help you need:

1. *Consider your needs.* Make a list of those functions for which you need leadership help. A typical list may look something like this: a transportation co-ordinator, a publicity/advertisement co-ordinator, a Bible Study co-ordinator, four adult couples to sponsor after-church youth activities, three adults to act as camp sponsors, a youth choir director, a Bible quizzing coach, a mission education director.
2. *Pray.* Pray that God would lead you to the leaders that He is preparing to help.
3. *Review the youth leadership qualifications discussed earlier.* In fact, you may wish to write those six qualifications beside the person's name while evaluating them?
 - a. *Write down the names of those you consider as having potential for youth ministry involvement.* Do not be biased by limited thinking in regard to age, educational level, or previous experience. These are not the final criteria for selection anyway.
 - b. Once the list is completed, to the best of your knowledge, determine if they have a good number, if not all, of the qualifications needed.
 - c. Once they have passed your own screening process, take the list to your pastor, associate pastor, or other leader who has responsibility for youth ministry in the church. In a private, confidential setting, share the list with them. They may have further insight into the candidates' availability and/or fitness for the task. It is always a good idea to clear the names with the person you are accountable to before you approach the would-be youth worker.
 - d. *Approach each person who seems qualified.* It's best to meet with each candidate one-on-one. Share openly with them what is on your mind, giving specific reasons why you feel they are qualified to help in youth ministry. Discuss the role you have in mind for them (small-group Bible study leader, activity sponsor, transportation co-ordinator, etc.), and give them a written job description outlining requirements and expectations. Ask them to meet with you and the others who are considering involvement for a brief discussion of what becoming a youth sponsor involves. Feel free to share your vision and your burden for youth ministry with them. Encourage them to give this careful and prayerful consideration before they respond.
 - e. Give them a deadline for sharing their response with you.
4. Support their response with understanding, whether that response is positive or negative.

There is no foolproof method of recruiting workers for your youth program. Ultimately, only time will tell whether or not your choice has been a good one. However, following these recruitment steps increases your chance of success.

Developing Leaders for Youth Ministry

Now that you have recruited a youth ministry team, what do you do with them? You can't just put a job description in their hands and wish them the best in their new responsibilities. Your task is to develop their skills for ministry. Here is a simple, concise leadership development strategy.

1. *Spend time with your leaders.* If you have a small youth ministries team, consider it a privilege that you are in a position to spend quality time with each leader. Your goal is to develop strong relationships with your team members, both inside and outside of ministry activities. Let them know you care about them as persons with personal needs. Encourage them to share those needs. This is

time well spent, for in so doing you increase their effectiveness for ministry, and indirectly, your own effectiveness as well. If you have a larger youth ministries team, spend quality time with your key team members, those with whom you are especially close and who are directly accountable to you.

2. *Schedule youth staff council meetings.* A regular meeting of your youth ministry team is a must. Such meetings should include the following elements:

- a. Your Meetings should be a time of *intercession* on behalf of both staff and youth. A successful youth ministry will always display a healthy dependence on God. In all likelihood, your staff will take their cues from you.
- b. *Insight.* The sharing of personal insights and lessons learned while performing youth ministry can have a positive impact on a group meeting. These times of shared experiences can accomplish a great deal to bring harmony and a sense of mission to the team.
- c. *Evaluation.* Do not be afraid to evaluate past youth events and programs. Examine each event, discussing first its strengths and then areas of potential improvement. Keep your goals and objectives before the group. Constantly ask: Are we really meeting the goals that we have outlined for this youth ministry? What needs to be changed? What needs to be added?
- d. *Information.* A segment of the agenda should be given to the sharing of important youth ministry information. Such gatherings are a good time to discuss youth trends, as well as the newest youth program materials and resources.
- e. *Planning.* Spend some time looking ahead to upcoming events, taking care of job assignments, transportation, and advertisements. Make sure that each person in the group has been assigned a task and understands his or her role.

3. *Create an atmosphere in which your leaders can develop both as persons and in regard to their ministry.* You did not develop your youth ministry skills overnight, did you? In all likelihood, a significant someone in your life patiently yet firmly guided you along the way. So, too, you have the responsibility of creating an atmosphere whereby your leaders may develop their skills. This can be accomplished as you:

- a. Support them in their failures. Arnold Glasow has rightfully said, “A good leader takes a little more than his share of the blame, a little less than his share of the credit.” Help your leaders to see their failures as stepping-stones to a greater effectiveness.
- b. Encourage them often, affirming them in their successes. Affirmation is a positive motivator ... certainly more potent than manipulation, fear-producing tactics, or guilt has ever been. In fact, from the look of things, affirmation seems to be the primary motive behind Paul's little letter to Philemon, in which he says: “*I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.... Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints*” (verses 4 -5, 7). Can you imagine how Philemon must have felt upon receiving such an expression of affirmation from his leader, Paul? Encouragement and affirmation, when given with dignity and sincerity, will produce a positive atmosphere in which your leaders will grow.

- c. Allow them to be a part of the decision-making process. John Naisbitt, in his book *Megatrends*, has observed that “people whose lives are affected by a decision must be part of the process of arriving at that decision.” If they are left out of the decision-making process, they will not feel “ownership” in a decision, and therefore, are unlikely to support it with enthusiasm. You will do a great deal to create a positive atmosphere where your leaders grow and develop if you purposefully involve them in the decision-making process.

PROGRAMMING TOTAL YOUTH MINISTRY

Now, we hope that the pieces of the **TOTAL** youth ministry puzzle are starting to fall in place. You've set some goals and objectives ... the organization is in place ... youth leadership has been selected and are poised, ready for action ... what do you do next? Well, that's exactly the right question to ask! It's time to consider the youth programs you want to begin and/or continue. Programming is the practical application of your youth ministry strategy. The programs you begin show what you hope to accomplish as a result of the whole planning process.

What Programs?

The big question that you are probably facing now is: What youth programs should we try here and now? What kinds of programs will work? Is Bible quizzing what we need? Will a youth camp meet the group's needs? Is a missions trip or service project the remedy for my group's ills? Maybe . . . but then again, maybe not! What works at Central Church may not work for your youth group. What worked for your youth group three years ago may not work now. That's why you need to consider the following guidelines for youth programming.

1. *Consider, once again, your youth ministry goals and objectives, both long-term goals and short-term.* When considering programs ask: What programs will best help us reach our goals and objectives for the future? This needs to be the guiding principle in the selection, start, and maintenance of every youth program you have. Talk with your pastor about the programs that you are thinking about, making sure those programs are consistent with his/her overall goals for the church and that he/she feels comfortable with those programs. This is important because you need his/her support and the support of other key leaders in the church if the programs are going to be successful.

2. *Consider your group's needs.* If you've been in youth leadership for a period of time, you know who the youth are and what their needs are. If you're new to the church or community, meet with former youth resource people, other youth leaders, parents of youth, and some of the youth themselves. Ask them to share from their perspective what they feel the group's needs are. What is the group's maturity level? What are their ages? What are their spiritual, physical, and emotional needs? And then pray that the Lord will sharpen your awareness of the youth group's needs. Once you feel that you've begun to identify those needs, begin to consider programs that will be a means of meeting those needs.

3. *Consider your group's size.* Some churches have youth groups that are so large that they can implement a wide range of youth programs. And that's great! But most churches have smaller youth groups. And that's great too, for size alone does not make a successful youth group. It's important that you understand that smaller youth groups cannot possibly run as many youth programs as the larger church can and they would not necessarily want to either. There is no advantage in simply having certain programs for the sake of having them. Your task as the leader of an average youth group is to choose a few programs and do them well. The difference between a large group and a smaller group is like the difference between a department store and a specialty shop! A department store can sell a lot of products to a lot of people. The specialty store chooses two or three products meeting the needs of a smaller group of people. The success of a youth program should not be measured by the number of youth in the group nor by the complexity of its programming. Success must be measured by the spiritual progress the members of your group makes.

The Basic Programs of TOTAL Youth Ministry - Introduction

Choosing the right programs for your local youth program may sometimes feel a little like playing a guessing game! If you choose the right one, great, you win. If you don't, you fail! Actually, the most "successful" youth leaders are those who don't guess, but have built their youth programs on five basic cornerstones: **worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship/community, and service to others**. These are the five irreplaceable elements of a comprehensive youth program. No matter if you have a group of 6 or 60, these five basic needs must be met if your program is to be a well-balanced one.

That is why TOTAL provides Experience Bible Studies. They are discussion-oriented Bible discovery experiences designed to meet your group's need to be students (disciples) of the Word, and find ways in which they can live for Christ in their world. That is why we include Youth Rallies, which are high energy, team competition events. They are to be used as a youth evangelism tool, drawing new youth into the group, as well as building community within your group. That is why we include Youth Worship Service outlines, which are included so your youth can help lead the entire church fellowship in worship.

Now, there are many other youth programming options open to you. But these three must be present if your youth program is to have a strong, biblically sound foundation. So take a few moments to read the following carefully. They are a basic introduction to the programs included in this book.

The Experience Bible Study

Youth today are born into a very complex world. Everywhere they turn, whether to school or to the media or to their peers, or even to their parents, they are bombarded by conflicting values. From each of these sources, they are likely to hear confusing, often contradictory, ideas of what life is all about and how a person should live.

As a committed youth worker, you are, no doubt, already aware that God offers youth the guidance they need to make life decisions that are right and best. That guidance is found in the Bible. Through the Word, He leads us into the Truth. Therefore, it is vitally important that youth have an opportunity to study God's Word. We, like Paul, are called to help our students discover the truth. Not just the truth about theological issues such as salvation and entire sanctification, but the truth about practical life issues that affect them every day. The Bible Studies are designed to meet this need.

Experience Bible Studies are not designed to be a curriculum in the traditional sense. This need will be met as youth participate in youth Sunday School. They are topical in nature. The topics are chosen and the lessons are written in direct response to the needs of contemporary Christian youth. The topics are selected from one of the following four basic categories:

1. *Contemporary Issues* (i.e., alcohol and drug abuse, abortion, war and peace, divorce, etc.)
2. *Relational Concerns* (i.e., dating, marriage, family problems, peer pressure, relationships, etc.)
3. *Christian Growth Issues* (i.e., commitment, temptations, attitudes, decision-making, etc.)
4. *Theological Questions* (i.e., salvation, holiness, forgiveness, the attributes of God, etc.)

Experience Bible Study Goals

The basic goals of **Experience Bible Studies** are:

1. To provide discipleship and teaching opportunities for youth.
2. To provide a workable model for serious life-oriented Bible study.
3. To provide youth with an opportunity to share personal values in a nonthreatening environment and compare these values with biblical principles.
4. To provide a natural follow-up opportunity for those new youth who enter the youth program through the youth rallies and other church activities.

EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDIES are written for the average youth group and to the average youth leader. Typical youth leaders are laypersons who volunteer their time and talents to the church. They have limited time for preparation and little “formal” education in the principles of youth ministry. But they love God and youth and carry a real burden for them. They want their youth to face life equipped with a knowledge of the Word of God as it relates to the great issues of life. *EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDY* are designed for such people.

EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDY Format

A typical Experience Bible Study will have eight basic sections.

1. *Leader's Guidelines.* A section called Leader's Guidelines will appear at the very beginning of the lesson. Written to the leader, it will include: a key concept, the goal of the lesson, an overview of the topic, and the materials needed for the lesson and how to find them.
2. *Opening Activities.* This section will provide suggestions to the leader for getting the session started. Such suggested activities will include: games, mixers, large-group/small-group options, projects, singing, and preliminaries (prayer, announcements, offering). There are additional games listed at the back of the book if the ones listed will not work for you.
3. *Leader Presentation.* The primary objective of this section is the presentation of the subject for discussion and Bible study. The leader's presentation will appear most often in the form of a real-life situation with which youth can identify. The leader's presentation, when completed, will inevitably bring certain values into direct conflict with each other. Tension will be created when there is an overlap of values. Re-creating this tension will reveal your youth's values and, hopefully, cause them to evaluate their beliefs.
4. *Discussion Questions.* The leader's presentation will be followed by a time for discussion. Youth will want to react to the life-situation story. They will have an opinion. The discussion questions are designed for them to share these opinions and the reason for these opinions, and, in so doing, reveal their value system. The questions asked will be value-type questions. Such questions will cause them to draw upon past experiences and judge which is the best course of action. Because these are personal value-type questions, there will be times when there are no obvious right or wrong answers. Sometimes there will be two answers that could be right. The issue may very well be between what is better and what is best.
5. *Bible Discovery.* When a proper amount of time has been given to value questions and discussion, the leader then moves into a period of Bible discovery. The scriptures that have been selected deal specifically with the subject of the lesson. Options will be given for both

small-group Bible discovery and large-group discussion. A concept commentary for each passage will be provided for the leader, stating the basic theological truths found in that passage.

6. *Large Group Discussion Questions.* Once the appropriate passages have been read and studied, another question and answer period takes place. Conceptual and value questions are asked of the youth to see if they understand the theological concepts covered in the Bible study sections. These questions are designed to help the youth verbalize their understanding of these concepts. The goal of the response to the Word questions is to help youth: (1) compare/contrast their personal values with biblical values; (2) become aware of those values that they hold that are not biblical, Christian values; and (3) conform to a biblical standard for Christian living as it relates to contemporary life.
7. *Lesson Closing.* The leader now has the responsibility of closing the lesson with some life application principles taken from the Bible Discovery section. The goal of this section is to have the leader supply five or six simply stated principles that relate to the subject of the lesson. These principles should help the youth in making the best ethical and spiritual decisions, both now and in the future.
8. *Adaptation.* Notes will be provided at the end of the EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDY, suggesting ways that the lesson may be adapted to meet the particular needs of your group. Since EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDIES are written for the “average” youth group, adaptations of the lessons will be necessary in the light of the size of the group and the average age and maturity level of the group.

Getting Started

Once you've decided that EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDIES belong in your youth ministry strategy, here's what you should do to get started.

1. *Select the best time for the EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDY.* Some have found that Wednesday evening, while the adults are perhaps in Bible study and the children are in their specialized program, is the best time. Others have found that Friday nights are better. In reality EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDY can be utilized at any time during the week.
2. *Select an EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDY.* There are 25 Experience Bible Studies included in this book. They are topical, therefore they may be used in any order. If you think that your group has a particular need or that a certain subject would be of special interest, select an EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDY in response to that need. Having 25 topics to choose from enhances the material's flexibility.
3. Read the Leader's Guidelines section of the lesson carefully.
4. *Secure a meeting place.* Keep in mind that each lesson is designed to begin with group activities. Select a location that has plenty of flexibility.
5. Advertise. Let everyone know what is going to happen.
6. *Prepare the lesson as thoroughly and completely as you possibly can.* The leader has a rather significant role in the EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDY. One hour of preparation should be adequate!
7. *Pray ...* that the Lord will use the Experience Bible Studies as an opportunity to bring change into the lives of the youth He has entrusted to your care.

EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDY are designed to be used generally within an hour to an hour and a half meeting-time schedule. You have the freedom to choose how much time you want to spend in any given section of the lesson. Be sure you have a good idea of how your lesson sections flow together to form a complete session.

The TOTAL Youth Worship Service

Creative youth worship is an important part of a well-balanced, holistic approach to youth ministry. Youth are no different from adults at that point. They need worship that encourages their participation and gives them opportunity to express praise to God. And yet, youth worship often finishes last in youth program scheduling behind youth Bible studies, social events, and service projects.

We cannot assume that worship experiences designed for and led by adults will meet all the needs of the average youth believer. Youth bring needs and expectations into a worship experience that is different from adults. And although it is important that families worship together on a regular basis, it is also important that youth be offered worship opportunities that are designed especially for them.

A youth worship service differs from family worship not in content and structure but in approach. Both an adult service and youth service will involve expressions of praise and thanksgiving to God. Both will include congregational and special singing. Both will centre around a message from the Word of God. Both will challenge participants to a life of holiness and service. These are the elements of meaningful, biblical worship. They transcend age differences. A youth worship service is different from an adult service in that it addresses the specific needs of youth and is put in a language that they will understand. In a youth worship service, the group singing will include songs and choruses that reflect the tastes and styles of a new generation as well as the great, time-proven hymns of the church. In a youth worship service, the special music will be selected and prepared by youth and performed in a way that will best communicate their heartfelt beliefs. In a youth worship service, the message from God's Word will be presented in language that youth can understand and speak to issues that are relevant to their lives. In a youth worship service, there will be a clear call to discipleship and total commitment of youth to the cause of Christ.

(Throughout this chapter, a youth worship service refers to a youth sponsored worship service for the entire church, utilizing the Youth Worship Service Outlines provided in this book.)

The Basic Elements of a Meaningful Youth Worship Experience

Worship is a complex event. Young and old alike enter a time of worship at different levels of spiritual maturity and therefore, with a distinctive set of needs. There are, however, some basic elements that must be present at all worship services if worship is to be meaningful.

1. *The presence of the Holy Spirit.* Jesus said "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). It is the Holy Spirit who energizes God's people for worship. It is the Holy Spirit who makes Jesus real to us. It is our awareness of the very presence of God by His Spirit that is the basic, irreplaceable element of youth worship. Through prayer, hymns, and scripture, the Holy Spirit causes the focus to turn from ourselves and turn to Jesus.

2. *Preparation.* Creative, meaningful youth worship experiences do not just happen. They require careful planning and preparation on the part of the worship leader. To plan and outline an order of worship does not limit the Holy Spirit's effectiveness in the least. In fact, an orderly, logical, well-planned worship schedule is the context in which the Holy Spirit can really deal with young people. **Disorder only draws attention to itself, not to God.** Therefore, when planning a youth worship service, the following preparation may prove helpful:
- a. Select a theme and write out a purpose statement for the service.
 - b. Select congregational songs, special music, drama, and a message that will reflect that purpose statement or theme.
 - c. Contact resource people who will be involved in these various worship activities. Give them as much advance notice as possible. Schedule rehearsal/preparation times, making sure that all participants are prepared.
 - d. Consider all your equipment needs (i.e., sound equipment, musical instruments, costumes, puppet stage, props, chorus sheets, choir music, overhead projector, etc.) securing them, testing them, and finding personnel for their operation.
 - e. Write out a detailed order of worship for every participant and make sure each one receives a copy.
 - f. Pray for a meaningful youth worship experience. Now that you've done all you can to prepare, relax and expect the Lord to do His part.
3. *Involvement.* There is no way to overemphasize the importance of involvement in a youth worship service. Most youth will not be content to sit through a worship service that only requires that they be a spectator. Involvement is the key. Those who plan youth worship services must consider ways to pull in as many youth participants as possible. The average youth may or may not remember the content of a message in which he sat and simply listened. But he just might catch the message of a drama, song, or other worship activity in which he had an active part. Spiritual truths are far more likely to be grasped and real life-change is far more likely to occur as a youth hears, sees, feels, and acts out the message. A person doesn't participate in a meal unless he eats ... he doesn't participate in a hike unless he walks ... he doesn't participate in a worship service unless he is actively involved.
- One of the important by-products of youth participation in worship is the development of talents and abilities for God and the church. Youth learn by doing. And in so doing, they are being trained for a lifetime of participation and leadership in the church. A youth worship service can be a great place for youth to not only exercise their gifts and abilities before the church but also be encouraged by it.
4. *Variety.* There are so many creative ways to minister to people in a worship service. The youth worship experience is an ideal setting for a variety of worship activities. It is the element of surprise and anticipation that will excite the youth participants and keep the general church population coming back. Variety for variety's sake_is not the goal. Variety in the name of freshness and creativity is what is really needed for a successful youth worship experience.

Creative Youth Worship Activities

The following is a list and brief discussion of a few of the youth worship activities you may use in a youth worship service.

DRAMA. Drama is not new to the church. It's been a legitimate expression of Christian faith and a significant mode of worship for centuries. If you have one or more youth in your group with "dramatic inclinations" and if you or another interested leader has the time and interest to invest, an ongoing drama program is an option for you to consider. Whether in the form of a full-blown play production with staging, costuming, and lighting or a simple scripture dialogue, sermon sketch, or unison reading, many youth groups are finding drama to be a creative worship activity for youth.

PUPPETS. Like drama, puppets have been used for religious purposes for many years. Although some youth leaders see puppets just as a form of entertainment, others realize that a puppet ministry provides a creative outlet for youth and a real ministry to the whole church. There may be youth in your group who do not feel comfortable standing in front of a large group, singing a solo, or acting out a part. But they would enjoy, and benefit from, involvement in a puppet program. Of course, you may not want to build an entire youth worship service around a puppet production. However, puppets can add life and variety to a well-rounded youth worship experience.

MUSIC. Music has been and continues to be a significant force in youth culture. The role of music does not diminish just because a youth becomes a believer. In fact, the place of music might even be enhanced in the life of a contemporary Christian youth. Therefore, music ministry is an important element in youth worship. An effective youth worship service will provide youth with an opportunity to share their musical talents with the whole church. Whether instrumental or vocal, group or solo, youth benefit and the church is blessed by the sharing of the gospel through song.

PROCLAMATION. Preaching has normally been held as the central event in a worship service. The same is true in a youth worship service. The proclamation of the Word of God, whether by the pastor or youth pastor, lay youth leader, or youth who feels a call to the preaching ministry, should remain the highest priority and occupy the central place on the order of worship. The question then is not *if* to preach but *how* to preach in a youth worship service. The how is determined by the needs of the youth and the media chosen to convey the message.

SUPPORT ACTIVITIES. Not every youth in your group can play a musical instrument, sing a solo or perform in a youth choir, put together a slide presentation, or handle a puppet. But there are other supportive activities that they can perform that will make them feel an important part of the worship program. The promotion and advertising of the service, the running of sound and/or lighting equipment, the construction of props or design of costumes, the preparation and distribution of worship bulletins, the collection of the offering, the sharing of a public prayer, etc. These are the kinds of activities that can be performed by youth before and during a youth worship service. The important thing is that you include every youth in the program and that they are made to feel needed and important.

How to Get a Youth Worship Program Started

1. First, sit down with your youth leadership, including your pastor, and share with them your concern that there be an opportunity given for a youth-sponsored, youth-led worship service. The best time for such a service is probably Sunday evening. However, an occasional Sunday

morning or Wednesday night would be appropriate too. Such a service once a month or once every six weeks would probably be often enough.

2. Once the date is set on the calendar, consider your resource people. Do you have enough youth interested in forming a youth choir or ensemble or doing solo work? Do you have some youth interested in forming a drama group? Do you have a youth or group of youth interested in media production? Or puppets? And just as important, do you have the leaders who are willing and able to give leadership to these groups? Contact each of them, asking them to consider their involvement in a youth worship service.
3. Establish a theme for the evening. You may use the season of the year to guide your thinking (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Independence Day, Mother's Day, Grandparent's Day, etc.). Or you may use a topic, such as family relationships, witnessing, or forgiveness. Whatever theme you select, allow the theme to determine the content of the worship service, including the message and the music.
4. Gather the resources you will need and begin to prepare for the service as soon as you can.
5. Refer to the Worship Outlines provided in this notebook. Select one that can best be used or adapted for your purposes.



EXPERIENCE

BIBLE

STUDIES

FORGIVENESS

by Doug Runyan

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—God's forgiveness is for me!
2. Goal of the Lesson—Help youth accept God's forgiveness and then to forgive themselves.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Many young people who have repented of their sins, have asked God's forgiveness, and have turned from their sinful way of life, still find themselves feeling guilty because of their past sins. Many times the reasons for this are: 1) they are basing their forgiveness on changing emotions instead of promises from the Bible, and 2) their disappointment with themselves causes them to believe God could not forgive them.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. According to the size of your group, this activity can be done as one group in a certain time period or as a competition between two or more groups. Tell them: "Beginning now, queue up as quickly as possible according to height from shortest to tallest." In addition, you can have them up by birthdates, alphabetically by name, or by height while on their knees, then go back to height—only this time tallest to shortest, etc. (May also be done in groups of 4 to 6.)
2. Read aloud the following five questions and have the youth write their answers on a piece of paper. Tell them to truthfully answer four of the questions, but put a wrong answer for one of the five questions. As the youth read their answers, let the others try to guess which answer is wrong.
 - 1) What is your full name?
 - 2) Where were you born?
 - 3) What is your favorite food?
 - 4) What is your favorite hobby/sport?
 - 5) What occupation do you hope to have when you get older?
 - 6) What is your goal in life?
3. Group Singing

C. Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)

Ask: When you were a child, did you ever break a friend's toy? How did you feel? How did your friend react? Would your friend forgive you?

Next, relate the following story, or one like it from your life: As a child, I remember asking a friend to forgive me for accidentally breaking one of his toys. My apology was finally accepted with a reluctant, "I forgive you", but my feeling of having been forgiven did not last long. For a long time, whenever my friend wanted to go first in a game, or simply have his way, he reminded me of that broken toy. Even though he had forgiven me, the guilt of that broken toy remained. Even now, I sometimes have the problem of being reminded again and again of past wrongs, even when I thought forgiveness had been given. At times I have had trouble forgiving myself.

The same is often true of how we feel concerning God's forgiveness. Why is it that even after we have asked for God's forgiveness, we often have difficulty putting our sins in the past and not thinking about them again?

Think about this example: Daniel had not been a Christian for very long. Not long before becoming a Christian, Daniel and some of his friends walked out of a café without paying for the food. This incident was one of the many things for which Daniel had asked God to forgive him. Daniel then felt like the right thing to do was to return to the café, apologize to the manager, and give him enough money to pay the bill. When he did this, the manager became angry, took the money, but refused to accept Daniel's apology. To make it even worse, several weeks later when Daniel stopped by the café with several friends from the church, the manager saw him and embarrassed him again by calling him a criminal. Daniel again tried to apologize, but the manager still refused and ordered him to leave the café and never come back. The manager's refusal to forgive him made Daniel wonder if God had even really forgiven him.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. If you were Daniel, how would you feel?
2. How do you feel about the way Daniel handled the situation?
3. If you were one of the friends from the church who was with Daniel at the café the last time, what would you tell Daniel?
4. If you were Satan speaking to Daniel, what would you tell him about this?
5. If you were God speaking to Daniel, what would you tell him about this?
5. Should Daniel continue to seek the forgiveness of the manager?
6. Does Daniel's forgiveness from God depend on his forgiveness by the manager?
7. Why do we sometimes feel guilty and have difficulty forgiving ourselves for past sins that we have already asked God to forgive us for?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

Let's look at some scriptures that talk about this. (Present in your own words.)

1. 1 John 1:9—*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* The forgiveness and cleansing of sin which we receive depends on the sincerity and depth of our confession. If we have a deep sense of guilt and uncleanness because of our sins, and if we realize that only God can remove this from our lives, and if we humble ourselves before Him by confessing our sins and our unclean condition, *then* forgiveness **will come** through Jesus Christ. The forgiveness and cleansing is ours when we truly confess our sins to God. Since He forgives us, we too should forgive ourselves. Jesus took our punishment; we do not need to punish ourselves.
2. Psalm 103:10-12—*“He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”* We earned eternal death because of our sins (Romans 6:23), but God sent Jesus who collected our earnings (death) for us. For those who truly confess their sins, He removes those sins as far from them as the east is from the west; in other words, they shall never meet. Our

minds may remember our sins, but God removes them forever from His sight. We are no longer responsible for them.

F. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. What must we do to be forgiven for sins?
2. Can there be other things on which our forgiveness may depend?
3. After we have asked God for forgiveness for our sins, can we ever be held responsible for those sins again?
4. In what ways do the words “as far as the east is from the west” relate to forgiven sins?

G. Closing

If you are uncertain of God's forgiveness from sins, seek forgiveness through confession to God. Then claim forgiveness through God's promise in 1 John 1:9 - “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Claim His forgiveness and cleaning! If you have asked God's forgiveness but are still struggling with forgiving yourself, ask yourself these questions”

1. Have I done all I know to do to make it right with anyone I may have wronged?
2. Was Christ's suffering and death for my sins not enough? Will punishing myself help?
3. Since God forgives me (1 John 1:9 says that He does), should I not also forgive myself?
4. Is there anyone I am refusing to forgive?

Pray this prayer: Dear Father, we thank you for your promise of forgiveness of sins if we will confess them to you. Right now, I confess to you these sins that keep me from having fellowship with you. (Ask them to tell God any sins that need to be confessed to Him.) We once again claim your forgiveness based on the promise in 1 John 1:9. We thank you that you remove our sins from us, and ask that you would help any who struggle in forgiving themselves. May each of us leave this time together assured of your forgiveness and more able to forgive ourselves and others. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

FAMILY PROBLEMS

by Michael Pitts

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—God has planned for us to have loving and caring families.
2. Goal of the Lesson—Teach youth how to get along better with family members.
3. Overview of the Lesson—A young person has a great desire to be independent. Because of this desire, he often has quarrels and problems, inwardly and/or outwardly, with his parents. It is important for young people to learn how to become independent people and at the same time to try to understand the feelings of the rest of the family. Young people can learn how to show God's love in their homes.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Finish this sentence: Ask the youth to finish the sentence. “If I were my mother or father, I would ... “ Allow them to finish the statement any way they choose. There are no right or wrong answers.
2. Group Singing.

C. Leader Presentation (present in your own words)

Most of us experience some kind of family problems. It seems that young people especially have problems with their parents. Listen to this situation and think about what you would do.

Rudy is one of the leading young people in the church youth group. His parents are also a part of the church. Rudy has worked hard to help plan a weekend camp for the youth group. In fact Keion, one of his friends from school who is not a Christian, has agreed to go with Rudy to the camp. Rudy has been praying that Keion will become a Christian at the camp. There is one problem though. Rudy worked so much on the plans for the camp that he did not have time to finish a report for one of his classes at school. Rudy's father told him that he could not go to the camp if he did not finish the report by Friday. Rudy knows that there is no way that he can get his report finished in time, and he does not know what to do. He knows that his father will ask him if he finished the report. If Rudy tells the truth, his father will not let him go to the camp, and then Keion will not go to the camp if Rudy does not go. If Rudy tells his father he has finished the report, he will let him go to the camp, and Keion will go and possibly become a Christian. Rudy can give his report to the teacher on Monday. His marks in the class have been so good that he will probably still get a good mark on the report even if it is turned in late.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. If you were Rudy, how would you feel?
2. If Rudy asked you for advice about this problem, what would you tell him?
3. Is Rudy's father being fair? Why or Why not?
4. If you were Rudy, what would you say to Keion?
5. What could Rudy have done to prevent this problem?
6. Pretend you are Rudy's father for a minute. Rudy just told you he did not finish the report. How would you feel? What will you say to Rudy?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

Let us look at some scriptures to help us with this lesson.

1. Colossians 3:20—“*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*” God's Word says that children must be obedient. This is how God planned it. When children (and young people) disobey their parents, it almost always brings problems, confusion and hostility to the home.
2. Philippians 2:3-4—“*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*” As young people, we are told to look out for the interests of others. The “others” in our lives include our parents. When we respond to them out of selfish motives instead of loving motives, it brings them pain. The Apostle Paul said that we know we really love someone when we treat them as if they were more important than ourselves.
3. Colossians 4:6—“*Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*” Think back to the last time your parents told you “no”. Was your response seasoned with salt, or with fire? God's Word tells us that we must be careful about how we talk to our parents. We must not talk negatively or tell lies to our parents.

F. Discussion Questions (Discuss as a whole group, or divide into small groups to discuss.)

1. Is obeying parents always easy? Is it ever easy? Is it required by God? Why or why not?
2. What happens when a Christian young person keeps on disobeying his parents? Is it sin?
3. What should a Christian do if he sins?
4. Does selfishness cause family problems? Why or why not?
5. Is what we say and how we respond to our parents important? Why or why not?
6. Is it ever acceptable to God when a young person disobeys his parents? Give an example of when such disobedience might be right.

G. Closing

Here are some guidelines that will help you with family problems.

1. Remember that obedience is your responsibility. It is God's will for you to submit to your parents' authority, unless they ask you to do something that is against God's laws, such as stealing or murder.
2. Check your motives. When you disagree with your parents, is it because of selfishness?
3. Talk with your parents about the problem.
4. Be honest. Keep your word. If you tell your parents you are going to do one thing and then do something else, they will lose trust and confidence in your word.
5. Let your parents know that you love them. Tell them that you do.

Close with prayer.

MAKING DECISIONS

by Doug Runyan

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—God wants you to make decisions that are acceptable for a Christian.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This lesson should help young people understand that they should look to God's Word when deciding on their goals and purpose in life. This will help them make wise decisions.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Young people seek help about making decisions as much as for any other problem. At times, it may seem that finding God's will in a certain situation is almost impossible. Hopefully this lesson will help young people come to a clearer understanding of how to make Christlike decisions.
4. Material needed - pencil and paper for each student, materials for opening activity.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Draw the Youth Leader - This activity is to be done in groups of three people. The first person in the group must draw the head and neck of the “youth leader” (or another person of your choice) on one piece of paper. At the same time, the second person must draw the body from the shoulders to the waist on his piece of paper while the third person must draw the rest of the body and legs on the third piece of paper. Each group member must draw his or her portion of the person without looking at the drawings of the other group members. When all three group members are finished, tape the papers together to show the completed picture. Finish by showing the entire picture to the entire group.
2. Group Singing.

C. Leader Presentation (present in your own words)

Making decisions is a regular part of life for each of us, and many of us seek to make those decisions based on God's will. It is easy to know God's will about some decisions because they are talked about in the Bible. For example, should I take a loaf of bread from the store without paying for it? No, because the Ten Commandments tell me not to steal.

Other decisions we make are not so easy. For example, should I study to be a teacher or a business person? The Bible does not tell us which choice is best. These decisions can be difficult. Let us look closer at one such problem.

The young lady's name is Natalie. Since Natalie can speak English, one of her teachers asked her if she could help some other students with their schoolwork. Sometimes it is difficult, but the students that Natalie helps are making great improvements in their work. Now Natalie has a problem. She has been asked to become a leader in the Student Leadership Council. However, the Council has changed their meeting day to the same day that she helps teach the students. Natalie knows that being a leader in the Student Council could really increase the influence of her testimony. She has been afraid to tell others that she is a Christian because she didn't want to lose her friends. But, if she continued to tutor the students, she would be able to share her testimony with them. After thinking about it for a couple of days, Natalie decides to go ahead and become a leader for the Student Council. She thinks that if it is God's will, she will be elected, and He will provide someone else to help teach the students.

D. Discussions Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. What do you think of Natalie's problem?
2. Do you think Natalie made the right choice?
3. Did Natalie seek to know God's will in the choice?
4. If Natalie had come to you for advice, what would you have told her?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

1. Romans 12:1-2—"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Before we can begin to understand God's will, we must:

- a. Give ourselves completely (body, soul and mind) to God.
 - b. Stop trying to be like other people.
 - c. Start acting like Jesus would. You cannot live a selfish life and at the same time ask for God's best in your life. It is God's will that you live your daily life for Him by serving others. You should ask God to help you know which of the choices is best for the kingdom of God.
2. Colossians 1:9-12—"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience and joyfully giving thanks to the Father." God's will is related to the way we live—doing good works that bring fruit, learning more about God, being patient by God's power, and being thankful.
 3. Philippians 2:3-5, 7a, 8b—"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who ... made himself nothing ... he humbled himself and became obedient to death." We must be humble and obedient; we must consider others as being better and we must put their needs first. If the goal of your life is to please God (2 Corinthians 5:9) by being like Christ in attitude and in actions, then you can make your decisions according to that goal. God often gives us the responsibility to choose between what is good and what is best.

F. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss or discuss as a whole group.)

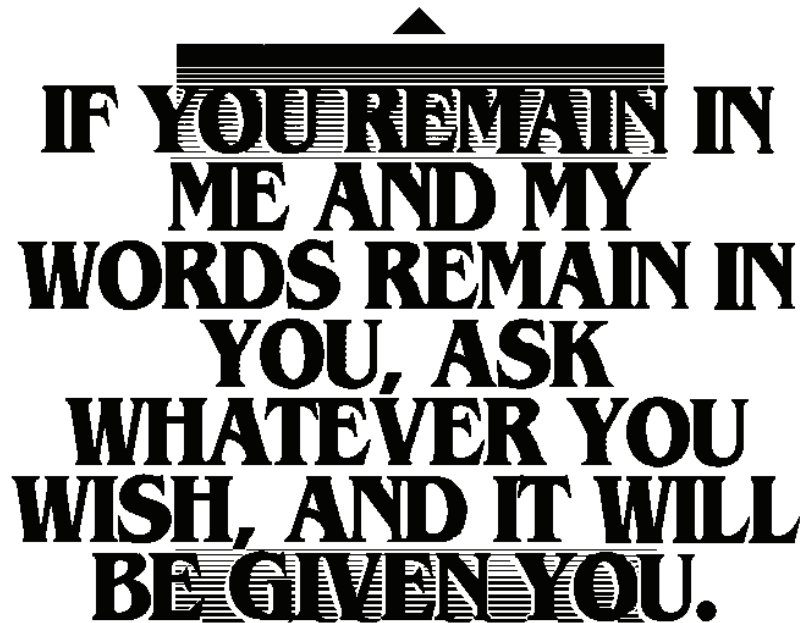
1. What do these scriptures say to you about God's will?
2. How does our way of life affect our ability to know God's will in certain situations?
3. Is there always one choice that is God's will and one that is not?

4. Are we ever free to make a decision on our own?
5. How should a Christian's way of making choices be different from someone who is not a Christian?
6. How do we find God's will?

G. Closing (*Pass out paper and pencils to students.*)

1. Are you centered in God's will right now?
2. Are you living just for yourself or are you serving others?
3. How does your attitude compare with Christ's attitude—humble, obedient, thinking of the needs of others before your own?
4. Make a list of the things in your life that need to change to make you more like Christ.
5. Now make a list of any decisions you need to make. Compare those decisions with the goal of serving Christ through serving others.

Let's pray and ask God to guide us in making those decisions.



**IF YOU REMAIN IN
ME AND MY
WORDS REMAIN IN
YOU, ASK
WHATEVER YOU
WISH, AND IT WILL
BE GIVEN YOU.**

JOHN 15:7

HANDLING THE INFLUENCE THAT OTHERS HAVE ON US

By Susie Shellenberger

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—God wants to be in control of your life.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This lesson will help young people to have the courage to be what God wants them to be.
3. Overview of the Lesson—The influence of others affects every person in your youth group. They face this problem almost every day. The way they choose to handle this problem can determine what kind of man or woman they will become.

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Sit Down—Stand Up. Have all the young people stand up. As you read the following statements, they are to sit down when a statement is true for them. When they hear another one that is true, they are to stand up if they are already sitting down. The youth will be standing or sitting, according to which statements are true for them.

Sit Down or Stand Up If . . . 1) You are at this youth meeting because you were forced to come. 2) You are taking a class at school because a friend talked you into it. 3) You did something last week you really didn't want to do, but were influenced by someone into doing it. 4) Today you forced a friend to do something that he/she did not want to do. 5) You missed church sometime this past month to do something else. 6) You drank more than one cold drink today. 7) Last week you said something that you wish you had not said, but said it anyway. 8) You have not finished your homework for school tomorrow. 9) You did not pray yesterday because you were in a hurry to go somewhere.

2. Influence. Before your meeting, choose four young people to help you with this game. They will be sent out of the room along with a youth you choose when the meeting begins. The four that you have chosen ahead of time will know what you plan to do. The fifth person will not. Have some of your youth put their shoes in a pile at the front of the room. Count the number of shoes you have in the pile. Ask all the youth you have chosen to come back into the room. Ask them to quickly count the shoes in the pile. (Give them only 30 seconds to count the shoes and then do not let them look at the shoes again.) The four people you had chosen before the meeting will know they are supposed to add one to the correct number. For example, if there are 10 shoes, they will say there are 11 shoes. The purpose of this game is to see what the fifth person will say. He counted the shoes and he knows there are 10. Will he say 10 and be different from the others? Or will he do as the other youth do and say there are 11 shoes? This game is supposed to show the youth how we are influenced by others.
3. Group Singing.

C. *Leader Presentation (present in your own words)*

Joseph was the eleventh of twelve sons. His older brothers were so much older that while Joseph was still at home, his brothers already worked in the fields and took care of their father's sheep. Joseph's father, Jacob, liked having a boy at home. He enjoyed playing with Joseph and watching him grow. Joseph made Jacob feel young again. Jacob loved Joseph so much that he decided to give him a new coat. This was a special coat - made of many colors and very expensive. This gift made Joseph's

brothers very jealous. They felt that it was not right that their father gave Joseph such a nice coat when he did not even work.

Joseph was a dreamer. He had strange dreams. He once dreamed that his family bowed down to him, and that when they all went out to the fields to stack hay, his hay always stood taller than any other person's hay. Joseph always told his brothers about the dreams. One day the ten older brothers felt very angry about Joseph's dreams. They saw Joseph walking across the fields in his coat of many colors. They took him and pushed him into an empty well.

Not all of Joseph's brothers wanted to hurt him. Only some really hated him. The rest of the brothers could not handle the influence of the brothers who hated Joseph so they did what the bad brothers wanted to do. The brothers finally pulled Joseph out of the well. They took his beautiful coat and dipped it in the blood of a goat. Then they sold Joseph to some slave buyers.

Joseph was taken to Egypt, where he was sold into slavery to a man named Potiphar. Potiphar's family liked Joseph very much and treated him well. In fact, Potiphar's wife liked Joseph so much that she tried to get Joseph to have sex with her. But Joseph had a stronger desire. He wanted to be a holy young man who refused to be influenced by wrong people. Potiphar's wife became angry because Joseph would not do what she wanted him to do. She tore her clothes and told her husband that Joseph tried to rape her. Potiphar had Joseph put into prison. He was in prison in a strange country for something he did not do!

Years passed, and people learned that Joseph could interpret dreams. When he interpreted one of the king's dreams, the king took him from prison and appointed him as an officer in the palace.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. If you were Joseph, how would you feel ... if your brothers threw you into a well? ... if you were tempted by Potiphar's wife? ...if you worked in the palace of the king?
2. If you were one of Joseph's brothers, how would you feel about Joseph's coat? His dreams? His special treatment by Jacob?
3. Rate the following people from the best to worst, with 1 being best and 6 being worst: Joseph, Jacob, The brothers who wanted to hurt Joseph, The brothers who did not want to hurt Joseph, The slave buyers, Potiphar's wife. Explain your answers.
4. Who was influenced by others in this story? Who handled it well? Who did not?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

Let's look at some scriptures that talk about handling the influence others have on us.

1. Matthew 6:25,33—Sometimes people influence us about material things, like wearing the newest styles of clothes, being seen with popular people, and doing certain activities. The problem comes when these things become more important to us than spiritual matters. What God wants from us must be more important than what others want us to do.
2. Romans 12:1-2—We will always have people who want to influence us, or to force us to do things we shouldn't do. We do not have to listen to them. We can resist their influence on us. God commands us not to be like people of this modern world. Instead, we must be changed. Such a change happens when we give everything to Jesus Christ.

3. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24—If we give everything to Jesus, God will help us to handle the influence of others. God will never leave us when someone tries to force us to do something. God has also promised that with His power, we can be victorious over every temptation and problem that comes to us. He will NEVER allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle. God wants us to be holy young men and women even in the worst kinds of temptations and He promises to help us through them. We do not have to give in to temptation. We can obey God and live as victorious Christians.

F. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss or discuss as a whole group.)

1. Will we always be influenced by other people? Why or why not?
2. How does God expect His children to respond towards the influence of others?
3. What must we do if we really want to live as victorious Christians?
4. If we give everything to Jesus, how will he help us handle the influence of others?

G. Closing

Here are some guidelines that may help you when you are tempted by the influence of others.

1. Before you do what your friends want you to do, think about the results of your actions.
2. Will doing that activity hurt your Christian witness? Will it hurt your relationship with God?
3. Don't do anything that you do not feel good about doing – no matter what your friends say.
4. It takes courage to resist the influence of others, but that is what Christians must do.
5. If a situation has become difficult for you, pray about it and give it to the Lord. He will give you the strength and the courage you need to resist temptation and the influence of people.
6. Find a friend who will help hold you accountable, who will encourage you, and pray for you.

**DON'T
CONFORM
TO THIS
WORLD, BUT
BE
TRANSFORMED
BY THE RENEWING
OF YOUR MIND
IN CHRIST JESUS.**

HOLINESS: LIVING MY WAY OR GOD'S WAY

By Alan Scott

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—To live a holy life means that we have decided, with God's help, to respond to people and situations as God would want us to respond.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To show young people that holiness is a decision to do things God's way in every area of their lives and that God will give them the ability to live out that decision.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Every day young people make decisions about how to respond to the people around them. Often a youth will show love and concern according to people's influence on them, how they feel about someone, or a certain situation. A youth who fully gives his life to God makes a decision to respond as God wants him to in every situation. That is entire sanctification. This young person, by God's power, will not allow the influence of people or situations to tell him how to respond toward others. He will pray, "God, how would You respond?" Then he will do it in God's strength, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Materials Needed—Bibles, Paper, Pencils or pens

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Divide your group into teams. The size and number of teams will depend on the size of your group. (Groups of at least 4 – 5 people each.) Give each team a sheet of paper and a pencil. Then one person from each team will go to the leader to receive the word to be drawn. (Example: sock, basket, chicken, tree, etc.) At the same time these people will run back to their team and draw a picture of the object. They must not talk or write any words. The first team to guess their object gets a point.
2. IF YOU LOVE ME, SMILE. Have everyone sit in a circle and choose someone to be "it". "It" stands in the centre of the circle and must try to make someone smile. If that person smiles, then they must change places. "It" tries to get someone to smile by going to that person in the circle and saying, "If you love me, please smile" (using all the charm he or she has). The person chosen must look at "it" and say (without smiling or laughing), "I love you but I just can't smile." "It" must keep on doing this until he or she gets someone to smile.
3. Group Singing.

C. *Leader Presentation (Using your own words, share the following information with your group.)*

How do we decide whom we will be nice to? On any certain day, we will only be able to spend time with a few people. That means we must make choices about who we get involved with and how we treat them. The following story shows different ways we may respond to the people around us.

Edison, Hallam, Greg, and Tony were on the same football team. Edison was the best player. He was good in football and he received high marks in school. Hallam was not very smart. It seemed that he was always trying to do something that he was not able to do. He had few friends. Greg and Tony were just average guys. They liked to be with Edison because he showed them how to play football better. It was also fun to be with the other youth who were friends of Edison.

On this day the leader announced that the football team was going to practice for four weeks for football. As they began to play, it became obvious that Hallam had never seen a football before. Edison began laughing and making jokes about Hallam when the leader was not close to him. Soon the other boys on the team were laughing at Hallam too. Greg thought the jokes were funny but he felt badly for Hallam. He did not want to lose the friendship of Edison, so he tried to get Edison to quit teasing Hallam.

Tony did not think it was nice to tease Hallam either. He thought that if he ignored Hallam that would hurt Hallam even more. Tony decided to risk losing the friendship of Edison and he went over to Hallam and helped him to learn how to play football. Hallam was glad for the help.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

Use these questions to get your group to evaluate the decision made by the people in the story.

1. Why do you think each of these boys acted as they did to Hallam?
2. What would you have done if you were Greg? Or Tony?
3. Do you think Tony hurt Edison's feelings by helping Hallam? Why or why not?
4. If you had to choose one of these four boys to play on your football team, who would you choose? Why

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

Read Luke 10:25-37. In this parable, Jesus talks about the question of how you decide who you will be nice to. Jesus declares that we must love God totally and love others as He would. The people asked Jesus to tell them exactly who they were to love in this way. He told them that they must love whoever needed to be loved. This love cost the Samaritan time and money but it gained him peace with God. The sanctified Christian chooses to love God's way rather than the human way in all circumstances.

F. Group Discussion Questions

1. What does this parable say about choosing who we are friendly with?
2. How is this scripture similar to the story of the football team?
3. After hearing this scripture, what do you think God would have wanted you to do if you had been on the football team?
4. Do you think there are ever any exceptions to the command of Jesus to go and do as the Samaritan did? If so, name a few.
5. Who is our neighbor? (answer: Anyone needing our help.)

G. Closing

Before closing, ask the youth to draw a circle on a sheet of paper. Inside the circle they must write the names of their closest friends. Then outside the circle they must write the names of their other friends and people they know. When they have finished, tell them that as Christians we are to continue to ask God who He wants us to bring into the circle. A holy life means that we must continue to add new and needy people into our circle. During the closing prayer time, encourage each young person to give his/her friendships to God. Ask them to choose to love whomever God wants them to love. Pray that the Holy Spirit will empower them to love people just as Jesus loved.

ABORTION: A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!

by Michael A. Pitts

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—Abortion is a key issue in the world today. It is important to help youth to understand the biblical / Christian view of abortion.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This session will present the scriptural position of life and the sacredness of life. The lesson will help youth to understand more clearly the Christian position on the question of abortion.
3. Overview of the Lesson—The laws of many nations say that an adult has the right to choose whether or not an unborn child will live. If a person decides that the pregnancy will cause problems or interfere with the personal goals of the adult, or if the child is just unwanted, there are places where women can get an abortion. Abortion goes against the truth in God's Word concerning the sacredness of human life. There are options to abortion. People should make responsible decision before pregnancy happens.
4. Materials Needed—Blackboard or large piece of paper, magazines, newspapers, scissors, glue or clear tape.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Magazine Man. Divide the group into groups of 3-5. Give each group some magazines and/or newspapers, a large piece of paper, scissors and glue/tape. Give the group about 10 minutes to make their own person, using arms, legs, head, etc. from the different pictures in the magazines. When they have finished the project, allow 60 seconds or less for each group to explain why their magazine man is useful to the world.
2. Group Singing. The lesson requires that the group be calm for the presentation. Sing choruses about God's love for us.
3. Announcements and offering. It might be good to take care of these items prior to the singing. Then you can go from singing to prayer and then right into the presentation.

C. Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)

We are all aware that abortions do happen. Many of you already know what you think about abortion. Some of you might not know exactly what to think. During this session, we will try to discover what the Christian response should be.

Statistics show that many unmarried girls will become pregnant this year, and many of those will choose to have abortions. Before you finish school, there is a good chance that someone you know will have an abortion. To have an abortion means to remove the fetus from the womb before it is developed enough to survive. The real question seems to be: "When does life really begin?" Does life begin at conception or at birth? (Conception is when the sperm from the man is joined with the egg from the woman.) Many say that life begins at conception. Scientific facts back up these conclusions. Between 12 and 28 days after conception, the heart begins to beat, and in four to six weeks brain waves can be measured. The skeleton, fingerprints, circulatory system and muscular system are complete by the eighth week.

Let's imagine the following situation. Mandy is a girl at school that you have known for a number of years. Even though you have been in the same classes and had the same teachers for several years, you aren't really friends. She has been dating Cameron for several months now. This morning, Mandy asks if she can speak to you. She begins to cry, telling you that she trusts you and feels like she has no one else to whom she can turn. When you ask her what's wrong, she tells you she just found out that she is pregnant.

Then Mandy tells you that she likes Cameron a lot, but does not love him. She wants to go to university and become a doctor. She does not want to marry him or have a baby. These things will keep her from becoming a doctor. Then she says that she is considering having an abortion. She looks at you and says: "What do you think I should do?"

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. If you were Mandy, how would you feel?
2. What options do you think Mandy has?
3. If Mandy chooses abortion, what do you think her reasons might be?
4. As Mandy's friend, what advice would you give her? Why?
5. Why do you think girls like Mandy choose to have abortions?
6. What effects do you think a decision for an abortion has upon a girl like Mandy?

E. Bible Discovery (Divide the scripture passages and assign them to small groups to look up.)

Let's examine the following scriptures and see what the Bible says about the subject.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Luke 1:41 | |
| 2. Psalm 22: 9-10 | These scriptures show us that life |
| 3. Genesis 25:21-24 | begins in the womb, not at the |
| 4. Jeremiah 1:45 | birth of the child. |
| 5. Isaiah 44:2 | These scriptures give us strong evidence |
| 6. Exodus 21:22-25 | that God is active in our lives <i>before</i> |
| 7. Psalm 139:13-16 | we are born. |
| 8. Genesis 1:26 | Is there any question about the value |
| 9. Psalm 119:73 | God places upon a human life? NONE! |
| 10. Psalm 127:3 | |

F. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. When does life begin? In the womb or at birth, as the child takes his first breath?
2. Does a relationship exist between God and an unborn child? Is God involved in our lives before or after birth?
3. Does God care if an abortion takes place? Why? What value does God place upon a human life?

4. Think back to the beginning of this session. Let's suppose that you find yourself in the same situation with a friend from school. What advice would you give according to what the Bible says?

G. Closing

If someone like Mandy ever asks you about abortion, you might want to share the following advice with them.

1. LIFE BEGINS AT CONCEPTION, NOT AT BIRTH. An abortion is taking a human life ... and taking a human life is murder and wrong in the eyes of God.
2. GOD VALUES HUMAN LIFE VERY HIGHLY. He values us so very highly that He sent Jesus Christ, His own Son, that we might have life.
3. THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES TO ABORTION. Sometimes couples who have no children would be willing to adopt a baby like Mandy's unborn child.

In closing, if you have any questions about our lesson—or if you are involved in a situation with a friend where abortion is being considered and would like to talk to someone about it, talk with the youth leader or pastor.

Close in prayer.



WHY ARE YOU ANGRY?

by Alan Scott

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—Anger can be a problem for Christian young people unless they understand how God wants to help them turn anger into spiritual growth.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To help our youth look for the source of the anger and to discover how God wants them to respond to the problem of anger.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Anger is a powerful emotion. If it is denied or suppressed it can cause emotional and physical harm. Young people often deny these feelings because they are afraid. But they need to know that angry feelings, honestly confronted with God's help, can lead to spiritual growth and less anger. A Christian youth needs to realize that anger is not a sign of spiritual defeat but a sign of new truths God wants to teach him.
4. Materials Needed—paper, pencils.

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

Choose from one or all of the following opening activities.

1. Mystery Guest. Have each youth secretly write on paper three true facts about himself that no one knows (for example: I have met someone from South America; I once ate 14 pieces of Fried Chicken at one time). Collect the papers. Read each person's list, allowing the other young people to try to figure out whose facts they are.
2. Interview. Divide the group into teams of two or three people. Each team must discuss times when they have been angry. Have the teams share the examples with the whole group. Ask the following questions: Why were they angry? What did they do with their anger?
3. Group Singing.

C. *Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)*

Is there anyone here who has never been angry? If we admit to anger then we can be honest with each other for the next few moments. Our anger can frighten us. We sometimes don't know how to stop our anger so we try to pretend that we are not angry. Losing control of our anger is not the answer to the problem either.

Many times anger is the second emotion we feel after an incident. First we feel hurt. Our anger tries to keep us from further hurt. We must choose how we will respond to our anger: (1) Hold it in until it explodes out; (2) Hurt someone out of revenge; (3) Do not do anything until you think about why that situation hurt you. How should we react when we are angry? Let us look at a situation and two possible responses to anger.

Melinda was late for school. The day had gone wrong from the moment she woke up. She woke up later than usual. Her hair did not look right. The shoestring broke on her shoes. She tore her homework paper when she picked up her books. As she ran into the school, her friend Daniel accidentally knocked the books out of her arm.

Response A: Melinda was very angry when she picked up her books, but said nothing. Later Melinda was embarrassed by her anger and wondered why she had been so angry over this accident. She began to see that she was hurt by everything that had gone wrong that day. She liked to be on

time but getting up late, the broken shoestring, and the dropped books had stopped her plan. Melinda had never realized before how proud she was of being on time for everything. She had allowed her pride to ruin her day. She asked God to forgive her for letting her pride become too important. She had allowed pride and not God to control her actions.

Response B: Melinda yelled at Daniel for knocking the books out of her arms. Daniel yelled back. They yelled at each other until the bell rang and they both ran to their class. Melinda was still angry at Daniel when they went to the youth meeting that night at church.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. How do you think Melinda felt after Response B? How did you think Daniel felt?
2. Which response do you think was best for Melinda, A or B? Why?
3. What do you think was the most important difference between the two responses?
4. Which response is not like your responses? Why?
5. If you were Melinda's best friend, what advice would you give her after Response A? B?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

1. Ephesians 4:26-27. *"In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."* Anger is not seen as sin in these verses. But sometimes it is easy to sin when we are angry. Bring your anger to God and let Him show you the problem. Someone's sin against us may reveal jealousy, pride, doubting God, or self-will in our own life.
2. Psalm 37:7-9. *"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land."* As we choose to tell God about our anger, we will discover the thing that causes our anger. Delaying our angry reactions will do no good unless we ask God to show us the cause of our anger.
3. Matthew 5:22-24. *"But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca', is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You Fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift."* This scripture shows how anger that is not brought to God will eventually harm our Christian life. Anger may reveal something that has come between you and God.

F. Discussion Questions - Ask several young people to read aloud the scriptures listed above. Then ask the following questions.

1. Does God expect us never to be angry? (answer: No. Anger is an emotion that God has given to us.)
2. What warnings are given here about anger?
3. How would this scripture help Melinda?

4. How can a Christian use his angry times to grow as a Christian? (answer: Anger often reveals something that has come between you and God.)

G. Closing

We have been learning that anger is not just the result of someone's sin against us. Our anger also is the result of sin in our own life: jealousy, pride, doubting God, and self-will (wanting our own way).

When we become angry, we should delay our response of anger and ask God:

1. Why am I angry?
2. Where have I been hurt or frustrated?
3. Am I jealous, or proud, or doubting God's power, or wanting my own way?
4. What does God want me to do about this anger?

Be obedient to God and gain victory over the angry times in your life. Use them as growing times.

Close in prayer. Ask God to help your youth to control their anger and to learn from it.



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

By Dee Kelly

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—God's will and God's guidance can be found in God's Word.
2. Goal of the Lesson—Help youth see the importance of a regular, private quiet time with God.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Many youth believers struggle with their personal quiet time with God. Bible reading is an important part of our quiet time. This study should help your youth see the importance of knowing God's Word and having a personal quiet time.
4. Materials Needed—Scrambled names in section B written on the blackboard or paper.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Scrambled Names. Have these two sets of scrambled words written on different parts of the blackboard or different pieces of paper. Have the boys work on the men's names and the girls work on the women's names. The first team that unscrambles all 14 names is the winner.

Men of the Bible

AHNO	(NOAH)
SJSEU	(JESUS)
ANAOR	(AARON)
PULA	(PAUL)
JDUE	(JUDE)
VADID	(DAVID)
LENDIA	(DANIEL)
MHOATS	(THOMAS)
LIHPPI	(PHILIP)
AMDA	(ADAM)
VEIL	(LEVI)
DOREH	(HEROD)
ERTPE	(PETER)
SSEOM	(MOSES)

Women of the Bible

ZEBJEEL	(JEZEBEL)
NANAAH	(HANNAH)
VEE	(EVE)
YADIL	(LYDIA)
SOIL	(LOIS)
YRAM	(MARY)
NUEECI	(EUNICE)
DOARH	(RHODA)
HEAL	(LEAH)
CRHAEL	(RACHEL)
RASHA	(SARAH)
ORDCAS	(DORCAS)
THRU	(RUTH)
IMOAN	(NAOMI)

2. Group Singing.
3. Questions. This part of the lesson should start a discussion and let the youth share their ideas. Don't judge the rightness or wrongness of answers.
 - a. Who should have a quiet time with God?
 - b. What is a quiet time?
 - c. What should you do during a quiet time?
 - d. When should you have a quiet time?
 - e. Where should you have a quiet time?
 - f. Why should you have a quiet time?

Give your own personal answers after the youth have given their answers. Be sure that you tell them that their quiet time is as personal as the clothes they wear. After you have asked the questions,

the group may decide on their own definition of a quiet time. The definition may be something like: "A quiet time is a specific time and place that is set aside for the worship and study of God."

C. Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)

Kevin was a youth like you. One day he had a very bad day. On this particular morning Kevin woke up later than usual. Then a button popped off his shirt, and he could not find his shoes. When we went out of the house he stepped in a puddle and got his socks wet.

Kevin sat down to wring the water out of his socks. Kenesha was a girl he really liked. She walked by and saw him with the wet socks. He felt so humiliated! Later in the day, Kevin had an exam, but he was not prepared for it. Instead of studying, he had played football with his friends. On his way home from school, Kevin dropped his books and the wind blew his homework papers down the road. Kenesha saw him and laughed at him.

Kevin was depressed. He needed some encouragement. He needed some words of wisdom. He needed to know that Kenesha still liked him. So, Kevin got out his Bible. He had not read the Bible for awhile but he had always been taught that if you needed help, you could go to the Bible. The Bible is a source of encouragement, and you can turn anywhere and find God's direction. Kevin needed guidance. What were God's words for him today? Kevin took the Bible, let the pages fall open, put his finger down and read these words from Matthew 27:5 - "Then he went away and hanged himself." This could not be God's message for him. Kevin must have done something wrong. He tried again. He let the pages fall open, put his finger down and read from Luke 10:37 - "Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Something must be wrong. God could not mean this. Kevin thought he would try it one more time. As he let the pages of the Bible fall open again he tried to forget the depressing day, the wet socks, the exam, and Kenesha laughing at him. He put his finger down on the page and read, "What you are about to do, do quickly."

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. How do you think Kevin felt when he finished his "quiet time"?
2. What do you think Kevin did wrong?
3. Have you ever read the Bible the way Kevin did?
4. What advice would you give Kevin about his quiet time?
5. How is your quiet time?
6. Is reading your Bible important? Why or why not?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

Have two young people read the following verses aloud for the whole group to hear:

1. Psalm 119:9 - If I am to live the way I ought to live, I will do it by living according to God's Word. Many of us want to know what God's will is for our lives. Where do we find God's will? We find it in the Bible. God's Word is God's will. The Bible may not give us specific answers to some of the problems that we face. For example, there is no scripture verse to tell you whether you should ask Mary or Kim to watch the football game with you. Answers like

that are not found in the Bible. But the Bible gives you principles by which you can make these decisions. These principles can be applied to all the situations you face.

2. 2 Timothy 3:15-16 - These verses get very specific. They list five uses for Scripture. They are preparation for salvation, teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.
 - * Verse 15 - Wise for Salvation: The Bible gives us the foundation for our faith. It is the source of our knowledge of Jesus Christ.
 - * Verse 16 - Teaching: The Bible gives us the most accurate picture of who Jesus is and what God has done for us. It teaches us about the One in whom we put our faith.
 - * Verse 16 - Rebuking and Correcting: This does not mean that the Bible should be used to find fault with others. It means that we can compare what we do and say with the Scripture to see if we are acting according to God's plan.
 - * Verse 16 - Training in Righteousness: The result of studying the Bible is that we will be trained and prepared to be used by God. The Bible not only guides us in living a pure life, but it also gets us ready to help others.

F. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. How can a quiet time help you?
2. How important is a quiet time to you?
3. What kinds of things could God teach you through the Word?
4. How can you use the Bible in testing the things you are taught every day?
5. Are you willing to let the Bible train you?
6. Does the Bible give us specific answers to every situation we face? Why or why not?

G. Closing

If your students are looking for specific places in the Bible to start reading, direct them to read one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) or from one of Paul's letters.

Close with Prayer.

IF WE TAKE RUBBISH IN . . . RUBBISH WILL COME OUT

By Alan Scott

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—What we read and do become a part of us and can affect our usefulness for God.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To encourage the young people to evaluate what they read and look at to determine if it is pleasing to God.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Pornography (writings or pictures that stimulate sexual feelings) among young people is a growing danger. Pornography is available in many magazines, papers, films, internet, etc. It is not longer just pictures of naked bodies. It now includes violent and degrading activities. Pornography and crime go together. Pornography destroys the mind, it destroys the right thinking of people. We must teach our youth how to handle the bad influences of life. We must encourage them to accept only that which is pure and good for the mind.
4. Materials Needed—Bibles, old magazines or newspapers

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

Choose one or all of the opening activities

1. Story Time. Before the activity time, cut out pictures of people and places from magazines or newspapers and paste them on paper, one picture on each paper. Divide the group into teams and give each team eight pictures. Tell each team to make up one story that uses all their pictures. Have each team tell their story and vote for the best story.
2. Sounds Good. Divide your group into pairs. Blindfold one of the people in each pair and tell the other person to be his guide. The guide can only tell his partner where to go; he cannot touch him. Set up an obstacle course indoors or outdoors. The team who completes the course in the shortest amount of time is the winner.
3. Group Singing.

C. *Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)*

We remember the things we read, hear, and see. What we act like and what we say is really a result of what we have put into our minds and hearts. Each day you must choose what you want to allow inside your mind and heart. Some things you want, some things you reject. How do you make such decisions? Listen to this story about choices.

David and Roger had not always been friends. Roger had moved to the town where David lived just before school started. David became Roger's first friend, and helped him find additional friends. The only problem was that David often made Roger feel like a child. Moving from the country into town had exposed Roger to many new experiences that he hadn't known in the country.

One day, Roger saw David before school. Some of the guys were laughing and joking at something David had. David called to Roger, "You must see this, country boy." Roger soon found that David had a bad magazine and was going to look at it that night. David invited Roger to go to his house to look at the magazine. Roger refused the invitation. David said that if Roger didn't come, then he was strange, or too much of a baby.

All day in school Roger thought about the problem. His youth group leader would tell him to stay away from David. But if Roger did not go, David and his other friends would make things miserable for him. He did not want to hurt David after he had been such a good friend. Roger tried to tell himself one magazine would not hurt anything. But he remembered how terrible he had felt after just looking a bit at the magazine David had found in the rubbish last month. Roger did not know what to do.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a group.)

1. How do you think Roger feels?
2. How strong is his temptations to go with David? Why is the temptation so strong?
3. What do you think Roger should do?
4. If Roger does not go, what should he say to David?
5. Where would you go for advice if you were Roger?
6. Is there any harm in doing it just once? Why or why not?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

1. Luke 6:45-49. "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord', and do not what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on a rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete." Jesus was very concerned about what was put into our hearts. The fruit we bear comes out of what we store up. You cannot build a solid Christian life on evil things. You cannot fill your mind with bad thoughts and expect to be strong when temptations come.
2. 2 Timothy 2:20-21. "In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work." Sometimes we allow bad things into our lives. Some TV shows or books and magazines that we read are not very good. The question is: Do you want to be useful to God? Then you must get rid of the bad things in your life.

Group Discussion Questions

1. Does everything I see affect me? Why? How?
2. What guidelines does the scripture give to decide what I should look at or read?
3. Do these scriptures relate to the situation in which Roger is involved? If so, how?
4. After reading these scriptures, what advice would you give to Roger?
5. How has this study changed your mind? What new lessons have you learned?

Closing

In today's world, we must take care of our minds and hearts. We must follow principles like these:

1. Realize that not everything is good for me. Some things are bad for my mind. Some memories are hard to forget after they are in my mind.
2. What you put into your mind is what God has available to use.
3. Put only the best into your mind.
4. Avoid magazines, books, films, TV, internet sites, songs, friends, etc. that are bad for the mind.

Close with prayer.

DEALING WITH LONELINESS

By Mark Pitcher

A. Leaders Guidelines

1. Key Idea—God can and will fill the emptiness caused by loneliness in our lives.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This lesson should help the youth to overcome loneliness by reaching out to others and by using the time when they are alone to draw closer to God.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Many young people feel the pain of loneliness in their lives. Loneliness comes in various forms: being home when all your friends are out together; not having anyone to sit with at lunch; not being asked out on a date; being absent from school or church and no one noticed that you were gone. The greatest damage is done when young people think about their loneliness instead of how God can help them. They need to be reminded of God's promise of friendship and His desire for everyone to give of themselves for others. We pray that through this study the young people will realize that God loves them and wants them to love Him in return and then love others. To understand this is to understand God's cure for loneliness.
4. Materials Needed—Pieces of paper and pens, something to make or play music on

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Groups. Have all the youth spread out and walk in a circle around a room while music plays. During the game, the leader will stop the music, and then bang loudly on a pan. Everyone must quickly get into groups of the same number of times the leader banged on the pan. If you have 15 youth and bang the pan 7 times, you will get two groups of 7 and 1 person is left out. That person is out of the game. Continue until you get down to 2 people. The final 2 people are the winners.
2. Move to the Music. Set up chairs in a circle, making sure you have one less chair than the number of young people. This is a simple game. While the music is playing (use the cassette player and have someone to stop and start the music), everyone walks around the chairs. When the music stops, everyone must sit down. Each time one person is left out. Remember to remove a chair each time the music stops. Continue until only one person remains. Provide a prize for the winner or points for his/her team.
3. Group Singing.

C. Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)

Everyone feels lonely at some time. You can feel lonely when you are all by yourself or when you are in a room filled with people. Some of you may feel lonely right now. Most of us will have to deal

with loneliness at times for the rest of our lives. For myself, the loneliest times were the start of a new school year, or entering a new school, or the times my friends went out and I did not get to go. We cannot ignore loneliness. We must learn to deal with it. Let's look at an example.

Alicia did not understand why she felt lonely. She had tried to be involved. At church she was a member of the youth council and even visited people on Saturday. At school, she was a member of the SRC. As a senior student, she tried to be friendly to everyone even the standard six pupils. She tried to be a kind, friendly outgoing person. Yet it seemed that Alicia was never invited to the special activities and this made her unhappy. Around home, her parents tried to encourage her, but it didn't help. They became concerned about her unhappiness and had her make an appointment with her youth leader at church. He said that if she was truly a committed Christian, she shouldn't feel lonely, because the Bible teaches that "Jesus is always with us". This didn't make Alicia feel any better because she thought she was a committed Christian.

Alicia finally shared her feelings with some friends at school. Mary was surprised to hear that Alicia felt lonely, because she seemed to be friendly. Sharon thought that Alicia was overreacting and trying to get attention. James responded by sharing that some of the guys thought that she was a little too friendly, and they were afraid that if anyone asked her out it would be misunderstood. Palesa, a new girl at school, said: "I know how you feel."

Alicia decided to meet with her school counselor and share her feelings of loneliness. The counselor responded by saying that it was only a passing phase and, "If you give it time, Alicia, it will pass."

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Who gave Alicia the greatest comfort? Why?
2. Who caused the greatest frustration? Why?
3. What advice would you have given Alicia?
4. When have you felt the loneliest?
5. What brought you comfort when you were lonely?
6. Do you believe that a committed Christian should ever be lonely? Why or why not?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

Let's look at some scriptures that can help us overcome loneliness.

1. Matthew 22:36-39—"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Loneliness causes problems when we think about our situation; it results in self-pity, feelings of uselessness, withdrawal, and the building up of walls. This scripture teaches us that we must "love the Lord" totally without reservation. That means taking our eyes off ourselves and placing them on God. Once we make God our number one priority, we want to please Him. His greatest pleasure is in seeing us "love one another". There is no better way of overcoming loneliness than to meet the needs of others.
2. Matthew 14:22-23—"Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he

went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.” Jesus knew there was a time to be with people and a time to be alone. Being alone and being lonely are two different things, yet we so often feel that “if I am alone, something is wrong with me”, and we feel lonely. Jesus used His time alone effectively. He did not think about his circumstances, instead He thought about God. He taught His disciples to take time to be alone with God. Example: Matthew 17:1 and Luke 9:10.

F. Group Discussion Questions

1. What are things that you can do that show God that you love Him?
2. What are ways that you can love each other?
3. What can you do when you are alone that will build a strong relationship with God?
4. If your best friend was lonely, how could you help?

G. Closing

I am sure that some of you are struggling with loneliness at this very moment. God wants to help you right where you are, but you must be willing to let Him! Listen to these two scriptures: Deuteronomy 31:8, *“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”* And from the New Testament, Matthew 28:20, *“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* If you want God to help you with your loneliness, pray this prayer: *Dear Father, Thank You for loving me just the way I am. Help me to love You with all my heart, soul, and mind so I can begin to love others. Help me when I am alone to pray, study your Word, and to think on the good things You provide. I will strive to live a life that is pleasing to You. Amen.*

I am with you
ALWAYS
even to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20

THE GIFT OF ENCOURAGEMENT

By Mark Pitcher

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—God wants us to “encourage one another”.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This lesson should help the young people to understand the importance of encouragement and learn ways to encourage each other.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Youth receive good and bad influences every day of their lives. They are challenged, motivated, and pushed to succeed by parents, teachers, and friends. Because of this great emphasis on success, a great need exists for young people to receive and give the gift of encouragement. If youth learn to encourage others, they will: (1) unite the Body of Christ; (2) continually build up one another; (3) fulfill the command of Jesus to “love one another”; (4) have better self-images.
4. Materials Needed—Bread (cut into small pieces), Toothpicks, Paper, Pencils.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Bread Jam. Choose four boys and four girls. The boys should stand next to each other and face the rest of the group. The girls are to put small pieces of bread in the mouths of the boys, one at a time. After each piece of bread is put in the mouth, the boys must say, “Fuzzy bunny.” If they swallow, spit out, or cannot say “fuzzy bunny”, they are out of the game. The person with the greatest amount of bread in his mouth is the winner. You may then want to change sides and see how much the girls can keep in their mouths.
2. Bread-Toothpick Game. If possible, choose two teams that are the same size and have them each stand in a line. Give one toothpick to every member of the two teams and give one small piece of bread to each team. The way to play this game is for each person on the team to hold a toothpick in his or her mouth, with most of the toothpick sticking out. The bread is put on the toothpick of the first person. The first person must then pass the bread to the next person's toothpick, without using his hands. Once the other person has stuck his toothpick into the bread, the first person releases the toothpick from his mouth. The second person must now pass the bread, along with the toothpick still sticking out of it, on to the next person on the team, and so forth. The winning team is the first to pass the bread, and all the toothpicks stuck into it, all the way along the queue to the last person, so that the last person has not only the bread but also all the other member's toothpicks stuck in the bread.
3. Bread Throw. Choose four pairs of youth. One person from each pair will be the bread throwers and the other the bread catchers. Have the bread throwers queue up beside each other. Have the bread catchers queue up at a distance of at least 3 meters away. Give the throwers 10 pieces of bread each. The object of the game is for the thrower to throw the bread to the catcher. The catcher must catch the bread with his mouth. They are not allowed to use their hands. The pair that catches the most bread is the winner.
4. Group Singing.

C. Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)

If you have ever been on a football team, then you have experienced the demands of the leader to run harder, concentrate on the game, and have a positive attitude. You knew that if you didn't, you would not be able to play the game.

Have you ever had a class at school where the teacher was constantly reminding you that “you are not working hard enough. You must get busy and do the work?”

These kinds of demands did not help me very much. Instead, they gave me more problems and discouragement. What I needed was encouragement.

The person who told me about Jesus Christ encouraged me to accept Jesus as my Savior, not because I was going to hell, but because Jesus loved me and accepted me just the way I was. That encouragement was all I needed to enter into that new life with Christ. Encouragement is something we all need.

Think about this example: Ronald is really afraid. The big exam in history is tomorrow, and if he wants to continue to play on the football team, he must get a C grade in the class.

John is a good friend of Ronald's and he also plays on the football team. John is also in the history class, and he is one of the best students. John knows that Ronald is an important player on the team, and if he cannot play, then the team will probably lose their games. Ronald told John that he would probably not do well on the exam unless he cheats. John said that Ronald could look at his answers during the exam so that he could get a good grade. Ronald feels discouraged but he appreciates John's offer.

After school, Ronald talked to Steven, his friend from church. He told him about his fear of the exam. Steven encouraged Ronald. He told him that if he studies he should do well on the exam. Steven offered to study with Ronald that evening and help him to prepare for the exam.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. What do you think Ronald will do?
2. How is John's encouragement different from Steven's encouragement?
3. What would happen if Ronald does what John wants him to do?
4. What would happen if Ronald does what Steven wants him to do?
5. If you were Ronald's friend, how would you encourage him?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

1. Philippians 2:1-4: “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others.” When we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we enter into a new relationship with Him. He provides us with comfort, love, fellowship, and a new awareness of the needs around us. We begin to think and love like Jesus does, and we accept His purpose to share the gospel with everyone. The key to this is having the same attitude as

- Jesus; that is, the attitude of a servant, to think of others before yourself, being interested in who they are and what God can do for them. The result of this is the unity of the Body where everyone is on the same level, not wanting to be served but to serve.
2. Hebrews 10:24-25: “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.” One of the main reasons that the early Christians were able to stand up against persecution and spread the gospel was because of their continual fellowship and encouragement. The believers met together for prayer, study, to share their needs, and to encourage each other.
 3. John 13:34-35: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” A command is given and is expected to be obeyed. Jesus does not give an option. If we are Christians, we must love and encourage one another. This will be the main way that others will know if you are a Christian, by your love.

F. Group Discussion Questions

1. Is encouragement an option for a Christian?
2. What would happen if our youth group encouraged each other?
3. What are some specific ways we can encourage each other?
4. What stops people from encouraging others?

G. Closing - Encouragement is the cure for many of the hurts and disappointments we face in life.

Each one of us can give the gift of encouragement to those around us who need it. If you see the value in encouraging others and you would like to begin to encourage people, then look at the following principles toward becoming an encourager.

Principle One: There Is Healing In Encouragement

Where medicine sometimes fails, encouragement made available from the ordinary, loving, listening, and caring youth believers can often bring healing and comfort to hurting people. Encouraging words are like a salve on a wound. Encouragement is helping someone find his own dignity and importance at a time when that person does not feel good about himself.

Principle Two: Everyone Needs Encouragement

We all have friends and loved ones at home, school, and church who need encouragement. It is obvious because they seem discouraged and insecure. They need encouragement. But we don't always think of others who need words of encouragement too, like the pastor, our parents, and our more confident friends. Every person needs to be encouraged from time to time.

Principle Three: Encouragement Begins When We See Life the Way Another Person Sees It

You cannot supply the encouragement a person needs unless you know his needs. However, many times this person will not tell you what his needs are. An encourager is one who is sensitive to the needs of others and who tries to understand what the other person is feeling. The gift of encouragement is only possible as we see others as Jesus sees them.

Principle Four: Encouragement Comes In All Colors, Shapes, And Sizes

There are many ways we may give the gift of encouragement to one another. Encouragement takes place mainly in spoken words. But it takes other forms too, such as written notes and phone calls and even a smile. Just being with a person in the time of a difficult situation can be a source of encouragement.

Principle Five: Encouragement Is A Ministry

Often we think that preaching is the only form of ministry. But, although that is an important ministry, it is not the only way to minister to people. God has given to each of us the ministry of encouragement.

Have your group get into small groups of four or five people. Give each person a piece of paper. Tell them to write, "Let us encourage one another" at the top of the paper, and to write their names. Then they should pass their paper to the person on their right. Each person should write an encouraging comment about the person whose name is on the paper. For example: You have a nice smile; you are always friendly; you are sensitive; etc. Keep passing the papers until everyone has their own back and reads the words of encouragement.

Close with Prayer.

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

Hebrews 10:25



LEARNING TO CONTROL YOURSELF

By Doug Runyan

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—We must learn to control ourselves if we want to grow in Christ.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This lesson should help the young people understand how important it is to control their responses to daily situations.
3. Overview of the Lesson—As young people get older, they are sometimes given more freedom to make their own decisions and more free time during which they are not under the supervision of their parents or other adults. Also, as their bodies change, their physical appetites and emotional responses change. These changes cause them to have to handle desires and feelings they have never experienced before. For these reasons, it is important that they learn to handle daily situations in a constructive and Christlike way, instead of the situations handling them.

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Take A Stand. Tell the group to sit in a circle. Have the group start with one person saying the number “1”. Continue on around the circle until you get to number “20”. If there are two or more groups, see who can do it the quickest. After you have done this, explain that this time they must stand if the number they are about to say starts with an S or a T. (They must stand before they say it.) If there are two or more groups, see who can do it the quickest. They must start over each time they miss.
2. The Self-Control Game. Bring one member of your youth group to the front of the room. Tell him that he must not smile, under any circumstances. Then, for one minute, tell the rest of the group to do whatever they can to make him smile. The only rule is that the group cannot touch that person. They can only use words and actions. Give a small prize to the youth that can go a whole minute without smiling.
3. Group Singing.

C. *Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)*

When was the last time you made a bad mistake? Maybe it was when your friend accidentally threw your homework papers into the dustbin. Then your best friend walked by and saw you looking through the rubbish. Was your response “controlled”? Or what about the time you put off studying for the big exam until the night before, only to have your favorite team playing for the football championship that same night? The game lasted a long time. You fell asleep before you finished studying chapter one. What was your response when the grades were posted? Who did you blame for the bad grade? Did you control your response, or not? Let us look at another situation:

Jameel has been trying very hard to be a positive influence on the other youth at school, especially his unsaved friends. The pastor’s sermon last Sunday about “avoiding the devil’s traps through the fruit of self-control” really spoke to Jameel. The pastor said that we must spend time every day reading the Bible, thinking how it applies to our daily lives, and we must talk and listen to God. The problem is, by the time Jameel gets home from school, plays football for a couple of hours, eats his supper, and hurries to finish his homework, he is too tired to read the Bible and to pray.

Jameel loves God. It is just that he does not seem to have much self-control or discipline that he needs. Jameel invited Joel to church, and he feels good about that. But he feels badly about the fact that Joel lets him copy his English homework. Jameel knows that if he would be disciplined, he could do his own homework. But he takes the easy way out and copies Joel's answers. Jameel knows that the Christian young people admire him for the Christian testimony that he gives. But now Jameel knows his testimony is in trouble, because last night at the football game he argued with the leaders. Jameel loves God and wants to do what is right. But as hard as he tries, Jameel cannot understand why his Christian life is not working out the way he knows it should.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. In what ways are Jameel's thoughts and actions in conflict?
2. In what ways are Jameel's actions in conflict with God's standards?
3. What changes must Jameel make before things come right in his spiritual life?
4. What is missing in Jameel's life?
5. Do you see yourself in any part of Jameel's story? What is there in this story that reminds you about yourself?
6. What are some of the other situations in which young people must control their responses?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

1. 1 Peter 5:8-9a.—“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.”
 - a. Satan has the cunning and the instincts of a lion – he knows just where and when to attack us. We must be aware of Satan's desire to attack us. We must keep our lives under God's control and follow the course He gives us to follow.
 - b. Our human desires and emotions must not control us – we must control them. If we do not control them, Satan will use them against us. We can resist Satan's attacks against us only when our desires and emotions are under God's control.
2. Proverbs 25:28—“*Like a city whose walls are broken down is the man who lacks self-control*”. Satan will attack a person who does not have self-control, much like the ancient cities without walls were open for attack.
3. Galatians 5:22-25—“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control . . . Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”
 - a. Self-control is listed by Paul among the fruits or outward evidences of the Holy Spirit living within us.
 - b. Paul goes on to tell us how it is we are to bring our human or sinful nature with its lustful passions and wrong desires under control – we give it up to be crucified with Christ. Since Christ was without sin, He could become our sin upon the Cross. Once we give our sinful nature to Christ, we no longer have to remain under its control.
 - c. Paul closes this part by reminding us that this life of self-control is step-by-step, and only through the power of the Spirit can we do it.

F. Group Discussion Questions

1. What do these scriptures tell you about the importance of self-control?
2. What does the one scripture say a man without self-control is like? Explain your answer.
3. Can you name some of the ways in which the desires and emotions of our human (sinful) nature are expressed? In other words, in what parts of our lives do our struggles for control take place?
4. Can we bring our human (sinful) nature under control? If so, how?
5. What does Paul say will prove to others that the Holy Spirit lives within us?

G. Closing (Read this to the group)

If you are interested in living a more disciplined life, a life of self-control, then you may want to consider the following steps towards a more disciplined life:

1. ADMIT THAT SOME THINGS ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO CONTROL IN OUR LIVES THAN OTHER THINGS.
What is hard for you to control may be easy for someone else to control. It is a personal thing. But you must be honest. Before God can help us, we must be willing to tell Him that we have a problem with a certain area of discipline.
2. ADMIT THAT THIS PROBLEM IS NOT UNDER THE CONTROL OF CHRIST.
This is difficult to admit, especially for young people. Self-control for the youth believer means that the self, the whole person, is under the control of Christ.
3. ADMIT THAT YOU NEED TO GIVE THIS PROBLEM TO GOD.
There comes a time when a Christian must say: "Lord, I have tried to overcome this problem of a lack of discipline, but I cannot. Please take control of this area of my life and bring it under your control. I am depending on You to help me, and not on my own strength."
4. PRAY THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP THIS AREA OF YOUR LIFE UNDER CONTROL.
It is only as you walk by the Holy Spirit in prayer and Bible study that you will become controlled by the Holy Spirit.
5. WHEN YOU FACE A SITUATION THAT MAY REQUIRE SOME SELF-CONTROL, ASK YOURSELF THESE THREE SIMPLE QUESTIONS:
 - a. Is this helpful? Should I or should I not do this activity? Will it help me to become a better person, or a better Christian?
 - b. Will this situation have a good effect on my life? Will I be a better person as a result of this activity?
 - c. Is it to the glory of God? Will this activity glorify Jesus and make Him seem desirable to others, or will this activity cause people to question what Christianity is about? Read 1 Corinthians 10:23,31.

Where are you in the struggle for self-control? Do your desires control you, or do you control your desires? Are people able to see the Spirit of God living in you through the fruit of self-control? If not, then I urge you to give your human (carnal) nature to Christ right now. Think about the areas where you are the weakest – a bad temper, impure sexual thoughts or actions, a bad attitude towards parents or other people, and so on. Give these things to Christ right now. Pray this prayer:

Dear God, I confess to You my weakness and my failures in my life. I give my sinful nature and its desires to You right now. I ask You to replace it with Your Holy Spirit. Let others see Your Spirit living in me through the self-control that You give me. In the name of Jesus Christ, Lord of my life, I pray. Amen.

“YOU DON’T HAVE TO WORRY!”

By Susie Shellenberger

A. Leader’s Guidelines

1. Key Idea—God does not want His children to worry.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This lesson will help young people understand what it means to place their cares and concerns into the hands of God.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Probably most of the young people in your group spend a big amount of time worrying about something. If they learn how to control their worry during their youth, they will mature into the trusting Christian adults that God wants them to be.
4. Material Needed—A cooking pot, Paper, Pencils, Matches.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Trust Walk. Explain to your youth that the opposite of worry is trust. This activity will help them to understand what it means to trust instead of worry. Tell the young people to get into pairs. One person from each pair will be blindfolded (or trusted to keep their eyes closed). The other person will lead the “blind” person on the trust walk. The person who has his eyes closed cannot look where he is going and he cannot touch or hold on to the person who can see. The other person can only lead him with his voice. This activity will show the youth what it means to trust another person and to totally rely on his guidance and leadership. Give everyone a time limit of five minutes. When each pair has completed this assignment, ask them the following questions:
 - a. How did it feel to completely trust in someone?
 - b. Were you tempted to worry about where you were going?
 - c. Were there times during the trust walk when you thought it was easier to trust the other person? Why?
 - d. What was your greatest worry?
 - e. Was there anything that made it difficult for you to trust the other person?
2. Worry Dramas. Explain to the youth group that each team or group has ten minutes to plan a drama about something that young people often worry about. They must use Matthew 6:27 somewhere in their drama. After each group has had enough time to plan a drama, give them time to present their drama to the whole group.
3. Group Singing.

C. Leader Presentation (Present in your own words)

Most often we worry about things that might happen but never do happen. Here is a story about a young lady who had a big problem with worry.

Christina and her family moved from her home in one town to another town during the middle of the school year. Christina had been very involved in school and church activities. Since her family moved to a new area, Christina was worried that she would not make any friends. She cried to her parents: “Everyone has decided who they will be friends with! I don’t think that I will fit in with these people.”

Christina met Colette the next Sunday morning in the youth Sunday School class. She found out that she would be going to the high school that Colette attended. Colette offered to walk to school with her the next day and introduce her to some of her friends.

Christina felt afraid while she was getting ready to go to school. “What if they don’t like my clothes? I feel like I’m living in a different world. What if they laugh at the way I talk? I’m so worried that no one will like me.” Colette came to Christina’s house. Christina said, “Thank you for walking to school with me. But why did you come? Are you afraid I cannot make friends on my own? You are probably right. I know I don’t talk like everyone else. I’m very scared that everyone will laugh at me today.”

Colette said, “You must not worry. We have some nice young people at our school. Most of them help new students feel welcome.”

After Christina finished her first day at school, she began to worry about doing her homework papers well enough to please the teacher. She thought, “The teachers will probably expect more work from me because I am a new student. I hope I can do what they want me to do.”

Colette invited Christina to the youth choir practice at church. Christina asked, “What if they don’t like the way I sing?” Colette said, “You will sing well. We want you to get involved and feel like you are an important part of the group.” Christina asked, “What time will we finish the choir practice?” She was worried about not having enough time to complete her homework papers.

“Tonight we are having sandwiches and cold drink after we sing,” said Colette. Christina cried, “Everyone will think the only reason I’m coming is so I can have some sandwiches.” Colette said, “We could always use more sandwiches. Would it make you feel better if you brought something?” Christina said, “Yes, I will bring some sandwiches.”

Now Colette wondered if she had made the right choice in trying to include Christina in with her friends. It seemed as if Christina was always worrying about something.

“Thank you for inviting me tonight, Colette,” Christina said when she saw Colette at church. “But I don’t think anyone will like my sandwiches. And I am sure that nobody will like the way I sing.” “That is enough!” Colette said. “You worry too much! You must talk with our youth leader about your problem of worry after the choir practice.”

“Oh no!” Christina screamed. “What will I say to him?”

D. Discussion Questions

Divide the young people into smaller groups or teams and give them the following instructions: If YOU were Christina’s youth leader, what advice would you give to her? Read Matthew 6:25, 27 and Philippians 4:6. How would you respond to Christina?

Give each group ten minutes to think about their answer. Then tell each group to share their advice with the whole group.

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss with the whole group.)

1. Luke 10:38-42—Martha was so busy with her work that she missed her opportunity to relax with the Lord. She was so worried about the unimportant things that she missed the most important thing – being with the Creator of the universe! Martha was so busy cooking the food that she did not realize that she was standing in the presence of the Almighty God! We

often find ourselves in the same trap. We get so busy with our work that sometimes we do not recognize the Lord.

2. Matthew 6:25-34—Jesus does not want us to spend our time worrying about our cares and problems. He wants us to give those cares to Him. He didn't just die for our sins—He also died for all of our problems and concerns.

Many times, instead of praying and giving our problems to the Lord, we just keep on worrying about things. Jesus wants us to give Him our problems. He wants to carry our worries . . . and He will, if we give them to Him. It is our responsibility to pray and to hope, and to trust Him completely with our problems.

F. Group Discussion

Worry List. Ask your group to name some things that young people worry about. Tell one of the youth to make a list of these worries on a sheet of paper, a poster, or on the chalkboard. (Example: clothes, friends, school, money, etc.)

G. Closing—Burn Those Worries

You will need a cooking pot and some matches for this activity. Give pencils and paper to the young people. Tell them to write down some of the things that they are worrying about. Encourage them to write down every problem that they might have. After everyone has finished writing, ask the young people to pray and to give their worries and problems to God. Then tell them to put their papers in the pot and burn them. As they watch their list of worries and problems burn, remind the young people that they have totally given these things to the Lord. Also, let them know that this is only symbolic of what they actually really need to do.

PUT POWER IN YOUR PRAYERS

By Dee Kelley

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—Prayer is communication between God and you.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This lesson will help youth to be more creative in their communication with God and will encourage them to let their prayer life grow.
3. Overview of the Lesson—In many Christian groups, prayer is emphasized much but not practiced enough. We hear so much about it, but do so little of it. For many people it is a ritual or a task. Jesus calls us to break away from rituals and move into a talking relationship with Him.
4. Materials Needed—Enough bananas for the opening activity.

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Banana Competition. Have each team choose one player to represent them before you explain the game. Have all the players stand behind a table and face the rest of the group. Place a banana in front of each player. At your signal they are to peel and eat the banana without using their hands or arms. If the banana drops on the floor, they still must not use their hands or arms. A winner is not declared until the banana is completely eaten.
2. Guess the leader. Explain the game and then send a volunteer out of the room. Everyone else stands in a circle and chooses a leader. The group must do what the leader does. The volunteer comes in and stands in the middle of the circle and tries to guess who the leader is by watching what everyone else is doing. He gets three chances. If he guesses correctly, the person who was the leader must then go out of the room. If he doesn't guess correctly after 3 tries, he then chooses who will be "it".
3. Group Singing.

C. *Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)*

It was the Wednesday before Christmas. Lisa was in the kitchen doing some cooking for the holiday. Wonderful smells were filling the house. Lisa's husband, Eric, was outside working on his car. The good smells soon reached him and he went to the kitchen to see if he could have a biscuit.

As he entered the kitchen, he asked: "Is there anything I can do to help?" He knew Lisa would say no; that was the only reason he offered.

Eric walked around the room and looked in every pot. Finally he went to the oven and peeked in to find a ham that was cooking. It looked delicious, but it reminded him of a question that had often crossed his mind this time of year. "Lisa," he said, "even though I have never asked you this, I have always wondered why you cut off the ends of the ham."

"Oh, Eric, everyone knows that you have to cut the ends off the ham before you cook it."

"But, Lisa," said Eric, "why do you cut the ends off the ham?"

"Well, I ... I'm not sure why I cut the ends off the ham. My mother always does it, but I never asked her why. It is just something you have to do. If you must know the reason, why don't you ask her, she will be here in about three hours."

About eight o'clock that night, Lisa's mother arrived. She didn't bring much luggage for her holiday, but she did bring a lot of food. It didn't take long for Eric to remember to ask about the ham.

"Mom," he said, "Lisa always cuts the ends off of her ham before she cooks it. When I asked her why, she did not have an answer. She said you would know why because you do it too."

Lisa's Mom looked a little confused and said: "Everyone knows that you have to cut off the ends of the ham before you cook it."

"But why?" asked Eric.

"I don't know. I've always done it because my mom always did it. She'll be here for dinner tomorrow, why don't you ask her."

Eric was determined to know the reason for cutting off the ends of the ham. He looked forward to Grandma's visit.

The next morning at 11:00, Grandma arrived. She didn't bring much luggage, but she sure brought a lot of food. Eric couldn't wait to ask his question. After the greetings, Eric asked Grandma why she had always cut the ends off of the ham before she cooked it.

Grandma quickly replied: "That is easy to explain. You see, I have a very small pot and the only way I can fit the ham in the pot is to cut off the ends!"

Lisa and her Mom had been cutting the ends off the hams for years for no reason at all. They had carried on a ritual without knowing the meaning behind the ritual.

We all do things like that. We have forgotten the meaning behind many of our rituals. In some cases we should do away with the ritual, such as in the case of the ham ends, and in other cases we simply need to be reminded of the meaning.

Let's talk about some rituals and see if you know the original purpose behind them.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. What is the reason that we worship on Sunday, since Saturday was actually the original Sabbath day? (*Answer: The resurrection of Jesus took place on Sunday, and the weekly worship service on Sunday is a celebration of that event.*)
2. What was the original reason for Sunday School? (*Answer: Before child labor laws were passed, children were working in factories all week long and not getting any education. The church took the responsibility of educating the children. In this case, the reason for beginning a ritual or program is not the same as the reason for continuing it.*)
3. Why do we celebrate Christmas?
4. Why do we have youth meetings?
5. Why do we pray before meals?
6. Why do we pray at all?
7. What is prayer?

E. Bible Discovery - Read and discuss as a group.

1. Matthew 6:5-8—"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth,

they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” This passage, taken from the Sermon on the Mount, challenges us to look at our prayer life. Why do we pray the way we do? Why do we pray at all? Jesus surprised the people of His day by the comments He made. He would probably surprise us today, if we could hear Him clearly.

The Jews thought prayer was very important. For this reason, many traditions developed: 1) Every Jew had to repeat a certain scripture from the Old Testament called the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41), once before 9 o'clock in the morning, and once before 9 o'clock at night. 2) They had to repeat a certain prayer three times a day. 3) There were prayers for every occasion. 4) For the devout Jew, there were set times for prayer; these were 09h00, 12h00, and 15h00. Wherever he was at the time, the devout Jew would stop and pray. Some would plan to be in very crowded places so that when prayer time came the people would see how “devout” they were. 5) Long prayers had a more “spiritual” appearance. 6) Repetition was very common.

There is nothing wrong with having a pattern to your prayer life, as long as it does not become a ritual with no meaning.

2. Matthew 6:9-15 – “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” This prayer, known as the Lord’s Prayer, was given by Jesus to us as an example of what prayer should be like. It is a prayer to teach us.

- 1) It is simple, not long and repetitious.
- 2) He approaches God with love. He called God “Father”.
- 3) He approaches God with respect, “Hallowed be your name”.
- 4) He expresses a willingness to be used by God, “Your will be done on earth”.
- 5) He talks about and commits the past, present, and future to God: Past, “Forgive us our debts”; present, “Give us today...”; future, “lead us not...”. In this simple prayer, Jesus tried to teach us to pray simply. Prayer is communication with God. Do not let ritual get in the way of true religion. Begin to find different ways to talk with God.

F. Group Discussion Questions

1. Ask the youth to repeat some ritual-type prayers (a prayer before meals, a bedtime prayer, an offering prayer, a youth meeting opening prayer).
2. Where is a good place for you to pray?
3. When is a good time for you to pray?
4. What are some creative ways we communicate with God? (e.g. speaking, thinking, writing our thoughts, singing songs or hymns.)

5. How can God communicate to us? (preaching, Bible reading, prayer, thoughts, songs and hymns, devotional material)
6. Is there any benefit to praying with someone? (see Matthew 18:19-20)

G. Closing

The more open we become to new ways of communicating with God, the more we will realize that we can pray throughout the day. God wants us to give our entire life to Him. We can share with Him our projects and our schoolwork. We can communicate our love for Him through our music, our money, and our words. We can pray in so many different ways; but any of these can lose their meaning if we forget that behind it all is the desire to communicate with God.

Close this session with prayer. 1) Ask the group for prayer requests. List them on a board or poster. 2) Divide the group into groups of three to five youth each. 3) Give them these instructions: a) everyone is to pray, and they can pray as many times as they want; b) no one will be chosen to be the first one to pray; c) one subject (a request or praise) is introduced by the first person who prays out loud (the others should pray silently about the same subject); d) prayers are to be short – no more than two sentences; e) prayers are to be simple – big words aren't necessary; f) prayers are to be specific (do not tell God what to do, but do tell Him exactly what you are thinking and feeling).

After about five minutes, the leader can close in a simple and short prayer thanking God for His presence.



HOW DO I KNOW IF IT IS SIN?

By Steven Scott

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—We sin against God whenever we choose to act against God's will or choose not to find out what God's direction is.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To help youth to develop the ability to identify sin and temptations to sin so that they can know the difference and live a victorious life.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Your youth believers may expect too much of themselves in their Christian walk. Often they are easily defeated when they do not recognize the difference between sin and temptation. Often, they will ask, 'Is this thing sin?' Rather than giving an answer, we must begin to teach them by asking, "What does the Bible say about that idea?" and "Would you be acting in disobedience to God?" It is important that they learn the difference between temptations, intentional sin, and unintentional disobedience.
4. Materials Needed—several copies of a recent newspaper.

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Newspaper Hunt. Divide your group into teams and give the teams identical copies of the same newspaper edition. Before the session begins, look through the paper and make a list of items found in that paper. This list can include names, faces, facts, advertisements, etc. Give the list to each team, and the first team to find all the items in the winner.
2. Newspaper Race. Have your teams stand in two queues, (one person behind another person) behind a starting line. Choose a goal line on the other side of the room. Each team member (one at a time) must race to the goal by stepping on newspapers. Each team is given two pages of newspaper. As they stand on one, then place the other one ahead of them. If their foot touches the floor, they must go back to the starting line and begin again. When they reach the goal line, they can pick up both pieces and race them back to the next team member in line. The first time to have all their players reach the goal line is the winner.
3. Group Singing.

C. *Leader Presentation (In your own words, share the following information with your group.)*

Have you ever asked yourself these questions? How do you know if something is sin? What if it is something the Bible doesn't exactly talk about? What if I don't realize it is sin when I do it? Am I still a Christian after that? These are important questions which you face every day. You don't always have time to ask for advice. That's why we should take time now to find guidelines to help us make decisions later. In the following story, each person makes choices from which we can learn.

Mrs. McKay kept Daniel after school so that he could make up some work he missed. It was just Daniel and Mrs. McKay in the history class until a fight started outside. Mrs. McKay went out quickly to help the other teachers and told Daniel to keep working. When she left, Daniel went to her desk and saw the test they were to have on Friday. Beside the test was the answer sheet. He quickly copied the answers and took his seat before Mrs. McKay returned.

At break the next day, Daniel told his friends what had happened and offered to sell the answers to his four friends. Daniel, Mohammed and Dexter were not Christians, but Roger and Edison were. All of them were in the same church youth group.

When the offer was made, Mohammed bought a copy of the answers because he needed a good grade to stay on the football team. Dexter didn't buy the answers, but sat near Mohammed on Friday and cheated off his paper and Mohammed didn't notice. Roger didn't buy the answers or cheat, but he decided to keep quiet and not turn Daniel and Mohammed in to Mrs. McKay. Edison didn't know what to do, so he pretended to be sick and stayed home on Friday. He knew Mrs. McKay would give him a different test as a make-up exam and he wouldn't have a chance to buy the answers.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups and use these questions to evaluate the persons and their activities in the story. Then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Who made the best and worst decisions of the five boys? List them in order.
2. Although Roger and Edison decided not to cheat, were they right not to tell Mrs. McKay? Why or why not?
3. Do you think all this was Mrs. McKay's fault for leaving the answers lying around? Why or why not?
4. If you had been at break that day with Daniel, what would you have done? Why?
5. List those who were tempted in the story. Describe the temptation they faced.
6. Who do you think sinned? What was their sin? When did temptation become sin for them?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

James 1:13-15. This scripture very clearly outlines the process that begins with temptation or desire. When we dwell on an inappropriate desire and fail to flee from it, we are easily led into committing that sin, which leads to spiritual death, which is separation from God. Our hope is found in James 4:7-8 and I John 1:9 and 2:1-2. (Ask someone to read those scriptures.) This pattern of temptation, sin and repentance may also be illustrated in the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. David was tempted and instead of fleeing the temptation, he investigated further. David's confession in 12:13 is important to the story. (Read this verse.)

F. Group Discussion Questions

1. How would you say sin and temptation are different?
2. What should we do if we discover that we are doing something that is a sin but we didn't realize it until now?
3. Why do you think God didn't give us a detailed list of every temptation we are going to face? (like cheating on an exam or turning in someone who cheats.)
4. How might we get away from some of our temptations? (If time permits, have your group list temptations or situations that youth face. Record their answers, and when the list is finished, let the group go back over them and make suggestions about how to keep the temptation from leading to sin. For example: When Daniel offered the exam answers to Edison, Edison could have told Daniel that he was wrong and warned Daniel that he was going to let Mrs. McKay know that somehow the test answers had gotten out.)

G. Closing

God is not waiting to catch us sinning so He can condemn us. He desires that we become aware of the traps of sin and become equipped to live free of sin's bondage. The following are helpful principles for dealing with sin:

1. **Learn to recognize the temptations that lead you to sin.** What is a real temptation to you may not be a serious temptation to someone else. The secret to overcoming certain temptations is to admit to God and to yourself that this thing is a particularly difficult temptation for you and that you are in need of special help from God to overcome it.
2. **Commit your life to always follow God's way in facing life's challenges.** Being totally committed to God does not mean you will never be tempted. But it does mean that you can live consistently, knowing that God has equipped and is equipping you by the Holy Spirit to stand fast in the face of temptation.
3. **As soon as you recognize your disobedience to God, stop and sincerely ask forgiveness.** If temptation does lead you to sin, stop and pray about it, asking the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sin. Make up your mind that with the Lord's help, it will never happen again. Learn from the experience so that if you are tempted in that way again, you can point back to that time of forgiveness and say, "The Lord has forgiven me for that. I shall not fail Him again!"

You may have some youth who need to seek God's forgiveness now. Take time to pray with them. For some, this may be the first time to truly repent and be saved. Be sensitive to the leading of God for your group.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO CRITICISM OR PERSECUTION?

By Alan Scott

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—Our response to criticism and persecution must follow Jesus' example.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To show youth the scriptural alternatives to the worldly pattern of “fighting back” when unfairly criticized or persecuted.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Our youth struggle every day with feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Because criticism frequently has some truth in it, the youth can be quickly defeated. The human response is to fight back. However, “fighting back” is not the example Jesus gave us. Youth receive advice from well-meaning teachers, friends, or parents that often contradicts Christ's example. Youth need to learn to evaluate their responses according to scripture. Jesus frequently took brave actions, but he was motivated by love for the defense of someone else.
4. Materials Needed—Pieces of paper for the Krazy Kwizz, Pencils, Bibles.

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Krazy Kwizz. Give everyone in the group a piece of paper. Ask half of the group to write a question beginning with the word “how”. (Example: How do you peel a banana?) The other half of the group must write an answer to the question they have not seen. They must write answers beginning with the word “by”. (Example: By dropping it into boiling water.) Collect the completed questions and answers. At random, read a question and then an answer. The results can be very funny. Reshuffle the questions and answers and you can enjoy it again.
2. Group Singing.

C. *Leader Presentation (Using your own words, share the following information with your group.)*

Everyone knows that Christians are not supposed to fight with other people. We don't go around fighting with people we don't like. But should a Christian fight back when he is mocked or attacked? How much should a Christian take? Should Christians let everyone think they are cowards? Listen to the problem faced by the youth in this story:

Victor tried to hide when he saw Horace at the end of the hall. Maybe Horace would pass by without seeing him. Horace was leader of a crowd of tough guys in school. However, Horace seemed to have a particular dislike for Christians, or “church freaks” as he called them. He usually made fun of Victor or the Christian kids whenever he had a chance. Thinking Horace had passed by, Victor grabbed his books and turned to go, only to find himself face to face with Horace.

“Hey, Freak,” Horace called, “Watch it. You almost hit me with those books.” Then he pushed Victor's books and they went sliding across the floor, including his Bible. Horace had mocked Victor before and Victor had said nothing, but throwing the Bible around was too much. Victor pushed Horace and yelled: “You can't treat the Bible like that!” Just then the bell rang for class and Horace yelled: “We'll finish this after school, Freak. Nobody pushes me!”

Victor was still weak when he sat down at break with his friends from church. He told them what had happened and said: “What should I do?” Dave quickly said: “Fight him. You can beat him. Somebody has got to teach that guy a lesson.”

“No,” Jules answered. “Just ignore him and keep praying for him. How will he know Christian love if you beat him up?”

“I agree with Dave,” added Ann. “Only don’t fight him to defend yourself. Stand up to him to protect the Bible. How can he respect the Bible if we don’t defend it?”

“If I were you,” Edith said, “I’d tell the vice-principal and get him in real trouble. He’d see who he was up against then!”

“You’ve got no choice,” Clinton replied. “You’ve got to meet him after school and witness to him. If he hits you, turn the other cheek. Besides, maybe you ought to apologize for pushing him.”

“That’s all great advice, guys,” Victor answered. “But what if Horace knocks me out anyway? How does that make God look then? I can’t witness much when I’m unconscious!”

D. Discussion Questions (Divide everyone into small groups and use these questions to help them evaluate the events of the story. Then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Whose advice is the best for Victor? Rank their advice from 1 to 5. Give reasons for your rankings.
2. What would you tell Victor to do as a Christian in that situation?
3. If you were Victor, what would you do?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

Luke 9:51-56—“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, ‘Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?’ But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village.” As you read through these scriptures, you will see that revenge and “fighting back” are not the way a Christian should act. Jesus turned down His disciples’ suggestions to destroy the Samaritan village. We are urged to follow the example of Jesus in these other scriptures. Fighting for our rights or to protect our pride is not the way of the Christian. Standing bravely for truth is a Christian’s responsibility. However, bravery does not equal violence. Our response to evil must be to demonstrate God’s love. Additional scriptures: Romans 12:14-21; 1 Peter 2:20-24; 3:9-17.

F. Group Discussion Questions

1. What similarities do you see between the story of Victor and Horace and Luke 9:51-56?
2. After reading this scripture, when do you think a Christian should fight back?
3. What advice would you give Victor now, using scripture?
4. How should you respond if you are threatened with serious physical injury?

G. Closing

In closing, ask your group to think of a person or situation in their lives that causes them to want to fight back. This might be someone at school, work, or home. Then ask them to consider these questions:

1. Do I want to fight back just to protect my rights or my pride?
 2. What good things might I be able to do for this person in response to his evil?
 3. Is there behavior in my life that needs changing, which if not changed will hinder my witness?
4. *If you, as leader, can share a situation you wish to change, it will help the others to do the same. Allow any to share needs or requests that they may have. Close in prayer.*

H. Lesson Option

When reading the story of Victor and Horace, stop reading before Victor's friends give advice. Have each youth write his suggestion to Victor privately. Then let them share their thoughts. Ask why they responded as they did. After reading the scripture, have them write a second suggestion to Victor. This time have them quote some part of these scriptures.

HAVE I NOT COMMANDED YOU?

**BE STRONG
ENCOURAGE!**

**DO NOT TREMBLE OR BE DISMAYED FOR THE LORD
YOUR GOD IS WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO. JOSH. 1:9**

ARE WE CONTROLLED BY OUR POSSESSIONS?

By Dee Kelley

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—It is not wrong to have our possessions, but we should never allow our possessions to control us.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This lesson will help youth to learn the principle of stewardship through Christian principles about money.
3. Overview of the Lesson—There are some wrong teachings in the evangelical church today about money. Some teach that anyone who is really a Bible-believing Christian will be healthy and wealthy. Others teach that if we would just have enough faith, we will receive anything we believe: choose anything our heart desires, name it and claim it, and God must give it to me.

Scripture gives a different view toward wealth. One of the main Christian principles for money is a proper attitude toward money and possessions. This lesson looks at materialism and attempts to help youth look honestly at their own attitudes and begin to develop an appropriate value system toward money and possessions. Remember, it is just as easy to be controlled by possessions one doesn't have but desires.

4. Material Needed—Toilet Paper, elastic bands (elastics), Blank paper, Pencils

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Blow Hard. Divide your group into teams of four to eight players per team. Give one square of toilet paper to each team leader. If the toilet paper is two-ply, then separate the two sheets, because this game works better if the paper is lighter. At your signal, the team leader is to drop the toilet paper square from above the group by standing on a chair. The object is to see which team can keep the paper in the air the longest by blowing it upwards. If the paper lands on a person, it must be blown off within two seconds or that team is out.
2. Elastic Band Man. Have each team choose two players before you explain the contest. Have the players queue up in a straight queue facing the rest of the group. Players on the same team should stand next to each other. Give an elastic band to each player. Have them put them over their heads. At the back the elastic band should be down around the neck and at the front it should be across the tip of the nose. The object is to get the elastic band down to the neck using only facial movements. Everyone starts at your signal. Explain that the contest is not over until two people from the same team have successfully gotten the elastic band down to their necks.
3. Group Singing.

C. *Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)*

Youth enjoy answering questions. Give each of them a pencil and paper. Have them write numbers from 1 to 15 in a vertical column. After you ask each question, have them mark "0" for false, "1" for somewhat true, and "2" for very true.

Question 1: I often think that I must have something because everyone else has it.

Question 2: When I hear a friend say, “Everyone knows that to be somebody you must own a certain item”, it makes me want to buy that item.

Question 3: I would be prouder of my family if they had a car or lived in a nicer house.

Question 4: If I am looking in the shops, I always buy something.

Question 5: If I see something I really like, I must have it.

Question 6: I think the best way to help people who are needy is to give money to an organization that helps the poor.

Question 7: I like to show people that I care by giving a gift.

Question 8: When I am old, I want to have a big house, an expensive car, and a lot of money.

Question 9: In order for me to feel good about myself, I must have money in my pocket all the time.

Question 10: Many times I feel a strong desire to get rich.

Question 11: I am embarrassed when my family’s home and possessions aren’t as nice as the homes and possessions of others.

Question 12: One of my biggest fears is not having money.

Question 13: I think I would be devastated if someone stole our radio or our television set.

Question 14: I have a difficult time lending things to people.

Question 15: I sometimes feel that I will never really have enough money or possessions.

(Share the following with the group.)

Add up the total score for the questions 1,2, and 3. These questions are about status-seeking. Very often we desire to impress others. If we let this attitude control us, we are very materialistic. If you scored a four or above, probably your status-seeking attitude is getting in the way of your relationship with God and perhaps your possessions control you. A lower score indicates a lower desire for status, but you should look at each answer that you scored as 1 or above and ask yourself why you feel that way.

Total your scores for questions 4 and 5. These test how much of an impulse buyer you are. Many salespeople and advertisers make a living from impulse buyers. Impulse buying almost always results in overspending and overbuying. If you scored 1 or 2, you might be a little impulsive. If you scored 3 or 4, you are probably not being a good steward of your money.

Total your scores for questions 6 and 7. Sometimes giving gifts or money becomes a substitute for giving love. Giving a gift can be an act of love, but we can also give material things as a way to avoid giving of ourselves. When possessions hold more value than relationships, we have become materialistic. A score of 3 or 4 may means that you need to re-evaluate your ideals of giving.

Total your scores for questions 8 through 11. This is an important category because it is so much a part of our world and yet it is very dangerous to our well-being. Many people measure their own self-worth by what they own. “The more I have, the more important I am” is popular, but very wrong thinking. Many people feel like failures if they do not own the “right” kinds of things. The Bible says that is not true. We are very valuable because Christ died for us. We should never judge others or ourselves by what we own. A score of 4 to 8 may indicate that you need to let Jesus Christ help you with your own self-respect or self-worth. Remember, God is your Creator. He doesn’t make mistakes. Your worth as a human being is not based on what you do or do not have, but on **Who** created you.

Total your score for questions 12 through 15. Possessions sometimes represent our security. The more we have, the more comfortable and secure we feel. We begin to depend on things or money instead of God. Possessions do not last forever. In fact, most possessions do not last very long at all! Any dependence on them can be false security and hinder your relationship with God. A score of 1 to 3 shows a little dependence on material things; while a score of 4 to 8 shows a pretty high level of dependence on possessions or wealth.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Describe a status-seeker.
2. Is the desire to wear nice clothes wrong? Why or why not?
3. How can impulse buying lead to overspending? Give examples.
4. Other than giving money, how can we help people who are needy?
5. If you want to show someone you love him/her, what can you give other than an actual gift?
6. On what should our self-worth be based?
7. What kinds of things do you do that really make you feel good about yourself?
8. Can a lot of money keep us from being dependent on God? If so how?
9. Can a person earn a big salary and still be dependent on God?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

It is not the amount of what we have that is important, but the attitude towards what we have. Man looks on the outside, but God looks on the heart. The attitude we have towards possessions and money is very important. The Bible talks about wealth and money over and over again. Many of the parables are about possessions and we can find guidance from them.

Proverbs 8:17-21 - "I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold, what I yield surpasses choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full." Chapter 8 of Proverbs is about the importance of wisdom. The scripture is important because materialism is the result of wrong priorities. When possessions control our thinking, we lose sight of God. But if we seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first, then all these things (food and clothing), will be given to us as well.

This passage says that enduring wealth and prosperity come with the wisdom of God. Because they have no eternal value in themselves, money and possessions are to be used as tools. Relationships are always more important than possessions and people are more important than money. The desire for money can easily take the place of the worship of God. This path will lead to destruction. But, if we keep possessions in their proper place, we can enjoy and use them as God intended. They are for our benefit, not for our worship.

F. Group Discussion Questions

1. Does it make any difference how we get our money? (Proverbs 10:2a; 16:8; 28:6)
2. Why is it dangerous to depend on possessions instead of on God? (Proverbs 11:14a; 11:28a)
3. What is greed?
4. In what ways are youth greedy?

5. Read what Proverbs says about greed. (Proverbs 11:26a; 15:27a; 28:22; 8:25)
6. Do we have a responsibility to the poor? (Proverbs 11:25a; 14:21b; 21:13; 28:27)
7. What should our attitude toward possessions and money be?
8. How can we keep ourselves from being materialistic?

G. Closing

The proper attitude toward money and possessions is that of a steward (Matthew 25:14). The steward is a manager of property, not the owner. God is the true owner of all we have; we are simply the managers.

When we take our hard-earned money and deposit it in the bank, the banker becomes the steward of our money. We expect him to invest it wisely; and anytime we want it back, we expect it returned with interest.

In the same way, God has given us His wealth. We are managers of His possessions and His money. At any time, He can require them and expect us to return to Him with interest what He has entrusted to us. God is not to serve us, but we are to serve Him. Tithing is a reminder of our dependence on God. It is not the end of our responsibility, it is the beginning.

It is not wrong to have possessions as long as your possessions don't control you. Following are some good things to keep in mind concerning money and possessions:

1. **Earn All You Can.** Although we must be careful not to gain money at the expense of our spiritual and physical health, or the expense of someone else's spiritual or physical health, we are to gain all we can through honest work. We are to make the best of what God has given us in the way of talents and abilities.
2. **Save All You Can.** Do not throw precious talents and money away. Spend only that which is necessary, saving the rest.
3. **Give All You Can.** Don't think that you have done anything by gaining or saving. All this is nothing if you don't go one step further. You must also be a giver.

Close with prayer, asking God to be Lord of our possessions.

WHAT SHALL
YOU PROFIT
IF YOU GAIN THE
WHOLE WORLD
AND FORFEIT
YOUR SOUL?
Matt. • 16:26

WE NEED TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER

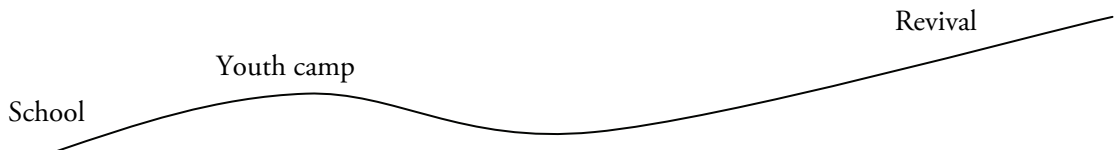
By Mark Pitcher

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—The Christian life is not to be lived in isolation. It is important for youth to understand that they must support each other in the Christian walk.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This session will discuss the importance of supporting each other in Christianity and teach youth practical ways to help each other daily.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Sometimes we think that we must live the Christian life all by ourselves. But the truth is that no one should try to be a Christian alone. Scripture tells us that we are to support one another in the daily walk with Jesus. We need to realize that there is strength in numbers. We must rely on each other for prayer and support. Sometimes just knowing that a friend is praying for you can give encouragement at a difficult time.
4. Material Needed—Pencils, Paper.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. History-in-a-Minute. Divide the group into groups of three persons each. Give each member of the groups 60 seconds to tell their entire life history. At the end of 180 seconds (3 minutes), all three persons should have shared their life's story.
2. Name Game. Have the entire group sit in a circle. (Larger groups may want to divide into two or more circles.) The person beginning this game chooses a creative name for himself. Example: If the first person's name is George, he might introduce himself as "Good George". Then, Person 2 must introduce herself and then say the name of the first person - "My name is Happy Hanna. This is Good George." When you get to the last person in the circle, this person must introduce himself and every person in the circle, working his way back to the first person in the circle.
3. Divide into groups of three persons in each group. Give each person a piece of paper and a pencil. Allow time for each person to draw a map or chart of his spiritual life within the past year. An example might look like this:



Allow time for each youth to share his map with the other members of the group.

4. Group Singing.

C. Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)

A few years ago, Reuben Welch wrote a book titled *We Really Do Need Each Other*. When it comes to living the Christian life, we really do need each other. That does not mean that Jesus is not enough for us. It does mean that Jesus works through those around us. We find strength and support in our friends when we rely on them to help us in our spiritual lives. While it is true that we want to be like people we admire, it is also true that we usually become like the people we spend most of our

time with. So, if the people you spend most of your time with are walking with Jesus, there is a much greater chance that you will do the same.

This means that it matters how you treat each other. Scripture tells us that we are to build up each other and not tear each other down. Let's think about that for a minute. Let's list some of the common things you hear each other say, and decide whether they are "Building up" or "Tearing down" statements.

Make two lists on the board or paper: 1) Building Up; 2) Tearing Down. Encourage the group to give you statements, phrases, or names that are commonly used. List them in the proper place.

Now just for fun, (but also to make a point), ask a couple of the youth to speak with each other using all the items listed in the "tearing down" column. The topic of conversation should be church, but they should use the names, phrases and descriptions to describe each other as they talk about church. (Allow three to five minutes.)

Allow the whole group to react to this situation. Ask questions like: 1) How did it make you feel to hear them talking to each other that way? 2) If you were a new youth in the group, would you want to come back? 3) Was there anything that happened to help either of the two persons to grow spiritually?

Now choose two more youth to speak using the "building up" list. Follow up by asking for the group to answer the same questions.

Sometimes we say things to each other and do not even realize we are doing damage. We really do need each other in order to build each other up, not to tear each other down.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Why is it that some people say unkind things to other people?
2. If people said only negative remarks to you, how would you feel?
3. How would you feel if someone used some of the phrases you use to describe others, to describe you?
4. What would happen to a youth group that communicated only with "tearing down" statements?
5. What would happen to a youth group that communicated only with "building up" statements?

E. Bible Discovery

1. Romans 12:10—Our love for one another in the church is necessary because we are members of the same family. With God as our Father and Jesus as our older brother, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We cannot act as strangers. We should be part of the family in the church. What difference would it make in our youth group if we all honored everyone else above ourselves? Isn't this the way Jesus lived?
2. Romans 15:5-7—We must be very careful to accept one another. This doesn't just happen by accident. It takes effort. It requires that our thoughts should be for each other and not just for ourselves. People are far more likely to grow in their faith if they worship in an atmosphere of love and acceptance rather than a negative, faultfinding atmosphere. What do we say to the world when we do not live in harmony?

3. John 15:12—God has created us to love one another. This is His plan for His children. This is our task. If everyone in our youth group loved each other the same way that Jesus loves, how would we change?

According to these scriptures, what should our youth group be like? Make a list of phrases or words that could be used by a “best” youth group. How does our group, as it presently is, match up with the way it should be?

F. Closing

We all need help in living for Jesus. It is important that you help one another. You can do that in a variety of ways:

1. You can be with each other at school. Remember there is strength in numbers.
2. You can show acts of kindness to each other.
3. You can use “building up” instead of “tearing down” words and actions.

As Ephesians 4:2 says, *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”* We must remember that the way we treat other Christians is very important because:

1. The way we treat each other tells the world that we are different (if we treat each other right).
2. The way we treat each other makes a difference in the way each person feels about himself.
3. The way we treat each other is not suggested by Jesus, it is commanded by Him. He cares very much about this.
4. The way we treat each other is a sign that tells whether or not we are really following Jesus.

Before we leave this meeting, let's divide into groups of two and make a prayer commitment to each other for a determined length of time (one month, six months, etc.). In each group, decide on a time during the day that you will pray for each other. For example, “I will pray for you at 10:30 or 13:30”, etc. The important thing is that each person knows that he/she is being prayed for by someone else. We have been called by Jesus to live for Him. If we support each other and treat each other like Jesus would, we can show the world that Jesus really does make a difference.

INCREASING YOUR FAITH

By Doug Runyan

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—God will provide all the faith we need.
2. Goal of the Lesson—This lesson should help young people understand that faith is a gift from God, and that His Word (written, spoken, and experienced) is the foundation of a personal faith.
3. Overview of the Lesson—Young people feel that they must experience something or be able to discover it with their senses (hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, feeling) before they can accept it. For this reason, they need to develop a foundation for believing rather than just being told, “This is how it is.” The same is true of their faith in God. In order to really believe, they must learn from the Bible and experience the witness of the Holy Spirit in their lives.
4. Materials Needed—Handkerchief.

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Name Game. Almost any size group can play this game. When possible, the young people must sit in a circle. The first person begins by saying the first and surname of someone. The next player has three seconds to say the first and surname of another person whose first name begins with the first letter of the previous person's surname. (For example: the first person says “Elvis Presley,” and the second person says “Pete Manley”. When someone cannot think of a name in three seconds, he is out of the game. If you have time, you can keep going around the circle until only one person is left. That person is the winner.
2. Group Singing.

C. *Leader Presentation (Present in your own words.)*

Faith—how to get it, how to keep it, how to give it away—is something that we all struggle with. We sing songs about faith moving mountains and about it giving us the victory. But very few of us know how to get it, how to increase it, or even how to keep it.

Let us look at the faith of one youth believer. Todd, Craig, and Dela are young people who attend the same church. Todd does not go to church very often but he has gone forward at the close of this service to give his life to God. Todd is struggling, and Craig and Dela are trying to help him pray.

Todd said that since he failed to live as a Christian after he went to camp last summer, he just does not have enough faith in himself. Craig said that his faith should be in God, not in himself. Todd said that he believes in God; he just cannot understand why his faith is so weak that he cannot resist temptations. Dela suggested that they pray together until Todd feels an increase of his faith in God. Craig tells Todd to think positively and that will increase his faith. Dela suggests that they hold hands, sway back and forth, and sing “Faith is the Victory” until Todd feels his faith is stronger.

Todd is just not sure what he should do.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. How well did Craig and Dela do at helping Todd?
2. Go through and discuss each piece of advice that Craig and Dela gave to Todd.
3. Have you ever felt like Todd? If so, explain how you felt.
4. What would you tell Todd if you were counseling him?
5. Can you remember things you have been told or have read about faith?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

1. Ephesians 2:8—*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* Faith makes salvation ours through God’s grace (love that is not earned). This salvation and the faith that makes it ours are both gifts from God. It is important to see that God supplies even our faith to believe.
2. Hebrews 11:1—*“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”* In an indirect way, Paul is emphasizing the important part that scriptures have in our faith. The things we are “sure of” are what God tells us in the Bible will happen (for example: The Second Coming of Christ). The uncertainty in the word “hope” refers to not knowing the exact time when these things will happen. The phrase “being . . . certain of what we do not see” means our faith depends on and is partly the result of events recorded in the Scriptures, such as the creation of the world, the great flood, the birth of Christ, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven. Our faith is not meant to be a substitute for knowledge but is to begin with a knowledge of the Bible. Without a knowledge of God’s Word, there can be no genuine faith.
3. Romans 10:17—*“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”* Paul tells us that faith is also a result of hearing the story of Jesus and responding to His Spirit, who speaks to our hearts.

F. Group Discussion Questions

1. Is faith only just believing?
2. Can we be saved without faith?
3. What is to be the foundation of our faith?
4. Who or what is to be the object of our faith?
5. How do we receive faith?
6. Have these scriptures changed any of your ideas about faith? If so, how?

G. Closing

We all have questions about faith. In this lesson, we have learned that faith is a gift from God and that God and His love and power should be who and what we have faith in. Here are some things that we can do to increase our faith in God:

1. READ, STUDY, AND MEMORISE THE SCRIPTURES. Remember what Paul said in Romans 10:17, “. . . *faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*” As you read, study, and memorize scripture, your faith in God will increase. A good place to begin is to read, study, and memorize Hebrews 11, the Faith Chapter. In Hebrews 11 you will see what faith is and the result of faith in the lives of people.

2. **LISTEN VERY ATTENTIVELY TO THE PASTOR'S SERMONS.** Your pastor, who is the spiritual leader of your congregation, spends much time in preparing sermons that will draw you closer to God and help increase your faith in God.
3. **OBEY THE HOLY SPIRIT AS HE DIRECTS YOU THROUGH THE BIBLE AND THE PREACHED WORD.** There is no substitute for obedience. Real people of faith are those who obey the Holy Spirit when He reveals the truth from the Word of God. The more you obey God, the more He will increase your faith.
4. **PUT YOUR FAITH INTO ACTION.** Faith is something you do. God wants us to be people of faith who are believers who will really live for Him. Do you have faith? Then use it at home, school, and work. Live your life according to biblical principles. When you read a promise from God's Word, say: "I believe that is true. I will claim it as my promise. I will live like that promise is true."

Close in Prayer.



THE SUCCESS SYNDROME

By Ed Robinson

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—Success in life-style and vocation are determined by God's standard of excellence.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To assist youth in thinking through life-style and vocational decisions in the light of what it means to be “successful.”
3. Summary of the Lesson—Some people judge the “success” of others by their possessions. For others, success is determined by self-actualization. “Be all that you can be” or “Find something that brings you a sense of fulfillment” is popular advice to young people. While these are not really wrong, they don't measure up to God's standard of success in life. Giving of oneself to the Lord and consequently to others is the standard. As young people make the decisions of life-style and vocation, God's standard of success/excellence must be used.

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Bedlam. This game requires four teams of equal size. Each team goes to one corner of a room or playing field. On a signal each team attempts to move as a group as quickly as possible diagonally across to the opposite corner, performing an announced activity as they go. The first team to get all its members into the corner wins the round. The first round can simply be running to the opposite corner. Following that, a number of possible activities like walking backward, piggybacking, hopping, skipping, and so forth, can be attempted. There is guaranteed to be mass bedlam as the groups criss-cross in the centre and go “over and through” others to become winners.
2. Sentence Completion. Depending on the size of the group, this activity can be done with all participants or in small groups of five or six. Write the following phrases on the board or flip chart:
 - If money were no object, tomorrow I would go out and buy ...
 - If I could be anything I wanted to be, I would be a ...Have each person complete the phrase. Some of the responses will be funny, some revealing, some even mundane. Remember the responses to use later in the lesson.
3. Group Singing.

C. *Leader's Presentation (Present in your own words.)*

Success and excellence are important to most of us. Many people judge success in terms of money, power and possessions. When a person receives a promotion at work, or rises to the top of the class with straight A's, or is able to buy a new car, he or she is often considered successful. However, we need to ask, “Who determines what the standards for success and excellence are? Is it the media? Is it the culture in which we live? Is it determined by our decisions? Is one person's mediocrity another person's excellence?” As Christians, it is important that we allow God's standard of excellence (notice we're not saying perfection) be our criteria for judging whether or not we are successful.

Let's look at the example of David. David is a Christian and a recent graduate from law school. He has done very well in school and has been offered positions with three different law firms. The first is a high-paying job that deals mostly with big corporations. The second job is an average-paying

position with a small firm dealing with civil cases. The last job is with a public defender's office that deals primarily with the poor. David has to decide which position to take. There are advantages and virtues to each position. David wants to be a "successful" lawyer. He wants to do excellent work.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. If you were giving advice to David, what would you say?
2. Can you think of some good reasons why he should take Job #1? Job #2? Job #3?
3. What do you think are some important questions David should ask before he decides?
4. In your opinion, does it really matter which job David takes? Why or why not?

E. Bible Discovery

1. 1 Timothy 6:17-19—Paul writes that riches are not a biblical standard of success. Rather, good deeds and generosity - giving of oneself and of one's means - are standards for the successful Christian. If David chooses his job primarily on the basis of money, he is making a mistake.
2. Mark 10:42-45—Getting to the top by stepping on others is not God's idea of success. In fact, God condemns such a view of success as evil (see James 5). Jesus states that the successful Christian is that one who serves best. Perhaps one of the questions David needs to ask is, "Which position will allow me to be the best servant I can be?" It is not an easy question, but one that each Christian must ask of himself.
3. Matthew 25:19-21-- In this parable the key is not the amount of the talents, for the master said the same to the servant who had the four talents. The key to success in this context is how the gifts are used. The servants were successful when they took what had been given to them and put it to its best use for the master's business. The one servant was rejected because of his lack of initiative in using what was given. If he had doubled his one talent, he probably would have received the same commendation as the others.

Part of God's standard for success is using that which He has given to us to its greatest potential for God's kingdom and not for our own promotion. Maybe David should ask himself, "In what job could I best use the skills God has given me to do His work in this world?"

F. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. From these scriptures (and others you might think of), what standards of success would you make for yourself in choosing a vocation? A style of living?
2. What kinds of things keep us from using God's standards of success? Could peer pressure? Could the love of money and the things money can buy? The need for security? The need to be in charge?
3. If you have given any thought to what you'd like to do for a vocation, has thinking about the biblical idea of success altered or strengthened those thoughts? How?
4. In the light of these scriptures, how should David decide?

G. Closing

The decisions concerning what life-style we are to have and what vocation we are to choose are two very important choices. To a large degree, they will determine where and how we spend our lives. These kinds of decisions are too important to be made with little or no thought. It is very easy to get sucked into the success syndrome where we allow peers, media, and culture to set the standards for our decisions. After all, nobody wants to be a failure. We all want to be successful. However, it is absolutely essential that Christians consider God's standards of success as we make these important choices. Here are some important guidelines to follow:

1. God judges success according to how we use the gifts He has given us to do His work and how obedient we are to His leading. Building the kingdom of God is our number one priority. Making a difference in the world is our goal.
2. Success isn't determined by who is the most powerful. Jesus said that a servant will be the most successful. The level of investment of our lives in serving others is the measuring stick of success.
3. Money or possessions cannot bring success. Success is in the riches of good deeds and in a generous spirit.

In the light of these guidelines, can you think of a “successful” person you know personally? What characterizes his or her life? Can you use that person as a model for your own life? That doesn't mean that you will choose the same vocation as your model. It simply means you will make your choices according to the same standard of success. As Christians walking on the road of life, may we walk on the excellent way of God's criteria.

Close with prayer.

DRUGS: USE, ABUSE, OR REFUSE

By Mark Gilroy

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—Drugs are harmful and to be avoided.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To help your youth take seriously the call to “say no” to drugs, and help them formulate strategies for staying clear of drugs.
3. Overview—Do your youth know how destructive and harmful drugs are? Probably! Many know quite a bit about drugs. So they avoid them, right? Wrong! For example, many youth believe that drinking alcoholic beverages is bad for their health, but drink anyway! Your challenge is to probe behind the facts about drugs and discuss with your group why youth take drugs. From there, you can begin to develop with them effective ways to say no to drugs.
4. Materials—pencils, paper or note cards, and tape.

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Back Snatching. Pass out two note cards, a pencil, and a piece of tape to every student. Ask them to make up a name or code word for themselves. They should write this on one of the note cards without anyone else seeing what they write. Now have everyone move to the edges of the room, tape their code name to their back, and put their backs to the wall. When you give the signal, everyone must move around the room, trying to write down as many code names as they can see (*back snatching*) without letting others see what is written on their back. Set a time limit of about two minutes, and see who gets the most names.
2. Blind queue-up. Quickly divide your class into two or more groups. You need at least four persons per team for this game to work. When the youth are divided, ask everyone to close his eyes. Emphasize, “No peeking!” Now instruct them to queue up from tallest to shortest, making absolutely no noise! When the group thinks they are finished, they should call out, “Done.” Tell the other groups to keep going, just in case the first team is not in correct order. To win, a team must be the first finished *in proper sequence*.
3. Teaching Option. If you have a police officer in your church, or someone else who is knowledgeable on drugs, invite him or her to help out with this lesson.
4. Group Singing.

C. *Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)*

1. Are drugs a problem at your school? If so, what are the most common drugs used?
2. Let's make a list. What are reasons people use drugs? (*Draw out responses to this question. Probe for answers like: They don't get along with their parents, etc.*)
3. Let's make another list. What are reasons people *don't* use drugs?

D. *Bible Discovery*

Most forms of drug abuse are not mentioned specifically in Scripture. The abuse of alcohol is of course mentioned on numerous occasions. Let's look at these passages in order to draw out *principles* to live by.

1. Proverbs 23:29-35—The issue here is “designer wine,” wine that is mixed for maximum impact. Note verses 33-34 and the images presented there. The description could fit that of many various drug users.
2. Galatians 5:19-23—Three words should be noted from these verses. Obviously *drunkenness* is not acceptable in the Christian's life because it is part of the sinful nature. *Debauchery* often has a sexual connotation. But at its heart is unrestrained pleasure seeking - the “party” attitude. Both of these first two words are in sharp contrast to the *self-control* called for in verse 23.
3. Ephesians 5:15-18—The overriding thought of these verses is to live wisely and carefully in these evil and dangerous days. One of the key ways to be careful is not to get drunk, which leads to debauchery (the “party” word again).

E. Discussion Starters

What follows are five case studies. Each of them is based on a true experience. Read each one and ask your students to volunteer possible responses they could make to help the person. If your class likes to act out situations, assign two students to each case to role-play it before the class.

1. Your younger sister (age 11) tells you that she and three of her friends drank some alcohol while she was at a friend's for a sleep-over. She kind of liked it at the time (the taste was not very nice) but felt terrible in the morning, both physically and guilt-wise.
2. A friend of yours, who is a great athlete, makes four errors in one sports game. He's such a good player normally, so nobody can believe it. However, you hear several guys joking later about what he was “on.” He comes to church sometimes but hasn't been very involved.
3. A new girl moves to town and starts coming to your youth group. She is fairly shy, so she really isn't that involved yet. You don't know that she is taking drugs or anything, but you notice that she is hanging around with kids at school who do.
4. A friend of yours is constantly left at home alone. He is a nice guy, but he has recently started using drugs “just for fun”. You have told him before that you think he is heading for trouble. “My parents say it's OK as long as I don't get in trouble with the police,” he says.
5. She has been a good friend since the two of you were in grade three. She just turned 16 and for the first time is showing signs of rebellion against her parents and being a part of church. “Let's smoke dagga, or snort some coke, or do something just one time,” she says to you. “We never have any excitement, and I want to see what it is like.”

F. Closing

1. Posters—Quickly review today's lesson. Highlight the lesson focus: Drugs are *harmful* and to be *avoided*. Now pass out a poster board or paper to each youth or to small groups of youth. Have them come up with slogans or advertisement campaigns or other illustrations that would convince others to avoid drugs. Point to your lists of reasons youth *do* and *do not* use drugs as suggestions. As incentive, you can make this activity a contest, providing a prize, and posting the winning poster in your church, or simply post all posters in your classroom for the next few weeks. If you are short on time, make this a take-home project with youth bringing their posters back next week.
2. Personal Reflection—Have your students close their eyes and bow their heads. Ask them these questions:

- a. After listing why *others* take drugs, is there a particular area from that list where you are vulnerable and open to drug use?
- b. What do you need to do, or how can you get help, so that you will not be vulnerable to drug use?

There are three ways to respond to drugs. You can use, abuse, or refuse. Some people believe you can do the first, use, without moving into abuse. However, the much wiser and safer position is to refuse. Are you willing to make a commitment to avoid drug use? If so, you don't have to do it alone. God will strengthen you. Talk to Him right now about it.

3. Final Support - Keep the same prayerful attitude going. Pledge to your youth your own willingness and availability to talk with them if they are struggling with drugs. You may want to mention other adults from your church who would have the same willingness (be sure to get their permission before giving out their names). Then ask all those youth who are willing to support the entire group and who are committed to having a positive peer pressure against drug use to step forward and join hands with you. Consider posting a sheet of paper that says, "WE SAY NO ... TOGETHER," and have willing youth sign it!

Further Projects. If you have youth who want to do more, you might be able to make arrangements with the children's Sunday School teacher for a few of your youth to make presentations to the children of your church. Work with them on short five-minute presentations and visual aids. This might even be done in a Sunday morning or Sunday evening church service. Lastly, remember that this is not a one-shot lesson but needs follow-up!

NOW IS NOT FOREVER

By Randy Craker

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—Youth need to know that life's difficulties are not forever, and suicide is never a valid alternative for dealing with their problems.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To encourage youth to confront the issue of suicide so that they can be helpers to those who might be contemplating it, as well as to give help to any in your group who are inwardly weighing options as they wrestle with their own problems.
3. Overview—Suicide is the No. 1 cause of death among youth in many countries. It is an issue that is often overlooked until it happens in your community, school, or church. Dialogue needs to start before that happens so that such tragedy can be averted. The problems of our society are such that some youth are not sure life is worth living, and causes them to question the future and wonder if it is worth going on.
4. Materials Checklist—Bibles, paper, pencils, two sacks.

B. Suggested Opening Activities

(Each of these activities is an opportunity for the group to have fun together. However in each of them, someone feels left out. Before the lesson is complete, they will have an opportunity to share their feelings, and through it we can get a glimpse of how some youth in our world might be hurting.)

1. Animal Upset. On individual pieces of paper write down the names of animals. Make two copies of each animal (three if your group is 15 or more). Then on one slip of paper write the word “duck,” but do not make a match. Distribute a slip to everyone in the group, being sure that every animal has at least one partner except for the duck. At your signal, everyone begins making the noise of the animal on their slip as they try to find their partner, get with them, and sit on the floor. The “duck” person goes on quacking without ever finding a partner.
2. Goofy Relay. Ask two people to choose up teams. Clue them in ahead of time to choose the people last who would normally be chosen first. Pick the ones first who might be chosen last. Take these two teams and play “Goofy Relay”. You need two sacks. In the sacks place slips of paper with goofy things to do (*find someone with a shaved head and scratch his head; sit on the floor, cross your legs, sing a song; take off your shoes and then put them on the wrong foot; touch all four corners of the room; etc.*). Make up crazy things and put the same instructions in each sack. On one of the slips in each sack write: “Go sit alone somewhere and do not take part in this game.” At your signal, the first person in each group takes out one of the slips, reads it, and then completes the action. As soon as the action is completed, the next person on the team draws a slip from the bag, reads it, and completes the action. And on it goes. The first team that completes all of the tasks in their bag wins.
3. Group Singing. Sing a song or two that emphasizes our togetherness.

C. Leader's Presentation (Present in your own words.)

There are many people who think life is not worth living. Problems at home and school seem so large that they fear life will never be any different. Thoughts begin to surface like “I'd be better off dead”. Tonight we are going to talk about suicide and learn how we can help our friends who might

be thinking of it as an option in solving their problems. Let's begin with a true/false quiz to see how much do you know about suicide.

1. In many countries, the number one cause of death among youth is suicide.
2. Only insane people commit suicide.
3. A person who has tried it once is likely to try again.
4. The afternoon hours are the most likely time that youth take their life.
5. A note is always left behind.
6. Talking about suicide could put ideas in people's heads.
7. A person who has made up his mind can't be talked out of it.
8. People who talk about it don't ever do it.
9. A person will usually give warnings.
10. Suicide is generally a means of communication.

(Familiarize yourself with the answers and let your group be involved in any discussion that they want to offer. They may want to share some experiences or observations.)

1. TRUE. In many countries, suicide is the number one cause of death among youth. Even where it is not number one, it is one of the top causes.
2. FALSE. People with no history or indication of mental disorder take their lives. Deep depression over a life situation becomes more than they are willing to handle.
3. TRUE. The hardest attempt is the first one. If the attempt does not bring the attention or the change that is desired, another attempt may follow.
4. TRUE. The hours of 3:00 p.m. (15h00) to 6:00 p.m. (18h00) are the time of highest frequency. Maybe it is because that's the end of the school day, and all of their friends leave them. Maybe they come home, the house is empty and they seem very much alone.
5. FALSE. Many times the only statement that is left is the act itself.
6. FALSE. If you sense a person is really down, you are mentioning something he no doubt has already given at least passing thought to. By letting him know you are aware of what he might be thinking, you demonstrate that you understand and really care about him.
7. FALSE. Death is frightening even to a person contemplating suicide. To hear that there might be another answer could help him to consider other solutions. But never make it trivial. Don't say, "That's stupid," or "Grow up." Talk in ways that let him know you care and are trying to understand. Say something like: "You have lots of trouble getting along with your parents, don't you?" or "You really loved Steve, didn't you, and it broke your heart when he broke up with you?" It doesn't matter how you feel about the matter, it is how *they* feel. Understanding talk can make a difference.
8. FALSE. Often their threats are a call for help; and when help never comes, they may carry it out just to show someone that they were serious.
9. TRUE. Nearly 80 percent of the time some clear warning signals are given. But you must be alert to pick up on them. One young man asked a friend, "If you were going to commit suicide, how would you do it?" His friend told him, and he went out and did it just like his friend had lined it out. Another young man asked his best friend, "If you were going to end your life, would you tell your best friend?" His friend thought a moment and said, "Yes, I think I would." After another moment he changed his mind, "No, maybe I would be too ashamed to." Instead of telling what was on his mind, the one who asked the question went

out and took his life. Some clues to watch for are long periods of depression, dropping out of everything, inability to sleep or eat for long periods, talking often about death, drastic changes in personality, making threats about taking their life, giving up on life. One or two of these may not signal anything, but several might. **TRUST YOUR JUDGEMENT.** Tell someone - parent, friends, teachers, or your pastor. It is better to be over concerned than to ignore it and live with regret.

10. **TRUE.** A statement is made in death that was often never listened to in life.

11. **TRANSITION:** But what point is really being made by suicide? Is it worth it? How do you help a friend who may be contemplating it?

D. Discussion

Break the group up into groups of three. Assign half of the groups to come up with a real-life issue that might cause a youth to consider suicide. Have the other groups put together a list of reasons why suicide is not the answer to any life problem. Then let one group share its problem and another deal with it. Help everyone see that the one who feels overwhelmed by the problem needs lots of support and patience.

E. Bible Discovery

1. Matthew 26:69-27:10—Here are the stories of two men who experienced similar life circumstances. Both were followers of Jesus. Both, after being warned of their upcoming actions, went ahead and did wrong anyway - Judas betrayed Jesus; Peter denied Him. Both felt like miserable failures. But their responses to life were different: Peter went out and wept bitterly (26:75); Judas went out and hanged himself (27:5).
2. These are examples of feelings of failure. There are many factors that lead youth to want to give up on life. However, whatever is happening, remember **-NOW IS NOT FOREVER.** Peter came back, and in Acts 4:18-20 the name he could not utter to a little servant girl was the name he preached boldly. Judas never had an opportunity to see a better day.

F. Discussion Questions

(Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. At the moment of failure what did each of these men feel?
2. Was failure easy for Peter? (Check Matthew 26:34-35)
3. Why do you suppose one chose to take his life and the other hung on through the dark hours?
4. How did some of you feel during the games tonight when you were rejected, isolated, and asked to go off alone? Are those feelings constant for some people in your world?
5. Is “now” forever in regard to any of our life situations?

G. Closing

Go over these basic points with your youth. Let them know that this has not been an in-depth look at this subject but an opportunity for them to be aware of a real-life issue confronting many young people these days. If a friend seems to show signs that he might be considering suicide:

1. Listen with understanding.
2. Tell someone and get him or her to help your friend.

3. Go out of your way in the days ahead to call, see, and encourage him or her.

And remember—NOW IS NOT FOREVER-BUT SUICIDE IS.

Remind or tell your youth that you are available to listen if they are feeling overwhelmed by situations or circumstances in their lives.

Close with prayer.

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES: THE DANGER OF FALSE RELIGIONS

By Mark K Gilroy

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—We must be on guard against the many false teachings that confront us.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To acquaint youth with specific information regarding cults and non-Christian religions, and to give them guidelines for determining whether a teaching is true or false.
3. Overview—Christians are confronted on all sides with cults like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses; groups that practice spiritism, ancestor worship, witchcraft, and Satanism; other major world religions like Islam and Buddhism; and with the many New Age-type religions that have roots in Hindu/Eastern thought. What can we do to guard ourselves and our youth against such an onslaught? We need both a positive approach (commitment to studying the Word and being closely involved with a community of believers), and a negative approach (warnings against non-Christian teachings). Use your youth's curiosity as you tackle this teaching assignment!
4. Materials Checklist—pencils or pens for each student, paper, Bibles.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Human Knots. Have everyone stand and get into a circle. (If you have more than 12 youth, divide into groups of 8 to 10 students.) Each person should grab a hand of 2 other people. The two hands cannot be the hands of 1 person or the hands of someone right next to the person. Everyone must try to untangle into a single circle, without letting go of the hands they are holding.
2. Human Ticktacktoe. Set up nine chairs in three rows of three - to serve as the ticktacktoe grid. Divide your group into two teams. Each team takes its turn by sending one person to sit in one of the chairs - a human X or O. The first team to get three in a row wins. Without labels for X and O the game is more difficult than it might seem. To make it even tougher, set a time limit for teams to make their moves, and allow no group consulting.
3. What Do You Know? Bring a soft ball to the meeting. Have everyone sit in a circle. Announce that today's subject is "Cults," and you want to find out what the group knows before getting started. Say something about cults that you knew before studying this lesson, then toss the ball to someone else. This person shares one bit of information he or she knows, and then passes the ball on to someone else to continue the process. Let this continue for five minutes or so until answers start being repeated. Thank the youth for their input and let them know they will be tested further about their knowledge of cults!
4. Group Singing.

C. Leader's Presentation (Present in your own words.)

Begin by giving your class the test that is at the end of this lesson. You can either photocopy the test and hand it out, or simply read out the question and have them write their answers on a piece of paper. Then, after giving them 7 to 10 minutes to answer all the questions, review the answers together. The discussion questions in section D are a follow-up to the test.

Test Answers:

1. e; 2. true; 3. e; 4. true; 5. e; 6. true; 7. a; 8. f; 9. c; 10. e; 11. true; 12. false; 13. c; 14. b; 15. b

D. Discussion Questions

1. What surprised you from this test? Why?
2. What exposure have you personally had with people or literature from cults, the occult, or non-Christian religions? What were some of your reactions?
3. Why do you think so many people are attracted to cults?
4. How concerned should we be with the growth of cults? the occult? non-Christian religions?
5. As we move into our Bible study, can you think of any ways that you can protect yourself and others in this group from getting involved in a cult group?

E. Bible Discovery

To introduce the activity, divide your class into four groups and give each group a number from one to four. Tell your class that you will go over each of the assignments with the entire class, but that their group is responsible only for the number that you have assigned to them. What follows are the assignments *and* some brief comments on each one for your benefit.

Give your groups about 7 to 10 minutes to prepare their answers to share with the entire class.

1. Assignment One: *Who Is Jesus Christ?* Your group must look up the following passages and answer the question, “Who is Christ?” • John 1: 1 –2 • Hebrews 13:8 • John 10:30 • Matthew 1: 18-23; 11:27 • Philippians 2:6-11. Give an example of how cults answer this question inadequately. *(These scriptures point to the important Christian doctrine that Jesus is God. He was not created, but He existed with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit eternally. He was not merely a good man. He was not simply an example of how God wants us to live. He is God Incarnate. One of the key ways that cults and non-Christian religions stray from accepted Christian truth is in how they look at Jesus. Most view Christ in a positive way. He was a good man. But as God? As One who can save us? No way! That is of course to be expected with non-Christian religions. But with cults that often appear to be and claim to be a part of the Christian faith, we need to be particularly on our guard. A key question to ask anyone who is not of your faith is: Who is Jesus Christ?)*

Example: Jehovah's Witnesses deny that Jesus is equal to God the Father. They believe that Jesus was the first being that God the Father ever created.

2. Assignment Two: *Does Man Really Have a Problem?* Your group must look up the following passages and answer the question, “Does mankind really have a problem?” Use as references: Isaiah 53:6 • Romans 3:23; 5:12-19 • Ephesians 2:1. Give an example of how cults answer this question inadequately. *(The Bible claims that mankind really does have a problem. All men and women have sinned. And all need to be forgiven of their sins, something that cannot be done through human effort. This is a second issue where cults, non-Christian religions, and secular society in general stray from Christian truth. Despite wars, the pain people inflict on each other, and many other hints of man's problem, there is much denial that man is a sinner or that sinning is even an issue. Many view man as inherently good. This is not our cue to ignore the supreme value that God places on each of us humans in His great love for us. We simply must remember*

that we are fallen. We have sinned and are born with a tendency to sin that God alone can deal with.)

Example: In Hindu belief, it is taught that all of us are gods. We need to rid ourselves of consciousness and rationalism, the two conditions that blind us to our true status as deity. This idea is picked up in numerous ways by numerous cults: Christian Science, the New Age Movement, and others.

3. Assignment Three: *How Can We Be Saved?* Your group must look up the following passages and answer the question, "How can we be saved?" Use: John 3:3 • Romans 3:24 • 1 Corinthians 15:4 • Romans 5:6-11 • 1 Corinthians 5:7. Give an example of how cults answer this question inadequately. (*It is through Jesus' death and resurrection that we can be saved. This is the gracious provision of God. Our part? We have the responsibility to repent and believe - to have faith. However, even faith is a gift of God. We are powerless to save ourselves. It is only by the grace of Jesus - Ephesians 28-9. Most cults deny this truth and proclaim that man can save himself through good works -if indeed he even needs to be saved.*)

Example: Mormons believe that everyone will eventually go to heaven through good works (that most will have to perform after they die). However, only Mormons will be allowed into the highest heaven.

4. Assignment Four: *What Is Our Source of Authority?* Your group must look up the following passages and answer the question, "What is our source of authority?" Use: 2 Timothy 3:16-17 • 2 Peter 1:20-21 • Hebrews 4:12 • Isaiah 40:8 • Psalm 119:105 • Deuteronomy 6:11-3. Give an example of how cults answer this question inadequately. (*A cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith centers around the authority and inspiration of Scripture. We affirm that God has spoken to us through the 66 books of our Bible. We don't discourage anyone from explaining the Bible or writing on the messages of the Word. However we do not give any other writing the place of authority or recognize it as a source of inspiration equal to the Bible. Cults are characterized by extrabiblical sources of authority. Some recognize the value of the Bible but feel that it must be understood only in light of their interpretation.*)

Example: Mormons have several other writings that they consider sacred: *The Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, and *Doctrines and Covenants*. Christian Science relies on the writings of Mary Baker Eddy to properly understand the Bible. Their real bible is *Science and Health*.

Conclusion: Conclude this portion of the session by asking someone to read 1 John 4:1-3.

F. Discussion

Many cult members come from Christian backgrounds. Why do people who should know better get involved in such groups? The two biggest reasons are *not belonging* and *unmet needs or hurts*. Here are some examples:

2. "I never fit in at church or school. This group made me feel like I belonged."
3. "When my girlfriend broke up with me, I was so hurt that I was looking for anybody or any group that would just love me."

(After reading this, ask your youth to brainstorm ways we can protect ourselves and each other. Record their ideas as they call them out.)

G. STUDENT RESPONSE

Pass out blank sheets of paper and pencils to your youth. Tell them that a close friend or family member of theirs has joined a cult or non-Christian religion (they should think of an actual group). A person who wants to get out of the group says that he will take a letter from them to their friend or family member. Ask them to write out how they will try to get them to come home.

After youth have had 8 to 10 minutes to write, ask volunteers to share their letters. Don't rush through this. It might be the most meaningful part of the evening. You may consider allowing more time next week to hear everybody's letters.

H. Closing

Ask your youth to prayerfully consider these four questions:

1. Are you committed to knowing what you believe?
2. Have you affirmed Jesus as Lord of your life?
3. Do you take seriously the commands and teachings of the Bible?
4. Are you tied in with a growing group of Christians?

I. OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

This is an excellent lesson to try some creative presentations! Consider asking one or more adults from your church (or youth in your youth group) to visit your class, playing the role of a cult figure. Ask the person to research the group enough so that he can make a pitch to recruit new members, and so that he can answer any questions your group might have. Insert this activity at the beginning of the lesson, and consider adding another week to cover this important subject with your youth.

AND YOU SHALL KNOW THE
TRUTH
AND THE
SHALL MAKE YOU FREE!
JOHN 8:32

CULT TEST

1. A Jehovah's Witness will be considered dead by his family members and church if he ... a. receives a blood transfusion; b. salutes his country's flag; c. donates a kidney; d. believes that Jesus is one with God; e. all of the above
2. True or False: The majority involved in the occult are women, and astrology is the most popular occult practice.
3. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science.... a. claimed her teachings were God's final revelation; b. believed that death and sickness are illusions; c. said that evil doesn't exist and man has never really sinned; d. said that Jesus did not really die but hid in the grave; e. all of the above
4. True or False: Mormons preach against tobacco, caffeine, and premarital sex, and are committed to strong families.
5. The Book of Mormon ...a. claims that American Indians are descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel; b. was reputedly given to Joseph Smith by an angel named Moroni; c. was reportedly translated by Smith with a pair of gold glasses named Urim and Thummin; d. proclaims that man can become a god; e. all of the above
6. T or F: The worship service that is to honor Satan is called the Black Mass.
7. The most difficult religious group to convert to Christianity are ... a. Muslims; b. Buddhists; c. Satanists; d. atheists
8. The New Age Movement teaches... a. all of us are gods; b. you have lived before and will live again; c. there is no death; d. reality is whatever an individual creates; e. none of the above; f. all of the above
9. Jehovah's Witnesses claim Christ is ... a. equal with God the Father; b. created and no different from anyone else; c. a created being who created all other creatures
10. Unitarians deny ... a. the inspiration of Scripture; b. the deity of Christ; c. the need for Jesus to have died on the Cross; d. none of the above; e. all of the above
11. True or False: Mormons believe that salvation will be received only by those who do good works.
12. True or False: Karl Marx, the father of Marxism, set his theories up as a religion.
13. Muhammad taught ... a. that polygamy was a sin; b. that belief in Allah brings salvation; c. that man must pay for his own sins; d. none of the above; e. all of the above
14. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh teaches. . .a. strict abstinence from earthly desires; b. the pursuit of sex, drugs, and other pleasures
15. A Buddhist believes that the way to end suffering is to ... a. learn about the forces of nature; b. desire absolutely nothing; c. practice the martial arts; d. practice yoga; e. none of the above; f all of the above.

ENTERTAINMENT: RIGHT OR WRONG

By Bruce Oldham

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—Our entertainment choices should help us live for Christ, not tempt us or bring evil into our lives.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To encourage youth to evaluate the entertainment choices they make, inform them of biblical standards and Christian values, and give them tools to make choices consistent with what Christ wants for their lives.
3. Overview—If the philosophy of today's society could be boiled down to two words, I believe they would be "Have fun!" Youth are immersed in this culture, making it easy for them to make all their decisions according to how good it makes them feel. Yes, I believe Jesus does want us to enjoy life, yet I do not believe that providing pleasure for us is His primary purpose in our lives. His chief goal is to make us like Him, in holiness and love, and to reconcile the world to Himself. Happiness is a by-product of that process. Every form of entertainment must be evaluated in light of our growth in Christ.
4. Materials Checklist—Bibles, paper, pencils, six cards (or slips of paper), three bowls of mashed potatoes, three towels, some old newspapers, three small round objects.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Mashed Potato Mayhem. Before the session, mix up a batch of mashed potatoes (or other gooey food), enough to fill three bowls. Each of the bowls should be wide and deep enough that a person could fit his entire face inside it. Put a small round object in the bottom of each bowl and pile on the mashed potatoes. Have each team select one person to participate. Ask each participant to put his hands behind his back and get on his knees in front of the bowl. On your signal, they must bend over and put their faces in their bowl to search for the ball with their mouths only, and when they find it, they must lift it out with their mouth.
2. Media Profile. Explain to each team that you are going to give them the names of five people. Their job is to determine without knowing anything but their names what they think would be those persons' favorite: a. song; b. magazine; c. music group; d. book. The five names that you give them are: a. Anthony Athlete; b. Kylie Countryclub; c. Michael Military; d. Matthew Music; e. Carl Christian
3. Divide the group into three groups.

Group One – This group must examine a popular youth book or television show, and describe how the book/show would be different if all the leading characters were Christians.

Group Two. This group must examine a popular youth activity or movie and describe how that activity/movie would be different if the leading characters were Christian.

Group Three: This group must select a secular song and pick out the words or phrases that are inconsistent with what the group perceives to be Christian values. Replace those words, or add to the song as needed, with Christian ideas.

When finished, have them read the description or words of their original show, movie, or song to the whole group, followed by the new description or words they composed.

4. Group Singing.

C. Leader's Presentation (Present in your own words.)

Playing soccer, flying a kite, playing miniature golf, camping, singing - all of these are different ways people have fun! As a youth, you have luxuries that youths in years past rarely had. Isn't progress wonderful! Yet our progress has brought some pitfalls. To fill our leisure time, much is spent every year on television programs, movies, music, and magazines. Few reflect Christian values. How can we be sure our entertainment does not damage our relationship with Christ? Do we have to put up with junk to have fun, or can we decide to reach for the best?

Take Kadri, for example. Kadri has been attending church all his life. His parents are strongly against Kadri attending movies and listening to any music other than Christian music. His family does not have a television because of the immorality of its programs. Though he acts like he agrees with his parents at home, Kadri has begun to think their feelings are crazy. So he attends movies, listens to non-Christian music, and watches TV while he's with friends.

Then there's Lucas. His parents have never set any limits on his entertainment. Lucas has never given a second thought to what he watches or listens to, even after he became a Christian. He goes along with the choices his friends make and thinks that as long as he stays in church and out of trouble, his entertainment choices really don't matter to God.

Finally there's Gilbert. His family has attended church for a long time and has always been concerned that Gilbert chooses what's right. After becoming a Christian, Gilbert began to notice that many songs, shows, books, and movies went against what he believed as a Christian. Though he's not always sure what to do, he listens and watches carefully and talks to his parents and church leaders about what he thinks. It's difficult. Sometimes he wonders if it wouldn't be easier just not to go anywhere or do anything -or just forget trying to choose and just do what feels good.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Which of the three do you think is using the best approach to making wise choices?
2. Why do you think each of them chose his particular way?
3. Which of the three attitudes about choosing most closely resembles your attitude?
4. Which are the strengths in each approach? The dangers?
5. What guidelines should a person use in discerning good and evil in entertainment?

E. Bible Discovery

1. Romans 12:2—The first principle we must use in making good entertainment choices is: *Our entertainment choices must not tempt us to compromise what we believe.* Paul urged us not to live according to the values of the world. When a show, movie, song, or book proclaims a message contrary to God's standards, then we should refuse it.
2. Philippians 4:8—The second principle is: *“What we think about, we become.”* If we put the wrong ideas about life into our minds, our lifestyles will almost always reflect those wrong ideas. Youth who find themselves powerless against temptation or overcome by sin can often be pointed to their choices of what they watched, read, and listened to for the reasons. But it takes more than just asking, “What's wrong with - - -?” Though some things may not seem bad, they may not be good (1 Corinthians 6:12). When we're constantly trying to justify

what we do, rather than deliberately choosing beforehand what is good, we will eventually find a reason to follow what's wrong. We've got to seek and choose the good.

3. Judges 16:16—Delilah tempted Samson to tell her the secret of his great strength. Samson thought he was strong enough to resist Delilah's lures - but he wasn't. He played too near the fire and got burned. Too often we think watching, listening to, or reading certain things won't affect us. Yet the story of Samson, as well as 1 Corinthians 10:12, warns us to be careful. When our entertainment choices begin to tempt us to sin, it's time to flee. Principle No. 3 is: ***“Entertainment must not put us in a position where temptation is strong.”***
4. Hebrews 6:12—Jesus wants us to live a balanced life. Just as “all work and no play” can be boring, “all play and no work” can also waste our potential. When entertainment takes up all our time, it becomes an evil influence. Our last principle is: ***“Entertainment must not dominate our time.”***

F. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

Ask your group to list the most popular youth television shows, movies, songs, and books, and then ask, “Would this entertainment be right for you?” Refer your group back to the principles you discussed in the Bible Discovery. Remind them that some things that may be permissible for them may not be for others. They have to decide for themselves, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and Scripture. Then ask someone to give an example of a specific entertainment choice they have made that helped them be a better person or a stronger Christian.

G. Closing

There are six questions we should ask ourselves when faced with a choice of entertainment: 1) Does it hinder my relationship with Christ? 2) Does it violate the teaching of the Bible? 3) Can it master me? 4) Does it damage my Christian witness? 5) Is it profitable?

Close in prayer.

DATING/COURTING THE WRONG PERSON

By Kendall Franklin

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—God cares about whom we date.
2. Lesson Goal—Show youth the importance of being selective in whom they date/court.
3. Overview—This Bible study is designed to show youth they should use caution and be selective in whom they begin a dating relationship. NB: While dating (a boy spending time alone with a girl) before marriage is practiced in some cultures, it is not universally practiced. If that is the case where you live, adapt the lesson to refer to courting instead.
4. Materials needed—pencils, toothpicks, two small rings.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. If You Love Me, Honey, Smile. Choose someone in the room to be “it.” He or she must go up to someone in the room and say, “If you love me, honey, smile.” The person must reply “I love you, honey, but I just can't smile,” without smiling, or they become “it.” The person who is “it” may do anything (make faces, etc.) except touch.
2. Ring Relay. Divide the group into two lines and give each player a toothpick, which he will place in his mouth. The leader will place a small ring on the toothpick of the players at the head of each queue. It is then passed from toothpick to toothpick until it reaches the end of the queue. If it is dropped before reaching the end, it must be started all over again at the beginning of the queue. The winning team is the one whose ring reaches the end of the queue first.
3. Group Singing.

C. Leader's Presentation (Present in your own words.)

A few years ago, there was a high school student named Sam. Sam was a massive 2 meters tall and weighed 120 kilogram. He was a sports star at his school. His best sport was football, where he played middle forward. Sam was well known throughout the area for his football skills. Sam was the nucleus of the team, and other teams feared him. Sam was the big man at school in more ways than one. He was tough. Many times he got into trouble because he used his great strength unwisely. His will was strong, too, sometimes too strong for his own good. Sam's parents gave him a special hairstyle - the wild look. Even though his hair was longer than most of the girls at his school, no one made fun of him - probably because of his size and strength.

Coaches would come from all over to watch him, trying to recruit him for a major university. During one game against their archrival school, Sam saw a girl from the other school. She was beautiful! So, they started seeing each other. However, the girl Sam noticed was not really a good influence on him. She didn't like his friends, parents, or church group, yet Sam still dated her. His parents were not happy with his choice of girls. They even asked him not to see her, but Sam wouldn't listen.

Sam really shouldn't have dated the girl from the other school. She didn't even believe in Sam's God, she worshiped a god that looked like a fish. She was from a family that wanted nothing to do with Sam's heritage, religion, or people. Yet he still dated her and ended up getting hurt.

This wasn't the end of the story either. When many of the jealous football players from the other school tried to mess him up, Sam beat them with the jawbone of their mascot. But Sam didn't learn. Snubbing several girls from his church, he started dating a girl named Delilah.

After some meetings with the enraged coaches and players of her school, Delilah decided to trick Sam into telling the secret of his strength. She wasn't concerned about Sam or his feelings. She asked him, "Sam, what is the secret to your tremendous football skill and strength?" Three times Sam made up a false answer, and when the whole football team jumped him, he still couldn't figure out that she wasn't the girl for him. Finally Delilah turned on the tears. It got to Sam, and he told her of the vow he had made. Then it happened: Delilah gave Sam a major haircut, which resulted in a total loss of strength and all football skills. Sam lost it all: his hair, his one-sided relationship, his college scholarships, his eyes, and eventually his life. Much of the reason was that he associated with, dated, and married the wrong person.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Is it wrong to date non-Christians?
2. Is it acceptable to date total strangers?
3. Should our parents have any influence or say on *whom* we date?
4. Should you date only someone you would want to marry?

E. Bible Discovery

1. Romans 12:1-2—Pleasing God in all of the aspects of our life includes *dating/courting*. There are standards that we should remember when choosing whom to date. We shouldn't do like the world and date for wrong motives or reasons. We are different from the world; we are above the world. As we follow Him as closely as possible, we will see *whom* He wants us to date. Therefore, dating can be a good and positive experience with His blessing.
2. Psalm 1:1-2—Not all non-Christians are bad, immoral people. There are kind, gentle, friendly, and talented non-Christians. However we cannot walk in the counsel of those who don't know Christ. We are different from those who don't believe. Like Samson, it is too easy to be influenced in a negative way by nonbelievers.
3. 2 Corinthians 6:14-16—Paul probably meant "married" in the term "yoked." This scripture, though, really speaks about a Christian's responsibility to be selective about the persons with whom he spends much of his time. The ultimate criterion for people having things in common is faith in Christ. While we must reach out to the nonbeliever, we must also make sure we depend on other brothers and sisters in Christ for most of our fellowship.

F. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Is it wrong to date non-Christians? (Not all non-Christians are bad people trying to take advantage of dates. Jesus told us we are the "salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13), so we should have relationships with Christians and non-Christians. However, consider this:
 - a. Dating someone in order to make him a Christian is not wise. It is not wise to build a spiritual relationship on the other person. That one then becomes a crutch. Often this

kind of dating leads to misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and possible spiritual complacency.

- b. As Christians, we are different. Paul tells us not to be yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). It would be a mismatch. It's not that we are better than nonChristians, it's just that we are living our lives for a different purpose. They live for self; we live for God. Dating a nonbeliever may lead to confusion, pain, or heartache. Caution to those who do: Don't be tricked by your emotions. It is easy to be deceived.

If you get in the habit of dating a non-Christian, the chances are great that you will marry one. That is wrong (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). Don't get into a bad habit.)

2. Should our parents have any influence or say in whom we date? (Hopefully we will have good enough relations with our parents that we will look to our parents for advice and at times even approval. There is nothing better than parents who really like a date that you like. Samson went against his parents' wishes and objections, and both times they were right. He should have listened. Remember: "Honor your father and your mother" - Exodus 20:12.)
3. Should you only date someone you want to marry? (Dating is preparation for marriage. One way in which we find out what kind of person we want to marry is by dating different kinds of people. Dates can show us a lot about whom we will want to marry eventually. We should always treat all dates with respect as if they were to be our marriage partner They were created by God, so we must love them as He would. Treat each one with dignity and respect.)

G. Closing - Directed Prayer. Ask your youth to pray silently for the following things:

1. That God will be Master of your dating life.
2. That God will bless your dating experiences.
3. That God will show you the right people to date.
4. That you will be receptive to His guidance.
5. That you will be an encouragement to your dates.

Remind them - Be selective in whom you date. It is important!

EMOTIONS: INDICATORS OR DICTATORS?

By Steven Scott

A. *Leader's Guidelines*

1. Key Idea—God designed our emotions to be indicators, not dictators, in our life.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To teach youth that our emotions should not be allowed to rule the actions and decisions of our life.
3. Overview—Our youth live in a world of fluctuating emotions. It seems sometimes they are high, and a few minutes later they are low. Their actions and decisions often change just as quickly. Many youth do not realize that they do not have to act like they feel. Often youth feel trapped by their roller coaster emotional lives. Frequently they are ashamed or afraid of feelings they have because they don't believe they have control of the resulting actions. This lesson will show your youth that they have responsibility for their actions that result from legitimate emotions. Emotions are God-given, and youth should not deny them. However, they need not indulge the emotions by their actions of response.
4. Materials Checklist—bag of small balloons, football or volleyball or any soft round object.

B. *Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)*

1. Balloon Pop Relay. For this relay you will need one balloon for each team. The object is to see which team can pop their balloon first (choose small balloons). Each team member is allowed one breath into the balloon, and then he must pass it on to the next person. If air escapes while passing the balloon, encourage the team to continue. Once everyone has had a turn, start over again if the balloon has not popped. Be prepared for stubborn balloons that may not want to pop. In that circumstance, declare the winner to be the team with the largest balloon.
2. Emotional Charades. Divide your youth into several groups, and have the group all sit an equal distance from you. Then call one person from each group to come to you. You will tell them a word to be acted out. Once they hear the word from you, they are to run back to their team and act it out. Once the team correctly guesses the word, the original person must race back to you. The first team to send their person back to you wins that round. As the leader, choose words of emotion to be acted out. Here are some ideas: *happy, sad, overjoyed, grief, angry, exhausted, love, hate.*
3. Feet Ball. Line two rows of chairs facing each other with about a one meter separation. Have your two teams sit facing each other. The object is for a team to move the ball to their end of the line (goal). Everyone must hold his arms behind his chair. Start the game by dropping the ball in the centre of the line. You will want to have everyone remove his or her shoes as a precaution.
4. Group Singing.

C. *Leader's Presentation (Present in your own words.)*

Emotions are often confusing. Sometimes they overwhelm you. Often they frighten you. There are fun emotions, like happiness, joy, love, and excitement. There are emotions that are painful, like sadness, anger, jealousy, hurt, and loneliness. But what are we to do with them?

People have been known to get carried away by their emotions. They do things they later regret because of the way they feel. As Christians we realize that God created us with emotions, but we often find ourselves defeated spiritually when negative ones arise.

Although Joshua was a Christian, he found himself getting jealous of Sylvain. Sylvain was the coach's favorite player on the football team. Although Sylvain was good, Joshua did not see what all the fuss was about. To make matters worse, Sylvain always had a girlfriend and usually one waiting to take her place. Joshua kept thinking that Coach Parker would notice him more if it weren't for Sylvain.

The day Sylvain brought his new football shoes to practice was the last straw. The shoes must have cost a fortune, and everyone admired them. While everyone was getting the field ready, Joshua had an opportunity to hide Sylvain's new shoes. He figured it would be a good way to teach Sylvain some humility. Joshua put them in a place Sylvain would eventually look. Now the coach would see Joshua play without Sylvain. It would also show Coach that even his perfect player could lose things. Joshua was really pleased with himself.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a group.)

1. What do you think of Joshua?
2. What emotion was Joshua dealing with, and how well did he handle it?
3. Didn't Sylvain deserve what he got?
4. Where do you think Joshua went wrong?
5. What would you have done in Joshua's place?

E. Bible Discovery

1. 2 Samuel 11:2-15—This account is of David being led into sin by emotions and sexual desire. God put the sexual desires in people, but He gave them the structure of marriage to respond to those desires. David tried to cover his actions by the murder of Uriah in battle. As the story continued, David paid for allowing his desires to rule his actions. But we read about his confession before God and his regret for his sin.
2. Romans 6:6-7, 11-12, 14—These verses make it clear that we are not powerless against sinful desires and emotions. God, by His Holy Spirit, empowers us to stand firmly for righteousness. We need not be slaves to our emotions. They do not need to dictate our actions. They can indicate something is wrong, but it does not mean we need to act in this way.

F. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Were David's emotions indicators or dictators?
2. What were the two emotions David acted upon?
3. Why does Romans 6 say we don't have to be slaves to our evil desires?
4. In light of Romans 6, what should Joshua have done?

G. Closing

Have you been a slave to your emotions and desires? God has provided freedom by simply calling for His help. When temptation tells you that it is too strong to resist, you can stand on the promises of Romans 6. Remember these key facts:

1. Emotions are indicators, not dictators. You choose how you act.
2. “Do not let sin reign ... that you obey its evil desires.”

Choose, by God's power, to react to emotions in righteousness.

Close in a time of prayer. Encourage youth to pray in confession to the Lord as David did. Lead them to ask God to empower them no longer to live as slaves to sinful desires.

DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

By Michael A. Pitts

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—The experience of depression in some form is common to all youth. Learning to understand and deal with depression is an important step towards a healthy, fulfilling life.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To help youth recognize the signs of depression in their friends and in themselves. It will also provide understanding and guidance for moving out of depression.
3. Overview—Depression is a common reaction to the changes and feelings experienced. Regardless of the individual personality, youth experience depression, or they recognize that a friend is struggling with life as a result of depression. Youth need to understand what depression is, how to recognize the symptoms of depression, and how to deal with it.
4. Materials needed—pencils, slips of paper, ball of string/yarn/cotton.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Dictionary. Select 5-10 words from the dictionary that your youth will not be familiar with. Write the words where everyone can see them. Then hand out slips of paper to each member of the group. Ask the youth to write what they think are the definition of the words. Collect the papers and separate them by word headings. Read 4-5 definitions written by the group along with the actual definitions. See if the group can guess which is the actual definition.
2. Emotion Sculptures. Divide your youth into groups of 4-6 persons. Then name an emotion (begin with one of the overt emotions: love, hate, anger, fear, etc.). Each small group is to create a sculpture with their bodies to represent their emotion, either literally or abstractly. Give the groups several minutes to create their sculptures, then one at a time have them show their sculptures to the other groups. Then assign a second emotion, and so on. If the groups are enjoying this, move to the subtler emotions: envy, contentment, discomfort, and so on.
3. Group Singing
4. String Circle. Have your group stand in a circle. The more people the better (include leaders). Give one of the circle members a ball of string. Ask him to tell the group one thing that makes him happy. That person holds on to the end of the ball of string and tosses the ball to someone else, who in turn does the same thing. Soon you will weave a web of "what makes us happy".

C. Leader's Presentation (Present in your own words.)

We have been talking about what makes us happy. Unfortunately, we all experience sad times. Sometimes we don't feel like laughing or having fun. Sometimes we feel depressed. Let's talk a little about depression, what it is, how to recognize it in ourselves and our friends, and what we can do about it. Depression is a sad mood that results in the loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities. Sometimes there are feelings of hopelessness or a down feeling. Often a person in this mood will be very irritable. Feelings of depression affect all of us from time to time. Usually the mood passes after a short period of time. However, sometimes a person gets locked into a cycle of depressed feelings. When this happens, the mood may last for long periods of time, making life difficult for oneself and others.

What happens when we get depressed? What does depression look like? Let's look at five areas of our lives that are affected when something happens to cause us feelings of depression:

Mood. Our mood changes. We feel sad and alone, we often have feelings of low self-esteem, we get agitated easily, we may feel bored, and often we just look sad - a drooped mouth and sad eyes. Not all of these happen to every depressed person, but many do.

Thinking. Negative thinking is very common with depression. Depressed persons see themselves as negative, their world as negative, and their future as negative. It becomes easy to blame self or others for events that are not in any one person's control. In more severe cases, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness cause a person to wish he were dead and may eventually lead to thoughts of suicide.

Physical. Depression may cause a person to sleep more than usual as an escape. Or a depressed person may not be able to sleep much at all. There may also be aches and pains, headaches, stomach-aches, and fatigue.

Behavior. Behavior changes are often caused by the depressed mood. They might include crying, withdrawal, irritation, feelings of rage or frustration.

Interpersonal. Depressed people withdraw from others. Sometimes they will try to stay very busy with groups so they won't have to be involved in real interpersonal relationships.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Have you ever experienced some of these symptoms?
2. Let's list some of the things that make us sad.
3. Is it wrong to feel sad about these things?
4. Should a Christian ever feel sad or depressed?

E. Bible Discovery

Although the Bible does not speak directly about depression, there are several scriptural accounts that suggest depression. Divide the group into smaller groups and ask them to read their assigned verses and answer the questions from the next section.

Psalm 69:1-5

Psalm 88:11-8

Matthew 26:36-38

1 Kings 19:1-5a

Numbers 11:10-15

F. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss, then discuss as a whole group.)

1. What was causing the depression?
2. How might the individual end the depression?
3. What do these verses say about what causes us to be depressed?
4. What do these verses say about how we can end some of our depressed feelings?

G. Closing

When you feel sad, there is probably a reason that you can identify, if you think about it. The problem is that your thinking is affected when you're depressed. So it is always a good idea to talk with someone else when you have those feelings, someone who is *not* depressed at the moment. They might be able to help you look at life in a brighter light.

Now, what about friends and family? We have to allow them the right to have depressed feelings about things like these, don't we? (*Show the list of what makes us depressed.*) Look for the mood, thinking, physical, behavioral, and interpersonal symptoms we just talked about. If you see some clues there, they may tell you one of the following:

1. This person isn't acting nasty just towards me. He is having a difficult time dealing with something in life right now.
2. Maybe this person needs someone to talk to.
3. Maybe I should keep an eye on this person to see if these symptoms persist. If they do, perhaps I should talk to someone else about it (parents, youth pastor, pastor, etc.).
4. Maybe this person needs me to be extra patient right now. We are all going to be affected by depressed feelings from time to time. Let's remember to allow each other the space to do that. However, that is not to say that we can excuse any and all behavior attitudes, and words when we are depressed. A depressed disciple is still a disciple and called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. And there are ways we can prevent depression from getting the best of us.
5. Trust in God. Remember, God can supply your needs. He can be your Strength and Support in every situation. Keep in mind that God is in control even when you know that you are not.
6. Expect some discouragement. We know that life is difficult. God doesn't promise that we will have no troubles, but He does promise that Jesus will go with us through the troubled times.
7. Think about your thinking. When you start thinking negative thoughts about yourself, others, or situations, consider whether or not there is any real support for your thoughts.
8. Reach out to others. When you feel down, reach out. Even though it is easier to isolate yourself and maybe even what you think you want to do, you need the support of others.

Close with prayer.

HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I'M SAVED?

By Ronald O. Frye

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—You can know that you are saved and live in that knowledge.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To give young people some tools to help them live out their salvation by faith instead of feeling.
3. Overview—Youth tend to doubt their salvation when their feelings work against them or when they stumble, or even when they are tempted. The enemy seeks to convince them that they are not saved. This lesson is designed to help them with their faith in a day-to-day walk.
4. Materials Needed – Bibles.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Believe It or Not. Select four young people to describe in less than three minutes the most unbelievable thing that has ever happened to them. After their presentation, have the group vote on the story that they believe the most. After the vote is in, ask the group to discuss whether they believed it because the story was believable or because the *person* was believable. (To add another dimension to it, have your pastor be one of the four who shares an unbelievable happening.)
2. Catch as Catch Can. Select four or five of your biggest guys to be circle 1. Select four or five of your smallest girls to be circle 2. Everyone else in the group must select either of the circles to submit themselves to. They must one at a time stand in the middle of the circle they have chosen, fall backward (keeping their body straight), and trust the circle to catch them. Afterward, discuss why they chose the circle they did and why they chose to fall in the direction they did.
3. Group Singing.

C. Leader's Presentation (Present in your own words.)

In our everyday conversations, there is a phrase we hear more and more. We will hear someone make a statement, and the other person will say, "I don't believe it."

In the study of science you have theories and laws. A theory cannot be proven. Consequently, a theory is constantly being debated. A law of nature, on the other hand, cannot be debated. Have you ever heard a debate on the law of gravity? It would be nonsense to debate the law of gravity in that it can be proven so easily.

In our lives, there are certain things that we become convinced of and other things we might not be sure of.

1. Theories we may debate all our lives.
2. Facts, as we experience them, become firm beliefs.
3. Emotions (the way we feel about something) sometimes complicates our beliefs (for example, it is possible to be loved and not feel loved).

Faith adds yet another element of the mental process. It believes without evidence. We live in an age of skepticism. We are taught in school to challenge everything. The consequences are that we question a lot, which is good, but there is an overabundance of doubt, which handicaps. If we bring

this mental process of great doubt to our life in Christ, there is a significant conflict. Life in Christ is by faith. Our knowledge of God is wrapped up in faith. Our obedience to God and His Word is by faith. Faith exercise creates real experience with God and confirms our knowledge of Him, but without faith it cannot happen. Without faith, actual spiritual truth becomes a theory to be doubted. Therefore, what we know about God and our relationship to Him still comes by faith.

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss. Then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Would you describe yourself as a person of faith or of doubt? Why?
2. Are you more likely to listen to your feelings or your head? Why?
3. When your feelings lie to you, what do you do?
4. How do you go from doubt to faith?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

1. Hebrews 11:1—Faith gives us our position in Christ. How can I be forgiven of my sins? By faith in Christ and His Word. How can I invite Christ to live in me? By faith in Christ and His Word. How can I know that Christ lives in me now? By faith in Christ and His Word. Faith causes us to be certain when our eyes can't see. You may say, "I don't understand that!"
2. Hebrews 11:1—Faith is our understanding. If we try to understand God, His plan for our salvation, His love for us, His will for us, and His way in us, by simply using our minds, we come up short. We can't prove all we experience in Christ. But by faith we sure do understand that God is doing something in us right now. By faith we know, even when we can't explain it to someone else.
3. Hebrews 11:13—We cannot please God by performance. Sometimes we doubt our salvation because of bad performance. We cannot please God by doing our thing or by doing God's thing our way. The only thing that pleases God is our faith. How does that work?
 - a. In order to come to God, you must believe that He exists. And not that He simply exists, but that He exists with all the capabilities to meet all our needs. No matter what we come to God with or for, we must understand, by faith, that He is big enough.
 - b. In order to come to God, we must believe that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. To diligently seek God is more than praying once in a while, reading the Bible once in a while, and going to church. We must seek the entirety of who God is with the entirety of who we are. Jeremiah 29:13 says, "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*" Matthew 6:33 says, "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*"

By faith we must seek God's way first instead of our way. By faith we seek Him, and by faith we find Him in a relationship that is real. Thereby we can know Jesus personally, that our sins are forgiven, and that Jesus lives in us through the Holy Spirit. By this same faith we can know that we have eternal life. John said, "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life*" (1 John 5:13).

Where do we get that kind of faith?

4. Romans 10:17—If faith in God and His Word is the substance of my knowledge of whether or not I'm saved, then it is important to understand where our faith comes from. We know

that faith is a gift of God. *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”* (Ephesians 2:8). And we also know from Romans 10:17 that the foundation for our faith is God's Word. When we are prone to judge our salvation through skeptical eyes, or by our feelings, we must learn to turn to the truth of God's Word. If we were saved on the basis of faith in the good news of God's salvation presented in His Word, then we must live continually on the basis of God's Word. Read Psalm 119:105-112.

F. Large Group Discussion Questions

1. What does faith tell you that feelings don't tell you?
2. Where does faith come from?
3. Is faith something you have or something you do?
4. What should you do when you are tempted to doubt your salvation?
5. Can I be in faith without being in God's Word? Explain.
6. Do you know that you are saved? How do you know?

G. Closing

Do you need to claim your salvation by faith and begin to reject your feelings that cause you to doubt right now? God, by His Word, wants to lead you. He understands your doubts and your feelings. Using God's Word, begin to distinguish the difference between your feelings and your need to exercise faith. Select someone to talk to about your feelings and to help encourage you to apply faith. Pray right now and ask God to lead you and to give you eyes of faith so that you can walk in His salvation way even when your feelings battle against you.

FALSE IMPRESSIONS

By Steven Scott

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—God, revealed through Jesus, desires to be our Friend and develop that friendship.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To challenge and correct unbiblical views of God youth often hold.
3. Overview—Our view of God is formed by many factors in our lives, ranging from the words of a godly grandmother to the lyrics of a best-selling song. Every Christian must frequently bring his view of God into alignment with what the Bible says.
4. Materials Needed—small balls, buckets of various sizes, pillows, glue, scissors, scraps of cloth.

B. Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Hit the Bucket. Line up 5-6 buckets of various sizes. Give each a point value, depending upon the difficulty. Give each individual a small ball and have him stand 2-3 meters from the buckets. The object is to bounce the ball into one of the buckets. The ball must bounce at least once and must remain in the bucket to be counted. For additional excitement, mark the balls so they can be identified and have several youth playing at the same time. As they all aim for the higher point buckets, their balls will hit each other.
2. Drawing God. Have everyone make an artistic portrait of the way he sees God. Give a creative way to make the picture by supplying glue, scissors, etc. When finished, ask each to explain his picture.
3. Group Singing.

C. Leader's Presentation (Present in your own words.)

Almost without noticing, we form and reshape our view of God, and then act towards God in accordance with the way we picture God. Kate was given a class assignment to interview people as to their opinion about an issue. She decided to ask, "What do you think God is like?"

"Excuse me, but what do you think God is like?"

"Oh, I don't know ... uh ... I guess a cowboy"

"A what?"

"A cowboy. You know, He's always pushing and prodding and roping people. I always picture Him trying to put His brand on me while I struggle to stay unbranded."

"Pardon me, madam. What is your picture of God?"

"Oh, God is a big, kind Daddy. I know He takes care of everything, so I don't have to do anything. He loves me so much that He just closes His eyes to the way I really am."

"Excuse me. I hate to interrupt your basketball practice, but can you tell me what you think God is like?"

"Sure. God's kinda like the Great Referee in the Sky."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you got all these rules in the Bible, right? Well, it's God's job to blow the whistle. You know, give you a penalty or call a foul. He might even throw you out of the game!"

“Can you help me in my survey about God? How do you picture Him?”

“I used to think God was strong, but now I think He's like a jelly fish, no backbone.”

“Why is that?”

“Look at the shape the world is in. Why doesn't He fix it? He's letting people push Him around. He's not standing up for Himself.”

“What's your view of God?”

“Oh, wow ... I'm not sure. I guess I'd say that God seems dusty.”

“Dusty? How do you mean that?”

“Well, God was helpful in the past, and we should show Him respect, but I kind of leave Him on a shelf. On holidays and special occasions I bring Him out and dust Him off.”

D. Discussion Questions (Divide into small groups to discuss. Then discuss as a whole group.)

1. Why do you think there are so many different ideas about God?
2. How do you think these people got their view of God?
3. Which of these views about God is the closest to the way your friends see God?
4. How do you think their view of God will affect the way these people act? Cowboy God? Big Daddy God? Referee God? Jellyfish God? Dusty God?

E. Bible Discovery (Read and discuss the following passages.)

1. John 14:91—“*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*” God did more than give us prophets to tell us what God is like. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to show us what God is like. When we need to know what God is like, we need only look to Jesus' life. Throughout the Gospels many pictures of Jesus are given that we might know the complete picture of who God is. Here are some from the Book of John:

Son of God 1:1-14	Servant 13:1-10	Son of Man 2:1-10
Counselor 14:1-3	Divine Teacher 3:1-21	True Vine 15:1-8
Friend of Sinners 4:7-29	Friend 15:9-17	Great Physician 5:1-9
Giver of the Holy Spirit 16:1-15	Bread of Life 6:25-58	Intercessor 17:1-26
Water of Life 7:37-38	Model Sufferer 18:1-11	Light of World 8:12
Conqueror of Death 20:1-31	Good Shepherd 10:1-16	King 12:12-15
Prince of Life 11:1-44	Restorer of Those Who Repent 21:1-19	

All these pictures must be seen together in order to know God as He really is. It is often by seeing only one part of God's nature that false impressions of God (i.e. Cowboy God, etc.) are formed.

2. Romans 1:20-23—This scripture declares that the true nature of God is very evident to everyone. We need not wonder if God is hiding from us. However, it is clear that our lack of knowledge of God may be due to our lack of surrender to God. When this happens, our tendency is to make our own God in the way that best fits our ideas. We must begin to reshape our picture of God by the Bible, not by what we think.

Here are three key factors from Scripture:

1. God has revealed himself through Jesus Christ.

2. The Bible gives us many pictures of Jesus to show us a more complete picture of God.
3. It is not always that God isn't known to us, but that we want to shape Him into our image.

F. Large Group Discussion Questions

1. How can we find out what God is like according to these scriptures?
2. Why are there so many pictures of Jesus?
3. How does our attitude toward God affect our picture of Him?
4. Go back over the images of God mentioned in Katie's interviews. What is wrong or missing about each image of God?
 - Cowboy God (God also gives people freedom to choose or reject Him.)
 - Big Daddy God (God gives people responsibility for choices made.)
 - Referee God (God is also a God of grace.)
 - Jellyfish God (God is merciful and doesn't always bring judgment like we think He should.)
 - Dusty God (God wants to live in and through our lives.)

G. Closing

We must be honest with God about how we have pictured Him. If we wish to really know God, we must be willing to accept God without trying to change Him. Remember these things:

1. God continues to want us to know Him more and more.
2. As we read about Jesus, we get to know God better.
3. All these pictures of God simply show the depth and height of God's love because, simply stated: God is love.

(Close in a time of prayer in which you give thanks to God for making Himself known.)

SAYING NO IN THE RIGHT SORT OF WAY

By Ed Robinson

A. Leader's Guidelines

1. Key Idea—There is a constructive way to voice disagreement or disapproval.
2. Goal of the Lesson—To help youth to think through the principles of constructive disapproval so as to contribute to reconciliation rather than continued strife.
3. Overview - In many ways, youth live in an age of dissent. They are encouraged to “Just say no!” to drugs, to speak up for their personal rights, and to express their own opinions to adults. While these may not be bad things, if youth are not careful, the spirit of dissent can creep into all of life so that they become argumentative, disrespectful, and at times downright obnoxious in expressing disapproval. This session will introduce your youth to some principles for constructively disagreeing with friends, parents, and other significant adults so as to make a positive contribution to relationships and communities.
4. Materials Needed—paper and pencil for each student.

B. Suggested Opening Activities (more are listed in the back of this book)

1. Zip-Zap Game. This naming activity is designed to reinforce the use of first names in the group. As the group sits in a circle, the leader points to an individual and says “Zip, one, two, three, four, five” or “Zap, one, two, . . .” The individual in the circle must tell the first name of the person to the right for “Zip” or to the left for “Zap” before the count of five, or he must be “it” in the middle of the circle. Continue play until most everyone's name has been called. As a variation you may want the group to change seats once or twice during the game.
2. I Like Everyone But ... This active game is played like Upset Fruitbasket (#30). As the group is seated in a circle (with no extra chairs), the leader states, “I like everyone but . . .” and names a characteristic common to at least two people in the circle (e.g., people who wear Nikes, people who don't wear socks, people who are wearing something blue, etc). Those individuals who fit that description must move from their seat to another seat that has been vacated. The person in the middle will also try to find a vacant seat in which to sit. The person left standing begins again by saying, “I like everyone but . . .” and the game continues. The caller may state, “I like everyone!” and the entire group must change seats.
3. Groupers. This activity can serve as a written discussion to focus on ideas, issues, or situations that may cause youth to voice disapproval. It is not meant to be a serious discussion, but it can serve to give the leader some hints of application later in the Bible study. Distribute paper and pencils to each person. Instruct the group to complete each phrase with a short answer (10 words or less). Ask for completion of the following phrases:
 - a. One of the things that upsets me most at school is ...
 - b. One of the things that upsets me most at home is ...
 - c. One of the things that disturbs me most about our area/village/city is ...
 - d. One of the things that disturbs me most about the world situation is ...
 - e. Push the group to write each response quickly. When the four phrases are complete, make sure that no one has written his name on the paper, and then collect them.

Then read some of the responses aloud. You may want to list some of the ideas on a chalkboard. Wrap up the activity by giving some of your own ideas and introducing the leader's presentation regarding constructively voicing disapproval.

4. Group Assignment. Divide the youth into groups of three to five persons. Give each group the following assignment: "You have been given \$5,000 to work on correcting one of the crucial problems in your community. You are to select a worthy project and decide how the money is to be spent. Only two rules guide your assignment: a. Your decisions must be unanimous. b. Any one person can veto any idea. In five minutes you will be expected to tell us your decision and how you arrived at it!"
 - a. At the appointed time, have each group (if there is time) share the process they went through to arrive at their decision. As the leader, you should note any dissensions within the groups so that you can capitalize on that dynamic later in the study.
5. Group Singing.

C. LEADER'S PRESENTATION (Present in your own words.)

There are times in our lives when we disagree with others. Sometimes those disagreements are about trivial matters, like what we want to eat, or where we want to sit in church. At other times, the disagreements can come over very important issues like disagreeing with parents over what is fair punishment or discipline; saying no to using drugs when friends want you to participate; standing up against moral injustices in the community or world.

Disagreements, even among Christians, are not new things. Paul and Barnabas had a significant disagreement over whether or not to take John Mark on a ministry trip (Acts 15:36-41). The result of the disagreement was a separation between the missionary partners. Barnabas went with John Mark, and Paul chose Silas for his new traveling companion.

The point is that disagreements, in themselves, are often unavoidable and may not be wrong. The *way* in which we disagree, however, can have some pretty serious consequences. If our disagreement is founded in a genuine concern for the right things to be done and without a selfish, vengeful motive, then we can often bring about a healthy solution to the problem. If our disapproval is colored by a resentful, bitter, egotistic attitude, we usually complicate the situation further. This principle of constructively voicing disapproval or disagreement applies equally to problems between friends over minor issues and to problems between world leaders over global issues.

Let's consider Max. Max is a star member of the school basketball team. Last week, Max's family had a guest from out of town staying with them. Because of the busy schedule that his parents had planned during the visit, Max didn't get much studying done. As a result, he failed an exam and was declared ineligible for the big basketball game against his school's archrival.

Max could respond to the situation in a variety of ways:

1. He could passively accept the ineligible status, complaining constantly to his friends how unfair his parents, teachers, and school administrators are.
2. He could protest to the teacher that it wasn't his fault, and the whole situation just wasn't fair.

3. He could complain to the coach about how dumb his parents had been to make him participate in the family activities that week and how unjust the teacher had been to flunk him when he didn't get a chance to study, hoping the coach would solve the problem.
4. He could confront his parents with the fact that the whole affair was their fault and that the responsibility for the future of the school's basketball season rested squarely on them.
5. Or Max could ...

D. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think would be the results of response #1? #2? #3? #4?
2. If you were in Max's place, what response would you probably have given?
3. In your opinion, is there something Max could do to salvage the situation?
4. If there is something Max could constructively do, how would you suggest he go about talking to the individuals involved?

E. BIBLE DISCOVERY (Read and discuss the following passages.)

Let's look at some scriptures that can help us to disagree in a constructive way.

1. 2 Timothy 2:23-24—**Make sure the issue is worth disagreeing over.** Sometimes our disapproval comes over such trivial matters (Paul calls them foolish and stupid!) that are hardly worth risking our relationships with others. Choose your disagreements carefully. You might win the battle but lose the war!
2. Proverbs 11:12; Proverbs 13:1—**Think before you speak and then choose your words carefully.** Whoever said, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me," didn't understand the power of words. Words can bring injury to a spirit as quickly as a weapon can bring injury to a body. Think before you speak and guard your words so that they don't destroy people. Try to get your point across without injuring another person's spirit.
3. Proverbs 18:2; Proverbs 18:12-13—**Make sure you understand the situation and have the facts before you voice your disapproval.** Often our haste to get our feelings expressed puts us into embarrassing situations. We speak before we have all the information. We should put ourselves in the other's place to try to understand his perspective. A thoughtful moment spent in reflection can spare us many moments of pain, having to apologize for harsh words we spoke simply because we didn't understand or know the facts about a particular issue.
4. Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 12:18; Proverbs 25:11-12—**Have a goal of bringing peace and healing through your disapproval.** If our disagreement or disapproval comes from a heart that is embittered or vengeful, then our words will reflect that attitude. If our concern is for genuine healing, growth, or correction, then our words should reflect that kind of attitude. Words spoken in anger very seldom do any good at all. But gentle words that are spoken in loving concern can make a world of difference. This principle applies to community social issues as well. (*Leader, you may want to use the example of those who would bomb abortion clinics as a means of protest as ones who are trying to disapprove by harsh words rather than a gentle spirit. Their efforts have hindered the fight against abortion rather than helping it.*)
5. Proverbs 17:14; Proverbs 17:19—**Avoid developing an argumentative spirit.** There are some people who live for a good argument. They love to quarrel, bicker, and dispute over everything. Such an attitude is a trap! Behind that consistent arguing is developing a

pessimist's heart. God has called us to be peacemakers, people of hope, healers in the world. An argumentative spirit can severely hinder us from fulfilling that call.

6. James 1:19-22—**Be willing to put actions behind your arguments.** It is not enough simply to criticize if we are not willing to offer a hand to bring change. It is not enough simply to protest against injustices if we are not willing to contribute something of ourselves to improve the situation. It is not enough to complain about the way things are at home if we are not willing to do everything within our power to correct the situation. It is not enough to argue about the circumstances at school if we are not willing to accept our responsibility to work for the betterment of the school. It is not enough to argue with friends about their stubbornness if we are unwilling to take the first step to heal the relationship. In these instances, our talk is not quite enough. We have to be willing to put our words into constructive action.

F. LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would these passages help Max in resolving his situation?
2. Which is the easiest of these principles to apply in your disagreements? Why?
3. Which is the hardest of these principles to apply to your disagreements?
4. How would you use these principles to disagree with someone about a important issue in your school? home? community?

G. CLOSING

Disagreements are unavoidable. We all have our own opinions about certain issues. As long as there is sin and strife in the world, there will always be something for Christians to disapprove of. We must be careful, however, that our disagreements and our disapproval are voiced in such a way that we contribute to the solution rather than contribute further to the problem.

Have the members of the group think about a situation that they might face that would bring disagreement or disapproval. Ask the group to imagine how they would respond to that situation in light of the principles discussed in the Bible study. You may want them to close their eyes to make the imagining process easier. You might have them write down the name of the individual or location associated with the circumstance on a small slip of paper to carry in their pocket or book to serve as a reminder to:

1. Make sure the issue is worth arguing over.
2. Think before they speak and then choose words carefully.
3. Make sure they understand the situation and have the facts before they voice their disapproval.
4. Have a goal of bringing peace and healing through their disapproval.
5. Avoid developing an argumentative spirit.
6. Be willing to put actions behind their argument.

Close with a time of prayer for strength and courage to take a stand when it's necessary and to take the stand in a positive, constructive way.

YOUTH

SERVICE

OUTLINES

WHO CARES ABOUT MISSIONS ANYWAY?

By Bud Reedy

Theme:

All believers, including youth, must be involved in the mission of the church.

Recommended Use:

This youth service outline can be used on any Sunday evening but might best be used as a part or even in place of the regularly scheduled missions service.

Preparation:

1. Choose a date for the service several weeks in advance. Make arrangements among the youth giving them plenty of time to practice their songs, drama, and other program responsibilities.
2. Advertise.
3. Practice. Meet with the whole group at least once before the service, running through the entire program, including songs, drama, and Bible readings.
4. Pray. After you've done all you can to make this a meaningful youth worship service, pray that both the youth who participate and the rest of the church will experience a special time of worship.

Suggested Outline:

Welcome and Prayer - Youth worship leader

Scripture: Psalm 96

Song: "We've A Story To Tell To The Nations" or another song about missions

Special: A song about missions by the youth group

Drama: "The Story of Jonah" by Martha Bolton

(The following monologue should be memorized and presented by one of the youth.)

Character: Jonah

(Scene takes place inside the belly of a whale—imaginary, of course.)

(Cupping his hands over his mouth) Hey! Can anybody hear me? Hello! . . . Is anyone out there?

(Disgusted) Oh, it's no use! There isn't anyone within miles of here. And even if they could hear me, they'd probably think it's the whale . . .and who listens to whales???

(Looking around at the imaginary surroundings) Boy! What a mess! This guy doesn't even chew his food! . . .And talk about BAD BREATH! No wonder he was traveling alone.

(Looks around again; then, as if he has just discovered something) AHA! Just as I thought! This guy had shrimp for dinner. I can smell it! . . . Now I know what my stomach feels like sometimes!

(Looks upward in disgust) Oh, no! Not again (ducking)! All this guy does is eat! (Cups his hands over his mouth and shouts upward) Say, friend—there's no more room down here! (Brushes himself off) (Tries to lift his leg, but it won't move) Uuuggghhh! Gum! . . . Didn't your mother ever tell you not to swallow your gum? (With some effort he pulls his foot loose, disgusted) All right, that does it! I'm getting out of here! I've just got to figure out my plan of escape. (Planning) Ummmmm . . .let's see . . . I could dance on his teeth, but I guess that

won't help. (Thinks some more) How about if I wait until he opens his mouth again, then try to swim out against the tide? (Thinks about that for a moment) No, that won't work. The way this guy takes in water, I'll probably drown in the process! . . . I suppose I could give him an upset stomach by jumping up and down four or five hundred times . . . but I don't think I'd like to see him get sick from this angle.

(Discouraged) I might as well face it. I'm stuck down here. Besides, I'm just getting what I deserve, I guess. After all, I have been running away from the Lord. (Looks up) But, Lord, I didn't realize that Nineveh meant so much to you! . . . I mean, Lord—it's a wicked city! A bunch of losers! Why waste Your time on them? They're NEVER going to repent of their sins. They're NEVER going to change! (Pause as if God is talking to him) Well, yes, Lord, I suppose I did repent of MY sins, but what . . . (another pause) Well, yes . . . all right, I guess I did change. But Lord, the people of Nineveh are DIFFERENT! Their sins are BAD, Lord. (Another brief pause) Well, yes, I know a sin is a sin, but . . . (Pause) Well, yes, I know there are no little sins, but . . . (impatient pause) All right, look—we're not getting anywhere with this, so . . . here's what I propose: let me go to Egypt. Lord, I'll hold big tent meetings, crusades, revivals, Vacation Bible Schools—whatever You want. Wouldn't that be enough to make up for Nineveh? (Pause) NO? Well, how about a big youth rally? We'll rent a pyramid—a vacant one, of course. Surely THAT would make You forget about Nineveh? (Pause) No, again, huh? BOY, WHEN YOU SET YOUR MIND TO SOMETHING!

All right, so tell me, Lord, why is Nineveh so important to You? They've continually rejected You. They want no part of Your Word. So, why not forget about them? (Pause, then answers impatiently) But how COULD You love them?

(Looks up) Oh, no! (Disgusted) It's MEALTIME again! Where does this guy think he's at—a feast?

(Brushing himself off) Whew! I sure hope that satisfies him for awhile!

Now, where were we? . . . Oh, yes . . . back to Nineveh! They're not worth the trouble, Lord—believe me!

(Pause) So that's it, huh? You're not going to change Your mind? You love Nineveh and I'm the one who has to go tell them?

Okay, Lord. Let's look at my options. I can obey You and go to Nineveh, or I can stay here and try to make a life for myself inside this whale. (Looks around unimpressed) There isn't much to do down here, Lord. To tell you the truth, Lord, I don't think I want to stick around here for breakfast! And besides, (sincere) I really don't like running away from You! (Looks around, disgusted) I mean, look where it gets me! (Pretends to wade through all the food and garbage) Nineveh can't be THIS bad!

(Brushing himself off) All right, Lord—I'll go to Nineveh, and I'LL GO WITH A SMILE! Just get me out of here and fast!

(Looks upward) Hey! What's that? (Listens) . . . Sounds like this guy is trying to sneeze! (Excited) Now's my chance to break out of here . . . (coaxing whale) Ah . . . ah . . . (Stops abruptly one more) Oh, come on—sneeze! (Coaxing even more enthusiastically) Ah . . . ah . . . CHOO!

(Pretends to be almost flying off platform as last line is shouted) God bless you—AND GOOD BYE!! NINEVEH - HERE I COME A-I-R-M-A-I-L!!

Announcements/Offering—Youth Worship Leader

Special: A song about missions

Message: Invite the pastor or youth leader to preach on the subject of missions from the scripture of his choice.

Prayer and dismissal.

KEEPING CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS

By Bud Reedy

SUGGESTED OUTLINE:

Welcome and Prayer—Youth Worship Leader

Scripture—Isaiah 9:2-7

Song: “Away In A Manager”

Special Song: A Christmas song or a song about the Lordship of Jesus

Announcements/Offering—Youth Worship Leader

Sketch: “Keeping Christ in Christmas”

This is an outline for a Christmas sketch that talks about the question: Is it possible to see Christ in Christmas today? It can be presented as a “man on the street” interview, with a reporter holding a microphone, with a TV camera and with people walking back and forth as if shopping for Christmas gifts.

The reporter begins: Good evening. I’m Barry Harry from television station TV4, your man-on-the-street reporter, live from the corner of Commissioner and Eloff (or local streets) where we are asking people this question: “Just what does Christmas mean to you?” We want to find out what the average person sees in Christmas today. Is it possible to see Christ in Christmas at all?

The reporter now stops various young people as they walk by and asks them: “Just what does Christmas mean to you?” The responses may be as follows:

1. Lights
2. Gifts
3. Cards
4. Crowds
5. Music
6. No School
7. Family
8. Parties
9. New clothes
10. Money

Others may be added to this list if you wish. Each person should be dressed to fit their character and their answer. Here are some sample answers:

1. Lights. (a youth in sunglasses) “Lights. Christmas lights, they are everywhere. Shops, trees, streets, red, green, blue lights. Flashing lights, millions of lights. It’s enough to blind a person.”
2. Gifts. (Greedy youth, rubbing hand together) “What is Christmas to me? Gifts. Gifts. Gifts. Big gifts. Little gifts. Receiving gifts.” (Fades off just repeating the word, laughing.)
6. No School. (very excited youth) “Are you kidding? There’s no school during the Christmas season.”
10. Money. (youth dressed in suit, like a businessman) “What is Christmas to me? Christmas is big money. Look at all those people spending money and making me rich!”

After all these people have been interviewed, the reporter should turn the camera and say, “Well, it’s just as we thought. No one sees Christ in Christmas any more.” At this point, one more person can come up and ask what’s going on, and the reporter should ask that person the same question: “What does Christmas mean to you?” He should answer, “Christ, of course.” The reporter should act surprised and say, “But how can you possibly see Christ in Christmas today?” The answer can go something like this:

“Well, when I see LIGHTS, I see the One who came as the Light of the world. When I see GIFTS, I think of His presence in my life and how He came as God’s GIFT to the world.

When I get a Christmas CARD, I think of how God ‘cared enough to send the very best’. When I hear MUSIC, I hear the angels singing on that first Christmas, and I think of how Christ brings harmony to a trouble world. When I see all the CROWDS, I realize that every person is so important to God that He send His Son to die for us. When I go to a PARTY or take a HOLIDAY, I think of the celebration in heaven when anyone decides to follow Christ and how Jesus said ‘Come unto me all you who labor and are burdened down, and I will give you rest’—a holiday. When I’m with my FAMILY, I’m thankful to be adopted into the family of God through Christ. When I spend any of my MONEY, I think of the great price that was paid so that I can have treasures in heaven. In fact, just about everywhere I look, I see Christ.”

The reporter turns to the camera and says, “Well, it’s just as we thought. It IS possible to see Christ in Christmas today . . . if you just open your eyes.”

Song: “Open My Eyes, That I May See”

Christmas Message: by Pastor, Youth Pastor, Youth Leader or mature youth

Prayer and Dismissal.

JESUS' STYLE OF LOVE

By Bud Reedy

THEME - The unconditional love of Jesus

PREPARATION - If you have not already done so, be sure to read the chapter at the beginning of this book entitled "The TOTAL Youth Worship Service."

SUGGESTED OUTLINE

- **Welcome and Prayer** - youth worship leader
- **Hymn No. 219** - "My Savior's Love"
- **Special Song** - youth vocalist/group
- **Drama** - "The Town with One White Shoe"

This drama, about unconditional love, is to be performed as an echo pantomime. You may use all the youth in your group for this performance. No props are necessary. The idea is quite simple. Have one youth read the following words and the rest of the group act out the actions on the other side of the platform.

Words

Have you ever heard of a one-horse town?
Well, there once was a town with one white shoe!

Now, these were good people. They paid all their taxes, they built good schools for their kids, and they even exceeded the annual goal at the Red Cross blood drive. But they had one rather curious tradition ... a tradition started so long ago that no one seems to remember why they still do it. They all wore one white shoe.

One day, a new family moved to town. They seemed like a nice family. And at first they were accepted by the townspeople. But then the mayor noticed:

And one by one, the townspeople began to react as people often do when someone dares to be different.

Actions

Enter youth wearing one white shoe

Whole group looks proud (comb hair polish nails, etc.).

*Three youth faint.
Look puzzled, shrug shoulders, etc.*

Group forms single line, everyone wearing one shoe

*Enter four youth w/both shoes on (i.e. red).
Group moves over to new family, shakes hands, says, "Welcome," etc.
One youth says, "Hey, these people wear two shoes!" Entire group gasps and begins to move slowly away.*

*Group: "Just who do they think they are?"
"Goody two shoes"; "Boy, do they look stupid"; "Johnny, don't play with those children."*

And the new family cried on the inside.

*Four youth huddle together, with arms
around each other so that the congregation
cannot see their faces.*

While the rest of the townspeople huddled together, devising a way to run this family out of town,

Group huddles and whispers, while glancing in the direction of the family. occasionally

One young person, not knowing any better, ventured over to the family with two shoes And said: “Why are you wearing two shoes like that?”

One person stand before family and pantomimes the question.

The father responded: “Well, where we came from, most everyone wears two shoes,”

The townspeople hear this statement and begin to listen curiously and say in unison: “They do?”

“Sure. That's because, where we come they sell shoes by the pair.”

“They do?” the townspeople respond once from, again.

And besides, we wear two shoes because, well, we have flat feet.”

“You do? We didn't know that,” the town people respond.

The mayor stepped forward and said:

“We didn't know you had flat feet. We just thought that well . . .

And the townspeople came to the family with two shoes and asked for their forgiveness.

One by one, seek their forgiveness and walk off stage

And they learned a lesson that day: That behind every man, woman, boy, and girl there is a story ... and love takes the time to listen.

- ***Special Song***
- ***Hymn No. 221 - “And Can It Be?”***
- ***Suggested Message Outline***

Jesus' Style of Love

Galatians 5:22-25

Introduction: When a believer is filled by the Holy Spirit at entire sanctification, he begins a brand-new life. It is instantaneous. But learning how to walk by the Spirit does not occur instantly. It takes time ... it is a process. In other words, just because a person is entirely sanctified doesn't mean he knows all there is to know about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These must be learned over time. Today, let's focus on one of the fruit of

the Spirit - love. Let's allow the Spirit to show us a thing or two about love ... Jesus' brand of love. From the life of Jesus we learn the following about Jesus' kind of love.

1. **Jesus loved unconditionally** (His love had no strings attached. See John 3:16 - “whoever”).

- a. He loves saints and sinners, He loves slaves and free, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile.
- b. Perhaps the Holy Spirit is saying to us, “Hey, come on over here ... You love people who are like you, who agree with you. That's no big deal” (see Luke 6:27-35).
- c. But Jesus loves unconditionally.
- d. Illustration:

There once was a little boy who had few friends at school because he was . . . different. The day before Valentine's Day he announced to his mother that he was going to make personal, handmade valentines for every person in his class. So, he set to work with construction paper, crayons, paste, and colored pens until, several hours later, he had completed enough valentines for every person in his class. He put them all in a paper bag and went to bed . . . exhausted.

The next day his mother worried, afraid her little boy would receive few valentines in return. So she made a batch of home-made biscuits for his arrival. At 3:30, the bus arrived and he got off, walking toward the house. And as he walked beneath the window where she was standing, she heard him say: “Not a one. Not a one.” Her heart sank, assuming he had not received a valentine in return. When he opened the door, she asked: “How did it go?” And with a smile that covered his entire face he responded: “Mom, I didn't forget a single person . . . not a one!”

Agape love, the love of Jesus, gives, and expects nothing in return.

2. **Jesus loved sacrificially** (He loved, even though it made Him vulnerable to hurt).

- a. He loved inconsistent disciples who would not even stay awake and pray ... He loved those who would murder Him ... He loved those who would ignore Him. He loved the unlovable, and His love for sinning humanity finally nailed Him to a tree.
- b. Perhaps the Holy Spirit says, “Hey, come on over here and look. You love those who love you. How about those who dislike you? How about when you don't feel up to it? Your love costs you nothing. His love cost Him everything.”
- c. Love is costly. Love requires that we lay down our lives (John 3:16).
- d. Jesus loves sacrificially.
- e. If you love others with the agape love of Jesus ...

3. **Jesus loved unselfishly** (He loved even though He had nothing to gain).

- a. Philippians 2:1-8.
- b. Jesus didn't love just those who were important or who could improve His lot in life or love Him back. He didn't love in order to gain. His motives were not mixed. He didn't ask, What's in it for me?
- c. Perhaps the Holy Spirit is saying, “Come over here and look. What are your motives? Do you love to gain love/stature/healing/security?”
- d. Jesus loved others unselfishly. Will you love unselfishly?

Conclusion: Let's consider a few basic, simple techniques that will allow you to experience the joy that comes from creating and giving love to others.

1. Listen to others. Jesus had this capacity. So must we.
2. Be concerned for the welfare/happiness of others. (Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.)
3. Finally recognize that Jesus is a mystical presence in the person you want to love. (Whatever you do for the least of these My brethren, you do for Me.)

Everyone becomes loveable when we become aware of the presence of Jesus in them.

Response (or closing) - Gather everyone into one, close group. Have a youth read Matthew 22:35-40. Ask of the group. "Who is to be loved?" Use a chalkboard or large paper to explain the following:

The word JOY can be used as a reminder of God's command to love –

Jesus

Others

Yourself

Ask: *What does this acronym tell us about Jesus' style of love? Who are some of the "others" that God has put in your life?*

Close with prayer, asking God to help you love with Jesus' brand of love.

- **Closing Hymn No. 220** - "Such Love"; "It's love, it's love that makes the world go round."
- **Optional Closing**—Give paper to everyone and ask them to write a note of love to God. Then read some of the letters at the next youth service or youth meeting or display them on the church bulletin board.

**BE DEVOTED TO
ONE ANOTHER
IN
BROTHERLY LOVE
BROTHERLY LOVE
ROMANS 12:10**

I'VE GOT THAT JOY DOWN IN MY HEART

By Bud Reedy

THEME

Joy is one of the evidences of the Lord's presence in a believer's life. As followers of Jesus Christ, we discover that real, lasting joy comes from Him through service to others.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE

- **Welcome and Prayer** - youth worship leader
- **Hymn No. 422** - "Joy Unspeakable"; "This Joy That I Have"; "I've Got a Joy Bell in My Heart."
- **Special Song** - youth vocalist or group of youth vocalists
- **Skit** - "Looking for Joy"

Characters

Joy: a young girl with a bright smile

Business : a stern-looking person in a three-piece suit

Average : average-looking guy

Nobody : a drunk with a bottle

Props: a 3" x 5" photo of Joy and a bottle

Stage: bare, with the exception of one table and chair

(When scene opens, there are two youth on stage. One is dressed in a suit, sitting at a table and chair. This is a business person who is totally consumed with his work. Another youth, dressed in ragged clothes, is lying on the floor on the other side of the platform, with a bottle in his hand. Enter Average holding a photo of Joy. He looks around the room for several seconds, looking for someone. This distracts the person at the desk.)

Business: Hey, you there, who are you?

Average: Oh, I'm average; just average.

Business: I see. Well, just average, are you looking for someone?

Average: Yes. (Continues to look around room.)

Business (*impatiently*): Well, who are you looking for?

Average: Joy.

Business: Who?

Average (sheepishly): Joy.

Business: Joy who?

Average (looking at the back of the picture, almost frightened): Joy Unspeakable. I was told I could find Joy Unspeakable here.

Business (*tersely*): Well, you were told wrong. She's not here.

Average (very timidly): Oh . . . excuse me, sir. I'm sorry to have bothered you. (Average begins to leave, but stops dead in his tracks. He wanders over to the desk again.) How do you know?

Business: How do I know what?

Average (*gaining confidence*): How do you know Joy is not here?

Business: My name is Business. Joe Business. I came here looking for Joy. She's not here.

Average (*excited*): You came here looking for Joy - this Joy? (*Shows him picture.*)

Business: Yes, that's the one. I came here several years ago looking for her. I believed that if you work hard enough and long enough and earn lots of money, you wouldn't have to go looking for Joy; she would find you. But I've worked hard and long, earned the money; but I haven't found her yet.

Average: Well, uh, do you think I could just hang around here and wait for Joy to show up? I'd really like to see her.

Business: Hey, suit yourself. (Average stands next to the desk for a few moments, waiting. Suddenly he notices Nobody on the other side of the platform. Nobody is on the floor and is obviously drunk.)

Average: Mr. Business, who's that?

Business: Oh, him. That's Nobody. (*Average moves across stage.*)

Average: Oh . . . excuse me, sir I'm looking for someone named Joy, Joy Unspeakable. Do you know where she is?

Nobody (*slurred sad voice*): Well, I do know where you won't find her. You won't find her here. (*Points to bottle.*)

Average: In a bottle? Well, of course not. Whoever heard of finding Joy in a bottle? (*Laughs.*)

Nobody: Hey wait a minute. A lot of my friends told me that she was here, and I saw it on television, too. (*sadly*). And I've been at the bottom of hundreds of bottles, but I haven't found her.

Average (*compassionately*): Oh, I'm so sorry. Here, let me help you to your feet. Let's go find you a nice meal and a warm coat. And you can stay at my house until you feel better.

Nobody (*as Average helps him to his feet*): Oh, thank you. That is the kindest thing anyone has ever done for me. (Suddenly Joy, a youth girl with a big smile, appears and walks quietly behind Nobody and Average as Average helps Nobody off stage. Average turns to see Joy.)

Average: Hey, you're the girl in the picture. You're Joy Unspeakable! I've been looking all over for you!

Joy (*brightly*): Oh yes, there are thousands of people looking for me, but only a few ever find me.

Average: Really? Well, then, how come I found you?

Joy: Oh, you didn't find me. I found you. I come to those who reach out to the people who are in need, just as you are helping this poor soul. For I cannot be found in these things (*looks at Business' desk and Nobody's bottle*) but in caring service to others.

Average: Oh, Joy, I hope you will never leave me.

Joy: Average, as long as you remain a kind, loving servant I will always follow just behind you.

(Exit Nobody and Average, arm in arm with Joy just behind.)

- Prayer/Announcements/Offering
- Special Song
- Suggested Sermon Outline

I've Got Joy Down in My Heart

Galatians 5:22-25

Introduction: Just because a person is entirely sanctified doesn't mean he is walking in the Spirit. Entire sanctification does not mean we know all there is to know about love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. They come with growth and maturity. Today let's focus on Christian joy:

1. Christian joy is normal for all believers. "The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).
2. Christian joy cannot be produced by man. Fruit is created by the Spirit and is the product of a vital relationship between the Christian and the Holy Spirit. His life in us is the source of Christian joy. He produces this fruit in us. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy" (Romans 15:13).
3. Christian joy is more than an emotion. It is not superficial or pretend. Rather, Christian joy is love's cheerfulness that wells up from the deep, inner springs of the Spirit-filled life. If joy is normal for the Christian, if it is produced by the Holy Spirit, then why isn't there more evidence of it in the Church today? In the lives of Spirit-filled Christian people? This is an area where we must walk in the Spirit and do some growing up. Here are three brief observations from God's Word about Christian joy:

I. Christian joy and obedience to God are closely connected.

- A. Christian joy and devotion go together.
- B. According to Paul, in the verses preceding our text in Galatians 5, disobedience results in strife, jealousy outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, and envy.
- C. However, obedience produces joy. Jesus said in Luke 11:28, 'Blessed [happy] ... are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'
- D. John Wesley said holiness and happiness are immediate fruit of God's reigning in the soul.
- E. Joy is not gush; it is not jolliness. Joy is perfect obedience to God's will because the soul delights itself in God Himself. (Read Hymn 465, "Trust and Obey" verses 1-3 and chorus.)
- F. Is there an area of your life where you have not been obedient? That's probably why there is a real lack of Christian joy in your life.
- G. When you walk in the Spirit, He will reproduce His joy in you.

II. Christian joy gives us strength to face the trials of life.

- A. Nehemiah observed that the joy of the Lord is our strength (8:10).
- B. James encourages us to consider it pure joy when we face trials of various kinds (1:2).
- C. In other words, *joy makes us strong*, produces energy. Those who do not celebrate joy that is a gift will not generate the joy that is strength overflowing in to all other facets of our lives.

III. Christian joy is the church's greatest advertisement.

- A. Karl Barth said your joy will speak where many a sermon will not be heard.
- B. **Illustration:** When Billy Graham was first getting started, one of his first converts was a music professor. Near the end of the crusade, the professor came to him and said, "I have a problem. I don't feel like a Christian, and I can't convince my wife to give her life to Jesus." Young Graham took one look at the professor and saw his problem. He had on a long, black coat; a black tie; a pair of black, horn-rimmed glasses; and, more importantly, a sour face. Graham spoke frankly: "Look at you, man. You aren't much of an advertisement for Jesus. What you need is the joy of the Lord." He prayed for him. Two years later Graham was back, and after the service, a man and his wife came to the platform to see him. He didn't even

recognize the guy who was wearing a plaid jacket, red bow tie, and big smile. He said, "Brother Graham, this is my wife. She accepted Jesus not long ago."

Conclusion: Do you know what we need today? An old-fashioned dose of Holy Spirit joy. How can this happen?

1. Walk in obedience to God.
2. Take advantage of every opportunity to express the joy of the Lord in your life: personal testimonies, singing, conversation (wonderful things God is doing in your life),
3. Become an agent of joy. Take it upon yourself to be a positive force in your world. If there is a negative, pessimistic conversation taking place, either turn it around or get out of there before it rubs off on you.
4. Be able to find joy in another's joy. That is the secret of happiness.
5. Remember that joy is not found in things, or position, or power, but inside a person, produced by the Holy Spirit.

Closing Choruses - "The Joy of the Lord Is My Strength"; "If You Want Joy"; "I've Got The Joy ...
Down in My Heart"; "I've Got Joy Like a Fountain"

If the
SON
sets you free
you are
really free

NOW IS THE TIME

By **Bud Reedy**

THEME

The beginning of a New Year is a great time to make goals and resolve to make a positive impact on our world. This worship service is a call to immediate action for God.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE

- **Welcome and Prayer** - youth worship leader
- **Hymn No. 372** – “I Am Resolved”
- **Special Song** - youth vocalist or group of youth vocalists
- **Readers Theatre:** “One Day Along the Road”

Characters:

Reader 1

Reader 2

Would-be Disciple 1

Would-be Disciple 2

Would-be Disciple 3

Reader 1: One day, as Jesus was walking along the road, He stopped to teach the crowds.

Reader 2: Wow, Jesus sure did know how to attract a crowd of people.

Reader 1: Yes, He did. But Jesus was not just looking for a group of followers. No, He wanted ...

Readers 1 and 2: DISCIPLES!

Reader 1: And so, when He had finished speaking,

Reader 2: A young man stepped out of the crowd and said,

Would-be Disciple 1 (*energetically*): I would follow You, Jesus, wherever You go!

Reader 2: Wherever He goes?

Would-be Disciple 1: Wherever He goes!

Reader 2: Well, what did Jesus say?

All: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests ...”

Reader 1 (*sadly*): “But the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

Reader 2: No place?

Reader 1: No place!

Reader 2: What could Jesus have meant? (to *Would-be Disciple 1*) You seemed so ... sincere.

Would-be Disciple 1: It was as if Jesus were saying to me, Do you have any idea what it costs to be a disciple of Mine? It will cost you everything to be a disciple of Mine.

Reader 2: Everything?

All: Everything!

Leader 1: Then Jesus spotted another person in the crowd with great Kingdom potential and said: “Follow me.”

Would-be Disciple 2: Okay, I'll follow You. But first allow me to go and bury my father.

Reader 2 (*sadly*): Oh, I'm so sorry. What did Jesus say?

Reader 1: He said,

All: “Let the dead bury their own dead, but as for you . . .”

Reader 1 (boldly): “Go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.”

Reader 2: Now wait a minute. Let the dead bury their own dead? What do you suppose Jesus meant?

Would-be Disciple 2: It was as if Jesus were saying to me, Do not put off until tomorrow what I am calling you to do today. I demand an immediate response.

Reader 2: Like right now?

All: Like right now!

Reader 1: And another would-be disciple stepped out of the crowd and said.

Would-be Disciple 3: I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.

Reader 2: Sounds reasonable to me.

Would-be Disciple 3: But Jesus said,

Reader 1: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

Reader 2: Hey now, come on. Don't you think that's a little harsh?

Would-be Disciple 3: Well, yes, at first I did. But soon I came to realize that Jesus expects a total commitment of our lives to Him.

Reader 2: A total commitment?

All: Yes, a total commitment!

Reader 1: Our time,

Reader 2: Our treasures,

Would-be Disciple 1: Our talents,

Would-be Disciple 2: Our abilities,

Would-be Disciple 3: Our inabilities.

Reader 1: Our commitment must be ...

All: Complete! He will settle for nothing less.

Reader 1: So, if you really want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ ...

Reader 2: Oh, yes, I really do!

Reader 1: Then you must . . .

Would-be Disciple 1: Count the cost,

Would-be Disciple 2: Respond immediately,

Would-be Disciple 3: And make a complete commitment of your life to Him.

- Hymn - “Give of Your Best to the Master”; “Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus”
- Prayer/Announcements/Offering
- Scripture Lesson: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Options:

(1) Have one youth read the passage.

(2) Print the passage, copy it, give it to each person who enters the sanctuary, and read it in unison with a youth leading.

Suggested Message Outline

Now Is the Time

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Introduction: Many people participate in making resolutions at the beginning of a new year. There is absolutely nothing wrong with making New Year's resolutions - it reveals a healthy, normal desire to see one's life improve. But life is not quite as simple as we would sometimes hope it to be. That's why so few New Year's resolutions ever really happen.

The man whom we know simply as the Preacher, the one who wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, was fully aware of the complex nature of life. And from the powerful poem we find in Ecclesiastes 3, we discover some truths that just might help us deal with the year

1. *There are some things that cannot be changed.*

- A. The Preacher has written: "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven" (verse 1).
- B. That is simply an admission of God's sovereignty. God has ordained order, and it is our responsibility to observe it.
- C. It is a waste of our precious time and energy to try to change that which cannot be changed.
- D. Danger: Although it is true that most things cannot be changed, that doesn't mean we are to be fatalistic. A fatalist is one who says: Well, since all things are ordered by God, it doesn't matter how I live or what I do. If it's going to happen, it's going to happen.

2. *There are some things that can be changed.*

- A. CW Keil has written that along with God's *sovereignty* is man's *responsibility*. True, some things cannot be changed, but some can. Therefore we are to live as responsible people.
- B. Maybe we cannot do anything about such issues as grief, disease, pain, suffering, and death. But in every person's life, there is a time to take action. "A time to build up ... to gather stones ... to embrace ... to search ... to speak ... to love" (NASB). These are our responsibility.

3. *Now is the time for God's people to act.*

- A. The Preacher has said, "There is. . . a time to *search*." This is the time. We must become a searching church. The church that does not search for those who are lost has lost touch with the very reason for its existence. (George W Peters: "The world is far more ready to receive the gospel than Christians are to hand it out.") NOW IS THE TIME!
- B. The Preacher has also said: "There is ... a time to *speak*." Our church is the best-kept secret in town. We've got to use every available resource to let this community know who we are and why we're here. This must become a very high priority. NOW IS THE TIME.
- C. The Preacher has also said, "There is a time to *embrace*." And this is the time. We must be willing to widen our circle to allow others in, not just point them to an empty pew and say, "We have room." We must open our hearts and our lives. NOW IS THE TIME.
- D. Finally, the Preacher has said: "There is a time to *love*." This is the message of holiness: love for God, and love for neighbor. The holiness message of perfect love is the reason for existence as a church. "God and a little company of holy believers can bring it to pass." NOW IS THE TIME.

Conclusion: How can we accomplish all this? What shall be our motivation? He has set eternity in our hearts (verse 11). By His Holy Spirit, eternal values now take the place of temporal concerns. We must search, speak, embrace, and love, because we have had a glimpse of eternity. Eternal life has begun in us; we must share it with others.

- **Closing Activity**-Pass out paper to everyone. Have them write out one resolution for the year, one thing God would have them do with their lives in the coming year.
- Closing Hymn and Prayer

OPERATOR, GIVE ME JESUS! (PRAYER)

By Bud Reedy

THEME

God wishes that His children become people of prayer.

PREPARATION

1. Appoint four youth to read the scriptures given in Dramatic Scripture Reading.
2. Select five adults or mature youth in advance to lead the discussion group.
3. Have youth prepared to sing, take the offering, and so on.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE

- Welcome and Prayer - youth worship leader
- **Opening Hymn No. 472** - "Standing on the Promises"
- **Introduction** - to be read, paraphrased, or memorized by the worship leader.

Richard Foster, author of the book *Celebration of Discipline*, writes the following about prayer:

"Prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the spiritual life. It is original research in unexplored territory. Prayer brings us into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit. Real prayer is life creating and life changing." Most of us would agree that prayer is important. And most of us would admit it is an area of our devotion to the Lord that could be improved.

Our youth will be leading us in a worship experience that has prayer as its theme. Their goal is to challenge the whole church to be people of prayer, as God desires.

- **Dramatic Scripture Reading** - With the hymn "Sweet Hour of Prayer" being played or sung softly in the background, have four youth read the following scriptures:
 1. "King David praised God as he prayed . . ." (read Psalm 103).
 2. "The Psalmist asked God to forgive him as he prayed . . ." (read Psalm 51).
 3. "James said of prayer. . ." (read James 5:13-18).
 4. "And our Lord Jesus taught us to pray . . ." (read Matthew 6:5-13; have the congregation join in on the Lord's Prayer).
- **Special Song** - Have a youth vocalist or group sing a song on the theme of prayer.
- **Announcements** - Be sure to announce upcoming youth events.
- **Offertory** - Use a youth vocalist.
- Suggested Message Outline

Operator, Give Me Jesus

Introduction: Have you ever been in a hotel that had room service? All you have to do is pick up a phone, and somebody is ready and waiting to bring you breakfast, lunch, dinner, five cups of coffee, a chocolate milk shake, or whatever your heart desires.

That is the concept that some Christians have of prayer. Some Christians have created God in the image of a divine bellhop. For them, prayer is like room service: Just dial direct and you may get whatever it is that you want. Now prayer is many things, but we can be quite sure this is not what prayer is.

There is a proper way to pray. And I believe that as mature, growing Christians, we should follow a simple procedure. Tonight we will consider a simple guide that may be helpful to you as you cultivate a meaningful prayer life. It is: ACTS.

1. *Meaningful prayer must begin with Adoration.*

- A. Adoration means worshipping and praising God.
- B. Why should we praise God?
 1. 1 John 4:10 - "This is love . . . not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." Let us never take our redemption for granted.
 2. Our personal salvation alone is reason enough.
 3. Praise to God is the best way for you to show your gratitude (Philippians 4:6).

2. *Prayer should include Confession.*

- A. Confession includes admitting our continual dependence upon God.
- B. Why is confession important?
 1. Isaiah 59:1-2
 2. Unconfessed sin hinders fellowship with God. True confession is a willingness to admit our shortcomings and failures to God.
 3. Result - 1 John 1:9
 4. One final observation about confession: It is good to pray for the repair of mistakes, but praying earlier would keep us from making so many (preventive medicine).

3. *Prayer must include Thanksgiving.*

- A. How often should we give thanks? (Hebrews 13:15)
- B. Why? (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- C. It seems that many of us seldom pause to give thanks for the simple blessings of life. One reason may be that we have so little that we think there isn't anything to be thankful for. Another reason may be that we are used to having so much. We simply assume that we deserve all the good things of life. Another reason is that it hurts our pride to be grateful. We do not want to admit that God is the Provider of all things. We are simply His stewards. Being thankful requires humility and faith in God. When we have these, we can be grateful.
- D. Thanksgiving puts power into living.

4. *Finally, prayer should involve Supplication.*

- A. Supplication involves intercession.
 1. Colossians 1:9 is an example of intercession.
 2. Many times our attempts to lead others to Jesus are fruitless because we forget to pray for them. The divine order is to talk to God about people, and then to talk to people about God.
- B. Supplication also involves petition.
 1. Prayers of petition include situations, problems, and circumstances that you perceive need changing.

2. Of these prayers, Jesus said: (Mark 11:24).
3. But God often chooses not to answer some of our petitions. Why? Unwise prayers or ones prayed with mixed motives could be the reason (James 1:5-8. 41-3).
4. We must be very careful to examine our motives.
5. Example - 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. God knows exactly what we need.

Conclusion:

1. Let us become people of prayer. Prayer is not a substitute for working, thinking, watching, suffering, or giving; prayer is a support for all other efforts.
 2. Model prayer - Not my will, but Yours.
- Hymn - “Not My Will, but Thine”
 - Close with prayer around the altar.



YOUTH

RALLIES

STARTING AGAIN

By Gary Sivewright

PURPOSE: To give those youth who have failed God in the past a chance to start over again.

RECOMMENDED USE: This Youth Rally can be used anytime during the year, but might best be used near the beginning of the New Year.

PREPARATION:

1. Advertise.
2. Announce. A week before the rally, announce the following team competition details.
 - a. There will be a “Most Beautiful Baby” contest (if you choose to do it).
 - b. Points will be given for attendance and for bringing guests. (For example, 100 points for each team member, 1000 extra points if the entire team is present, 300 points for each guest.)
3. Choose a youth boy and an adult who will prepare to perform a drama, “The Race”. Give them the script as early as you can. The boy is to wear a heavy pair of boots, a heavy coat, hat, scarf, and should have a rather large stone tied around his neck.
4. Read Hebrews 12:1
5. Pray that your youth will have both an entertaining evening and be challenged to put God first.

GROUP ACTIVITIES: Choose one or all of the following group activities to get the rally started.

1. Beautiful Baby Contest. Have each team choose one youth to represent them. Have a team leader take those who were chosen out of the room. Using white bed sheets and pins, dress them in “nappies” (have them roll up their pant legs or wear shorts). Have them walk in front of the whole group, one at a time. Judge them on the following things: Best looking baby; Best cry; Best baby talk. Have a panel of judges give points to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place babies.
2. Backwards Shoe Relay Race. Instruct the teams that they all will hop, one at a time, on one foot from one side of the room to the other. When they reach the opposite side of the room, they are to remove their shoes and put them on the opposite feet, and hop back on the opposite foot they hopped down on. The team who finished first is the winning team.
3. How Well Do You Really Know Your Friends? Instruct each youth to choose a partner. They will have three minutes to find out as much information as they can from their partner. At the end of the three minutes, they are to sit back to back with their partner so they cannot see each other. Pass out pieces of paper or cards, and pencils to the group and ask them to complete the following questions about their partner. The youth who answers the most questions correctly wins.
Questions: 1) Do your partner’s shoes tie, buckle, strap or neither? 2) List all the colors in your partner’s dress or shirt. 3) Was your partner wearing a watch?
4. Pass The Orange. You will need one orange for each team. Teams must stand in a queue. Give the first person in queue an orange. They must place it under their chins and at the signal pass it to the next person without using their hands or arms. The orange must be

passed from chin to chin all the way down the queue and back. If a team should drop its orange or touch it with hands or arms, that team must start over. Give points to the team that finishes first.

5. Red Light, Green Light. Everyone stands against one wall facing the leader. The leader turns his back and calls “green light”. When he does this everyone must proceed to move towards the finish line. When the leader calls “red light”, everyone must stop. The leader will quickly turn around, and anyone moving must go back to the start. The youth leader can try to trick everyone by shouting out things like “green fight, green bite, green lightning bug.” Give points to the first team to finish.

TRANSITION: These activities are designed to help make the transition from the activities to the message.

1. Announce the winner of the competitions and give team points. Announce the point totals.
2. Group Singing.
3. Drama, “The Race”. A young man and an adult coach enter. The boy is dressed in an overcoat and heavy boots. The coach is in sports clothing.

Coach: Marcellino, how do you feel about the race?

Marcellino: I feel super, coach. Never felt better.

Coach: Then you really want to do your best?

Marcellino: Yes, I do.

Coach: Then you better take off those boots. They might slow you down a bit.

Marcellino: Okay, Coach. (Marcellino takes off the boots.)

Coach: And while you’re at it, you might want to take off the hat and the scarf.

Marcellino: Are you sure?

Coach: Yes. Now they’re getting ready to call you to your marks. Remember everything I’ve told you. Don’t listen to anyone else but me. Run your race. Now take off your coat and give it your best. (Marcellino takes off coat, revealing a stone around his neck.)

Marcellino: Okay, I’m ready.

Starter: Get on your mark, get set . . .

Coach: Wait, wait, wait a minute, Marcellino. Marcellino, what is that around your neck?

Marcellino: That’s my “lucky stone,” Coach.

Coach: Get rid of it!

Marcellino: But, Coach . . .

Coach: I said get rid of it. You can’t run a race with a stone hitting you in the chest. Get rid of that thing.

Marcellino: I guess you’re right, but I sure feel insecure without my lucky stone.

Coach: Your lucky stone? You mean you have never run races without this thing hanging around your neck before?

Marcellino: Well, no Coach . . . why?

Coach: Well, it slows you down, that's why. No wonder you haven't finished a race in three years. Get rid of that thing!

Marcellino: Okay, Coach . . . ah, hey Coach. If I can't wear the stone, is it okay if I pull my lucky piano behind me?

MESSAGE: "Starting Again" (This is just an outline. Fill in and present in your own words.)

It's hard to imagine someone running a race dressed like Marcellino. And yet, there are some youths who are trying to live the Christian life in a similar way. Hebrews 12:1 says: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

So before you think that Marcellino is really strange, consider this: We've all had our "lucky stones"—things we've held onto to make us feel more secure. And what is even more tragic is that sometimes the things we throw away or confess to the Lord we go back and pick up at a later date. These things slow us down and might even cause us to stumble and fall. But we go back to them just like Marcellino and his lucky stone. Maybe what we need are some training rules. Rules that will help us keep the faith and not stumble quite so often. The writer of Hebrews helps us out:

1. Throw away (confess) those sins, habits, and relationships that cause us to fail. Then keep away from them.
2. "Run with perseverance"—the race is not won in a day, or a week, or two weeks. It's a marathon, so you have to prepare and train. How?
 - a. Read your Bible for God's direction for your life.
 - b. Talk to God about your own daily race.
 - c. Trust the Coach (Jesus) with your life.
3. Fix your eyes on Jesus. When we look at past failures and defeats, we're tempted to give up. If you stumble or make a mistake, just admit it, confess it, and move on from there. No successful runner stays on the ground or goes back to the starting line.

Maybe you are carrying around a stone like Marcellino tried to carry. Maybe your stone is a failure, or an attitude, or a sin that is keeping you from really running the race well. You can start again. Starting again is for people who are not growing . . . for people not in training . . . for people who are not as serious as they should be about running the race. So go ahead, start again. Just come to this place of prayer and confess your failure, attitude, or sin to God. Drop the stone. Let it go. Believe that God will forgive and begin the race again. (Close the message with an invitation to pray. Sing a chorus of invitation like "I Have Decided To Follow Jesus".) After a time of prayer, dismiss the group.

NEW RAGS, NEW TOUCH

by Susie Shellenberger

PURPOSE: To encourage youth to accept Christ as their personal savior and allow Him to give them a “brand-new touch.”

RECOMMENDED USE: This youth rally is recommended for the summer months so the group can take advantage of the outdoor space for the Group activities, but it can be used at any time during the year.

PREPARATION:

1. **Announce.** A week before the rally, announce that everyone will need to bring a rag to the rally.
2. **Points will be awarded** for team attendance and for bringing guests.
3. **Familiarize yourself** with Isaiah 43:19, 25; 44:21-22; 45:4-5 (all TLB).

GROUP ACTIVITIES:

Choose one or all of the following Group activities to get the rally started.

1. **Rag Tag.** Each person takes the rag he brought with him and tucks the end into a pants or dress pocket or underneath his/her belt. One person is designated “it”. At a given signal he pursues the rest of the group in a game of “chase”. When he pulls someone's rag, that person is “it”.

A Variation: Give the signal and allow all teams to go after each others' rags. The team with the most rags at the end of three minutes is declared the winning team.

2. **Drop the Rag.** Everyone is instructed to stand in a circle, facing inward. One person is “it” and walks around the outside of the circle with a rag in hand. He drops the rag behind someone's feet and proceeds to run around the circle. The other person chases him. The first person back to the original spot is safe, and the other person takes the rag and becomes “it”.
3. **Rag Fashion Show.** Instruct the youth to gather in their teams. Explain that they have 10 minutes to create a “rag fashion” on one member of their team. They will need to gather all their rags together and create a hat or some kind of fashionable garment for the selected team member. You will want to have scissors, tape and so on, available for each team. At the end of 10 minutes, have each rag model walk to the front of the group and model his fashion. A panel of judges should be available to judge for creativity.

TRANSITION:

Choose as many of the suggested activities as you wish. They are designed to help you make the transition from the high-energy group activities to the message.

1. **Announcements.** Announce the winners of each team competition and give updated team point totals. Use this time also to announce upcoming TOTAL events.
2. **Offering.** You may wish to have one of the youth provide an instrumental or vocal offertory.
3. **Group Singing.**
4. **Acquaint-a-Saint.** Ask an older adult in the church to share a short word of testimony with the youth group; or prepare a five-minute interview with him/her about his/her walk with the Lord and how he/she came to know Christ. This helps to acquaint your youth with some mature spiritual adults that they otherwise may not get to know.

5. **Group Discussion.** You have the option of breaking into teams for the discussion or keeping the entire group together. Read the following scriptures to the group or ask several youths to do so.

“For I’m going to do a brand new thing. See, I have already begun! Don’t you see it?” (Isaiah 43:19, TLB).

“I, yes, I alone am he who blots away your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again.” (v. 25, TLB)

“Israel, my chosen. I called you by name when you didn’t know me. I am Jehovah; there is no other God. I will strengthen you and send you out to victory even though you don’t know me.” (45:4-5, TLB).

6. Discussion Questions

- * What does God mean when He promises to do a “brand new thing” when we give our lives to Him?
 - * What does the fact that God calls us by our very name, before we even surrender our lives to Him, say about His character?
 - * Identify a time in your life when you felt as though you needed a brand-new touch.
 - * Though God is the only one who can really give a brand-new touch, what are other areas that people turn to, seeking that new touch?
 - * Do Christians sometimes need a brand-new touch, or is this mainly for non-Christians?
7. **Prayer.** Have one of the adult workers lead the group in prayer. You may wish to have one of the youth sing a special song before the message.

MESSAGE: “New Rags, New Touch”

(You will want to have little squares of new cloth or material placed on a small table at the front of your meeting room to use at the close of the service.)

Even before the dawn on Friday morning I noticed a young man, handsome and strong, walking the alleys of our city. He was pulling an old cart filled with cloth both bright and new, and he was calling in a clear, tenor voice: “Rags!” Ah, the air was foul and the first light filthy to be crossed by such sweet music.

“Rags! New rags for old! I take your tired rags! Rags!”

“Now, This is a wonder,” I thought to myself, for the man stood two meters tall and his arms were like tree limbs, hard and muscular, and his eyes flashed intelligence. Could he find no better job than this, to be a ragman in the inner city?

I followed him. My curiosity drove me. And I wasn’t disappointed.

Soon the Ragman saw a woman sitting on her back porch. She was sobbing into a handkerchief, sighing and shedding a thousand tears. Her knees and elbows made a sad X. Her shoulders shook. Her heart was breaking.

The Ragman stopped his cart. Quietly, he walked to the woman, stepping round tin cans, old toys, and nappies. “Give me your rag,” he said so quietly, “and I’ll give you another.”

He slipped the handkerchief from her eyes. She looked up, and he laid across her palm a linen cloth so clean and new that it shined. She blinked from the gift to the giver.

Then, as he began to pull his cart again, the Ragman did a strange thing: he put her stained handkerchief to his own face, and then *he* began to weep, to sob as grievously as she had done, his shoulders shaking. Yet she was left without a tear.

“This *is* a wonder,” I breathed to myself, and I followed the sobbing Ragman like a child who cannot turn away from a mystery.

“Rags! Rags! New rags for old!”

In a little while, when the sky showed grey behind the rooftops and I could see the shredded curtains hanging out black windows, the Ragman came upon a girl whose head was wrapped in a bandage, whose eyes were empty. Blood soaked her bandage. A single line of blood ran down her cheek.

Now the tall Ragman looked upon the child with pity, and he drew a lovely yellow bonnet from his cart.

“Give me your rags,” he said, tracing his own line on her cheek, “and I’ll give you mine.”

The child could only gaze at him while he loosened the bandage, removed it, and tied it to his own head. The bonnet he set on hers. And I gasped at what I saw, for with the bandage went the wound! Against his brow it ran a darker, more substantial blood—his own!

“Rags! Rags! I take old rags!” cried the sobbing, bleeding, strong, intelligent Ragman. The Ragman seemed more and more to hurry.

“Are you going to work?” he asked a man who leaned against a telephone pole. The man shook his head.

The Ragman pressed him: “Do you have a job?”

“Are you crazy ?” sneered the other. He pulled away from the pole, revealing the right sleeve of his jacket—flat, the cuff stuffed into the pocket. He had no arm.

“So,” said the Ragman. “Give me your jacket, and I’ll give you mine.”

Such quiet authority in his voice!

The one-armed man took off his jacket. So did the Ragman—and I trembled at what I saw: for the Ragman’s arm stayed in its sleeve, and when the other put it on he had two good arms, thick as tree limbs; but the Ragman had only one.

“Go to work,” he said.

After that he found a drunk, lying unconscious beneath an army blanket, an old man, hunched, wizened, and sick. He took that blanket and wrapped it round himself, but for the drunk he left new clothes.

And now I had to run to keep up with the Ragman. Though he was weeping uncontrollably, and bleeding freely at the forehead, pulling his cart with one arm, stumbling for drunkenness, falling again and again, exhausted, old and sick, yet he went with terrible speed. On spider’s legs he skittered through the alleys of the city, this mile and the next, until he came to its limits and then he rushed beyond.

I wept to see the change in this man. I hurt to see his sorrow. And yet I needed to see where he was going in such haste, perhaps to know what drove him so.

The little old Ragman—he came to a landfill. He came to the garbage pits. And then I wanted to help him in what he did, but I hung back, hiding. He climbed a hill. Then he sighed. He lay down. He laid his head on a handkerchief and a jacket. He covered his bones with an army blanket. And he died.

Oh, how I cried to witness that death! I slumped in a junked car and waited and mourned as one who has no hope—because I had come to love the Ragman. Every other face had faded in the wonder of this man, and I cherished him; but he died. I sobbed myself to sleep.

I did not know—how could I know—that I slept through Friday night and Saturday and its night, too.

But then, on Sunday morning, I was awakened by a violence.

Light—pure, hard, demanding light—slammed against my sour face, and I blinked, and I looked, and I saw the last and the first wonder of all. There was the Ragman, folding the blanket most carefully, a scar on his forehead, but alive! And, besides that, healthy! There was not sign of sorrow nor of age, and all the rags that he had gathered shined for cleanliness.

Well, then I lowered my head and trembling for all that I had seen. I myself walked up to the Ragman. I told him my name with shame, for I was a sorry figure next to him. Then I took off all my clothes in that place, and I said to him with dear yearning in my voice: “Dress me.”

He dressed me. My Lord, he put new rags on me, and I am a wonder beside him. The Ragman, the Ragman, the Christ!

WRAP UP

The Ragman is a parallel to Jesus Christ. In Isaiah, God tells us that He wants to do a “brand-new thing” in our lives. In other words, He wants to take the confusion, the guilt, and the aimlessness and replace it with peace, joy, and purpose for living. But He can't do that “brand-new thing” in our lives until we give Him our old lives. In the parable we saw the man coming to Jesus and asking for a new “dress” or a new life-style, a new start. We need to give God *everything*, all of our old ways and habits, and allow Him to completely redress us with His will and His character.

Some of you have put off making a decision for Christ. You've had a great time tonight playing the games and joining in on the fun, but you've never made a serious commitment to the Lord. Tonight can be your night. Will you let God have His way with you right now? Will you let Him do a brand-new, exciting thing in your heart tonight?

Some of you are already Christians, but somehow you've become a little stagnant in your walk with Christ. The pressures of life have been building around you, your Bible sits on the shelf, and for one reason or another you haven't really grown spiritually for a long time. You've somehow lost the excitement of being a Christian. More than anything else, you just need a brand-new touch tonight. Would you like to recommit some things to God and seek His forgiveness and receive a brand-new touch? Christ wants to take your old rags and replace them with new. In other words, He's willing right now to give you a brand-new start. Do you need a brand-new touch? Let Him touch you right now.

I want everyone to bow their heads and close their eyes. I have some pieces of brand-new rags up here with me. I would like for each one of you to take a little rag home with you and put it somewhere where you'll see it often, to remind yourself of Christ's brand-new touch on your life. But

before you take a rag, I want to invite you to kneel in prayer and evaluate your relationship with God. If you've never asked Him to come into your life, now is the time to do it. If you're already a Christian, but just need a brand-new touch tonight, now is the time to receive His touch. After you're finished praying, come receive your rag and remain in an attitude of prayer. (Close in a prayer of thanks and testimony.)

FISHERMAN'S WHARF

By Susie Shellenberger

PURPOSE: To encourage youth to: (1) share His Spirit with a lost and dying world; (2) examine themselves spiritually on a daily basis, so that they are *ready* and *equipped* to share His Spirit.

PREPARATION:

1. Advertise.
2. Announce. A few weeks before the rally announce the following details:
 - a. Five thousand points (or an amount of your choice) will be awarded to everyone who brings fishing accessories or dresses “fishy.” (Encourage the youth to be creative. This can be a lot of fun. Encourage them that almost anything goes. Examples: fish hooks, a picture of a fish, worms, etc.)
 - b. Twenty thousand points will be awarded to the team with the most people bringing or wearing anything related to fish.
 - c. Team competition
3. Points will be awarded for team attendance and for bringing guests.
4. Familiarize yourself with the Book of Jonah.

GROUP ACTIVITIES:

Choose one or all of the following activities to get the rally started.

Hook Up. Everyone hooks one arm with a partner, and all the pairs stand in a large circle. Then one pair is unhooked and put in the middle. One person must chase the other person. The person who is chased must try to “hook up” with another pair before being touched by the one who is “it”. When he hooks up with another pair, the odd person in the pair must leave and find someone else to hook up with. If the chaser catches him, the roles are reversed and now the chaser is chased.

Octopus. Mark out playing area. One person is the Octopus. queue everyone up at one end of the playing area, with the Octopus standing in the middle of the area. When the Octopus counts to three, everyone must run to the other end of the playing area without being touched by the Octopus. If they are touched, they must stop where they are touched. Everyone who was touched is now on the Octopus' team and must try to “capture” others by touching them. However, they cannot move their feet. They must stay where they are touched. On the count of 3, everyone runs to the opposite end of the playing area again, while the Octopus and his “arms” try to touch them. (Remember that the “arms” cannot move their feet!) The game continues until everyone has been touched.

Most Outlandish Fish Story. Instruct each team that they have four minutes to create the most ridiculous fish story they can create. At the end of four minutes they are to elect one member from each team to share his fish story with the entire youth group. Have all the storytellers come forward at once, even though each one will tell his story separately, so none of the teams can continue to create while someone is sharing their story with the group. Award the team with the most outlandish fish story a large number of points. Stories cannot exceed one minute in length.

TRANSITION:

Choose as many of the suggested activities as you wish. They are designed to help you make the transition from the high-energy group activities to the message.

1. **Announcements.** Announce the winners of each team competition and give updated team point totals. Announce the team with the most number of points for people dressed fishy or with fish gear. Use this time also to announce upcoming **TOTAL** events.
2. **Offering.** You may wish to have one of the youth play an instrumental offertory.
3. **Group Singing.** Lead the group in the song “Share His Spirit,” or other song that will have a definite tie-in with tonight’s message.
4. **Group Discussion.** If the group is large, divide into teams for the discussion. If your group is small enough for all teams to participate together, then lead the discussion with the large group.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?” (Matthew 5:13) As Christians, we are the seasoning of the world. Since we possess Christ in our hearts, we have the solution for a dull and listless world. It is our responsibility as the seasoning to make the rest of the world flavorful by sharing our seasoning with those around us.

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men” (Matthew 5:14-16). We are commissioned to share His light with those in our world. If we as Christians don’t share the Light, who will?

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to be the “salt of the earth”?
 2. If saltiness is connected with seasoning, how can we season our lost and dying world?
 3. What does it mean to “let your light shine”?
 4. How could you as an individual “shine your light” at school?
 5. Do you see *specific* evidence of any Christians shining their lights at school? At work?
 6. Can a few of you identify a specific time in your lives when you felt that God was prompting you to share His light with another person?
 7. What makes it hardest to share His light with those we come in contact with?
5. **Prayer.** Have one of the adult workers lead the group in prayer for tonight’s message.

MESSAGE: “The World’s Most Outlandish Fish Story”

Some of you shared some pretty wild fish stories earlier this evening. During the next few minutes I’d like to share the world’s most outlandish fish story! Some of you are familiar with parts of the story; but you know how it is with fish stories: They get better each time you tell them. Tonight is no exception.

Nineveh was an old city It was also a *big* city. In fact, it was the fastest-growing city in its area. At the time of our story, Nineveh had hundreds of thousands of residents, and more people were moving inside the city limits every day. Nineveh was also an extremely wicked city, full of evil perversion. Things had gotten so far out of control that God decided He would destroy the city. We’ve heard of other cities that God had to destroy due to maximum evil: Sodom, Gomorrah, and even the whole world in Noah’s time. This gives us an idea of how wicked Nineveh must have been.

Even though God is just and fair, He is also a very loving God who doesn't want any of mankind to be eternally lost. Nineveh had never had any missionaries or godly prophets. The people had never heard of God's love and freedom from sin. Because of this, God decided to give the city another chance. He chose a prophet named Jonah to go to Nineveh and tell the people about Him.

Jonah's response to God was, "Lord. Don't send me. Send someone else! I don't want to go."

"But Jonah, if you don't tell the people about Me, I'll have to destroy them!"

Well, that didn't bother Jonah at all. In fact, he *wanted* God to destroy them!

God continued dealing with Jonah. Jonah's next response was, "O Lord, it's so far away from home! I just don't want to leave home. I've got my friends and my family, and I just don't want to."

"Jonah, I need you to share My message with the lost and dying world of Nineveh. If you don't do it, I'll have to destroy them."

Jonah wanted the easy way out and gave God his next excuse. "Listen, Lord, I've heard about their reputation. Those people are wicked—massively wicked! I don't want to get involved with *those* kinds of people! Go ahead and destroy them and get it over with."

However, God wasn't about to let the people in Nineveh die without at least hearing that they had a chance to turn from their sins and experience forgiveness. And Jonah was the man He'd chosen to do the job. Since Jonah didn't want the job, he ran. Some of you know what it's like to run from God. It could be that some of you are still running. You can keep running, but you can never hide. God always knows where you are. It's a lot easier to obey God the first time around instead of trying to run.

Jonah was determined to run from God, so he went and bought a one-way ticket for a cruise. Only this was no pleasure cruise! Jonah boarded a ship full of superstitious sailors and headed for the basement to sleep off his guilt. We can't run from God! God knew exactly where Jonah was. A terrible storm arose at sea. Water rushed onto the deck of the ship, and the sailors knew they were about to die. They knew that Jonah was a man of God, so they woke him up and begged him to pray for their safety.

Well, the last thing Jonah wanted to do was pray! He didn't feel like praying for anyone. His conscience bothered him too much. The superstitious sailors then drew straws to see who would be thrown overboard. Jonah lost. He then told the crew that he was the reason for the turmoil. The sailors threw him overboard, and immediately the storm began to ease. Even though things started looking a lot better for the sailors, Jonah was about to experience fishing from a whole new perspective!

A large fish swallowed him. The Bible doesn't tell us what kind of fish it was, but for tonight we will say it was a whale. That's a pretty big fish! Picture yourself being swallowed whole by a whale. Can you imagine that? What would it be like inside a whale? The Bible tells us that Jonah spent the next three days and three nights inside the whale. Wow! Three days and three nights is a long time.

What can you do in the belly of a whale for three days and three nights? Back stroke through the stomach juices? Taste the gastric acids? Chip off the ol' bone marrow? Think? Jonah thought, long and hard. For three days and three nights in the belly of a whale, swimming through the stomach muscles, Jonah thought about giving in and getting right with God. Jonah begged God for another chance. God heard his prayers and caused the whale to vomit, meaning that Jonah would receive

another chance. Whew! It would've been a lot easier to serve God at the beginning instead of trying to run!

Jonah went to Nineveh and stood right in the middle of the town square. He preached fervently to the people passing by. He warned them about God's judgment. He told of a loving God who didn't want His children to die. The people stopped and listened. They'd never heard a message like this before! They had no idea they could be freed from their bond of sin. They liked what they heard. They began praying and they repented of their sins. The king even heard what Jonah said and issued a new decree that the whole city turn from their wicked ways and worship the one true God. Jonah finished the big sermon series by telling the people that God would destroy their city in 40 days if they didn't turn from their evil ways.

After saying all that he felt God wanted him to say, he went right outside the city limits and waited for God to send down the fire from heaven and destroy Nineveh. Jonah wanted to see some action! Forty days passed and nothing happened. There was no need for God to destroy the city now; they had turned to Him. But Jonah was furious. He begged God to kill him. He didn't want to be seen when the things he had prophesied were going to happen didn't happen.

He was worried about what the citizens of Nineveh would think of him. Instead of being concerned with what other people thought of him, he *should have* been concerned with a lost and dying city that had come to know God! He needed an attitude check. Pouting, he sat under a small vine and begged God to kill him. The vine withered and Jonah received a third-degree sunburn. Jonah continued to pout, and told God that he wanted to die *immediately!* But God continued to deal with Jonah. There were a couple of very *important* lessons that God wanted Jonah to learn. I believe God would have us learn those same things.

NUMBER ONE: It's our responsibility to share Christ with a lost and dying world. God has commissioned each one of us to share His Message with those we come in contact with. Your school is a lost and dying world. God is asking you to be His messenger. Too many times, like Jonah, we get overly concerned about what other people will think, instead of focusing on the real issue of youth living without the Lord.

If we don't share His message with our lost and dying world, who will? You think the rocks are going to start talking? That's preposterous. It's just as preposterous, however, to think that you would allow your friends to die and spend eternity in hell without ever sharing God's message with them. They are your responsibility. Invite them to church. Bring them to rallies like this one. Let's love them to Jesus.

God may be nudging some of you in a special way to share His Spirit through full-time ministry as a pastor, or youth minister, or missionary or song evangelist. Are you willing? Will you try to run like Jonah, or will you respond like Isaiah, "I'll go, Lord. Send me!"

NUMBER TWO: We need an attitude check! We need to check our priorities and our heart's motives on a continual basis. Second Corinthians 13:5 tells us to examine ourselves. As Christians, we need to get into a disciplined *habit of* examining ourselves spiritually. Do some of you need an attitude check tonight? If so, we're going to pray in just a moment. Have some of you avoided the responsibility of sharing God's Spirit with your world? Like Jonah, have you been too concerned with what others would think? Some of you may still be running from God. It's time to stop running. God

can end your search tonight. Would there be one here whom God has been dealing with concerning full-time ministry? How will you respond?

To everyone, God reminds us through the world's most outlandish fish story that we are *responsible for* our world! Let's join together and sing again "Share His Spirit." If you have a need in your life tonight or would like to respond to what God has shown you this evening, I want you to make this your personal prayer time.

CLOSING

(If you have an altar you will want to invite the youth to come forward for prayer time.)

YOU AND THE JUDGE

by Ted Taylor

PURPOSE: To confront youth with the reality of Judgment Day and teach them accountability for their lives.

PREPARATION:

1. **Study** the following scripture passages: Matthew 12:34, 36-37; Proverbs 13:3; James 1:26; Hebrews 9:27; Romans 3:10, 23; John 3:17; 1 John 4:16-17.
2. **Recruit** people to be part of your drama.
3. **Advertise** the rally.

GROUP ACTIVITIES (More activities are found in the back of this book):

Appoint a youth to be the nonbiased judge for the evening. The funnier the person, the better this will be. Have him sit in a decorated chair, black robe, table, and gavel. He will judge all the games for the evening.

1. **Judge's Choice.** This is a relay in which each team member runs to the end where the judge is. They must imitate a person or animal. When the judge thinks they are doing a good job, he sends them back and the next person comes up. Award points to the winners.
2. **My Mummy.** Give each team two or three rolls of toilet paper and have them turn one of their team members into a mummy. Let your judge pick your winner.

TRANSITION: Use this time to move toward the message by using some or all of the following.

1. Group Singing.
2. Interview your youth judge. Ask him/her the following questions:
 - a. What is it like being the judge?
 - b. Is it hard to make decisions?
 - c. Were you afraid that people would be mad at you?
 - d. Would you like to be in God's shoes on Judgment Day?

3. Drama:

Announcer

Host, Peter

Alfonso

Mr. Look Wright

Ima Blessed

Announcer: Welcome tonight, ladies and gentlemen, to the most revealing game show in the world. It's time once again for "God's Court," with the Honorable Jehovah God presiding. Let's hear a heavenly welcome for your host, the apostle Peter.

Peter: Thank you. Welcome to the show "God's Court," where once you earn a prize, it's yours to keep. All our rules come right out of God's Holy Word, for Hebrews 4:12 tells us that "The word of God is living and active ... [and] judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Let's now meet our first contestant.

Announcer: Our first contestant was a mushroom picker from Kingston, Jamaica. Please welcome Alfonso.

Peter: Welcome, Alfonso, to “God's Court” How are you feeling today?

Alfonso: I don't know. I think I'm going to be sorry.

Peter: As we look into your file, you have a lot to worry about. You hold a new “God's Court” record because in your lifetime you took the name of the Lord in vain, either by cursing God or by using the name of Jesus, 621,486 times. That is 1,208 times more than our previous record holder, B. A. Cusser.

Alfonso: What about the time I helped the old lady across the street? I even said, “God bless you,” to her.

Peter: I don't think that evens out the score. Let's take a look at the Book. Your scripture judgment is Matthew 12:34, 36-37: “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. . . . I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Alfonso: So what happens to me?

Peter: You've been a great sport on the show, but let's just say that I'm glad I'm not you. (*Alfonso exits.*)

Announcer: Our next contestant is Mr. Look Wright from Trinidad & Tobago where he owned oil wells.

Peter: Welcome to “God's Court,” the place where everything is known and shown.

Mr. Wright: I'm happy to be here. I raised lots of money to buy new benches for our church..

Peter: Let's look in your file. I'm sorry; your file isn't spotless.

Mr. Wright: What do you mean?

Peter: Well, does 9 March 2001 at the country club ring a bell? It seems that you were telling some real juicy gossip and those dirty jokes.

Mr. Wright: But that was what everyone was doing, We all told stories like that and --

Peter: Let's see what the scripture says for you. James 1:26: “If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.”

Mr. Wright: Worthless, after going every Sunday to that boring church service! (*Mr. Wright exits.*)

Peter: I'm sorry; you can tell it to the Judge.

Announcer: Our final contestant works at a food store in Guyana. Please welcome Ima Blessed.

Ima: Praise the Lord, it's a real blessing to be here. I've looked forward to this day for so long. Peter, I've always wanted you to teach me to water-ski.

Peter: Later; we've got plenty of time. Let's open your file. It's completely empty. Not one sin or blot.

Ima: Praise the Lord, but it's not my own righteousness. I asked Jesus into my heart when I was a youth, and living for Him has been the most exciting thing in my life. You see, Jesus' blood washed me white. I've done plenty of things wrong, but when I asked His forgiveness, it's like I never did one wrong thing.

Peter: Well, what scripture do we have for you? Revelation 21:1-2, 4: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. . . He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Ima: Praise the Lord!

Peter: That's our show for today, proving what Proverbs 13:3 says , “He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.” This is the apostle Peter, signing off from the Pearly Gates, saying, “Good-bye, and we'll see you someday in God's Court.”

MESSAGE: “Judgment Day”

Judgment Day—most of us don't like to think about it, but that day is for certain, a day when we will be held accountable for everything we've said and done on earth. Hebrews 9:27 says, “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” No saint or sinner will escape—just you and the Judge.

If your teacher makes an assignment, but you know that you will never be asked for that assignment or ever tested over that assignment, would you do the assignment? Judgment Day is the test day for the student, the harvest day for the farmer, or the big game for the athlete. It's the day we are all held accountable for what we have done, a day when rewards and punishment are given.

There are a few key scriptures we need to know:

1. Romans 3:10: *“There is no one righteous, not even one.”*; Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* The bad news is that we all have failed the test and are deserving of eternal punishment - no matter how many times we've gone to Sunday School or church. We can avoid all of the “Don'ts” (drinking, smoking, premarital sex, etc.) and still not be good enough to go to heaven. No one but Jesus has ever lived a good enough life to please God.
2. John 3:17: *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* Good news - Jesus has taken our punishment for us, and though we cannot stand in our own righteousness, we can stand in His righteousness. God can forgive our sins, never to be remembered against us. The Bible teaches us that it was Jesus' blood on the Cross that covers our sins.

Do we have to be scared of the Judgment? It all depends. If we haven't asked Jesus into our hearts, if we aren't living as Jesus instructed us to live, we have a lot to fear. If we are Christians and God is living in our hearts, then we don't have anything to fear. 1 John 4:16-17 tells us, *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.”* Someday it will be just you and the Judge. Is Jesus real in your life? If He isn't, right now can be the beginning of a brand-new life for you, a life that will be great now and even greater later, for Christians have no past and non-Christians have no future. (Close with time of prayer/altar call.)

HOW DO YOU BUILD A TEMPLE ?

(Part One of a Two-Part Series)

By Susie Shellenberger

PURPOSE: To make youth aware that good stewardship is not an option in Christianity.

PREPARATION:

1. Announce a week before the rally the following details:
 - a. Team Competitions.
 - b. Points will be awarded for team attendance and for bringing guests.
2. Familiarize yourself with the Book of Haggai.
3. Advertise the rally

GROUP ACTIVITIES: Choose one or all of the following group activities to get started.

1. **Machine Charades.** Instruct each team that they have 13 minutes to create a machine, with each team member acting out a certain part of the machine. At the end of 10 minutes, call the teams together and have each team present their machine to the entire youth group. Encourage the group to try to guess what each machine is. Award a prize or points to the most creative machine.
2. **Co-ordination clapping test.** Youth are to clap when the leader crosses his hands. They are out when they clap when they aren't supposed to or don't when they're supposed to.
3. **Stack em up.** Everyone sits in a circle. The leader reads out a description, and if the description applies to anyone, they must move one seat to their right. Ex. If you have long hair, move one seat to your right. If you have a green socks, move one seat to your right. If there is someone already in the chair, they cannot move. The person changing chairs simply sits on their lap. One chair could end up with 3,4,5 or more people stacked up on it. Read 15-20 descriptions per game.

TRANSITION: (These are designed to help you make the transition to the message.)

1. **Announcements.** Announce the winners of team competitions and give updated team points.
2. Group Singing.
3. **Dramas.** Copies of the following skits should be made and assigned two weeks prior to the rally.

Drama 1 - CONVERSATION WITH GOD

God: Raphael.

Raphael (*apathetic*): Yeah.

God: This is the Lord.

Raphael (*straightens up*): Yeah!

God: It's time to give, Raphael. Next Sunday your church is taking a special offering for the rebuilding of the temple. What are YOU going to do?

Raphael: OK, OK. I know all about it. I've heard the announcements and read about it in the bulletin. What am I supposed to do? Break into my savings account? That would probably buy a nail or two.

God: I want you to give from the heart.

Raphael: GIVE??? The only thing I could give that would be worth anything at all are my Nike basketball shoes. And that would NEVER work! I mean, God, do You realize what I would look like wearing my boots on the basketball court? *(Pause)* No way.

God: Raphael, I want you to give.

Raphael: OK. Wait a minute. Let's just calm down. I give. I do - I give. I give my time ... my talents ... my energies ... mySELF! What more could I give?

God: Money

Raphael *(sarcastic laugh)*: What does that look like?

God: Raphael, I want you to give money.

Raphael *(laughing)*: God wants me to give money. *(Laughing - laughter slowly dies, becomes serious)* Money! Wow, God, I want to help. I really do. But the most I could give would be \$3.00.

God: I want you to give \$25.00.

Raphael: TWENTY-FIVE? TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS? *(Pause)* God, I can't give that much. I only make \$40.00 a month working at my job. That would leave me \$15.00 for the whole month! How could I live on \$15.00 for a whole month! Besides, I've got to start saving up for Jamie's birthday.

God: Raphael, if you give only what you *think you can afford to give*, it's not really giving at all.

Raphael: What do you mean?

God: REAL GIVING. . . is giving what you *don't* have. SACRIFICIAL giving. Giving much more than you think you can afford to give . . . and trusting Me to supply your needs.

Raphael: Yeah, I'd have to trust You to supply my needs all right. No one else would.

God: When you give sacrificially is when you really start to enjoy and to *reap* My blessings. How bout it?

Raphael: Twenty-five dollars? *(Pause)* Yeah ... I could use a blessing!

Drama 2 - THE INVITATION

SCENE: Four people in church, during an invitation time. As each person speaks, voicing their inner thoughts, the rest of the group freezes.

Preacher: And so, we're opening up the altar now, for those of you who want to make a spiritual commitment.

Number 1: Oh, I sure hope those biscuits turn out OK. There'll be a lot of kids at the party tonight after church, and if those biscuits don't turn out good, they'll never let me live it down. *(Pause)* Oh no! I don't think I turned the oven off!

Preacher: I know that many of you will want to pray about the spiritual commitment you want to make towards rebuilding the temple. After all ... we are the temple!

Number 2: If he doesn't hurry up and quit preaching, I'm going to miss my favorite show.
(Looking at watch; restless) Oh come on! This is ridiculous! I'll never make it in time if he doesn't quit!

Preacher: Come forward and make the wisest decision you'll ever make. Jesus Christ can give you a reason and purpose to live.

Number 3: I guess I really should go forward, but I'm sitting next to _____, and he's (she's) got his legs crossed, and he'd have to uncross them just to let me through, and then that would cause the person next to him to have to uncross his legs, too. No, that would cause too much of a commotion. I couldn't put anybody through that.

Preacher: Will you be a temple-builder?

Number 4 (singing): "Just as I am, without one plea . . ." Well, surely they don't expect me to go forward! I'm in the CHOIR! If I went forward that would certainly leave a weak spot in the choir, and what's an invitation without a strong soprano section? No, I'd better not.

Preacher: Jesus Christ will flood you with a peace you've never experienced. Let Him make you a brand-new person.

Number 2: I can't believe I'm going to miss my favorite show!

Preacher We're going to stay a few minutes longer. I just sense that you want to respond to God's call.

Number 1: If I didn't turn that oven off, our whole house could burn down! I can see it now, Dad will ground me for a LIFETIME!

Preacher: Make a decision now that will affect your eternity.

Number 3: I really should obey God. But, there's Mark Brown over there! He needs to go forward more than I do! I've heard about the wild parties he goes to. I don't need to go forward if Mark doesn't. I'm a LOT better off than HE is!

Number 4: There's no way I could go to the altar. That would leave Ruth singing the soprano part in the choir, and she can't carry a tune in an empty bucket! No, I just couldn't do that to the church!

Preacher: If Jesus Christ were to return in the next ten seconds, where would He find you spiritually RIGHT NOW?

Number 1: In my oven? (Freeze)

Number 2: In front of my favorite show? (Freeze)

Number 3: With Ruth? (Freeze)

Number 4: In the choir? (Freeze)

Preacher (to audience): What about you? Are you obeying God?

5. Prayer:

MESSAGE: “How Do You Build a Temple?” (Part One)

Haggai was a prophet. His main responsibility was to relay God's message to his people. It was a demanding job, but he often enjoyed his assignments. The particular message he was supposed to deliver *this* time, however, was heavy! Haggai was supposed to rebuke the people of the land for not taking the time to rebuild the Temple of the Lord. Before we take a look at their particular situation, let's take a quick look at how to build a temple.

How do you build a temple? First, you get an instruction book. You need a guidebook of instructions to help you build a sound, sturdy structure. Second, you need an instruction book you can understand. It would be ridiculous for me to give you an instruction book written in Chinese. If you haven't already guessed it, this instruction book is your Bible. If you're going to follow Jesus and adhere to His commands, you need first of all to have a Bible. Third, follow the instructions inside. God's Word will tell you *everything* you need to know about how to build a temple.

In Haggai 1:2, we find God questioning the people: “Why is everyone saying it is not the right time for rebuilding my Temple?’ asks the Lord” (TLB). Why is everyone saying it's not cool to build the house of the Lord? What is the temple, anyway? The temple of the Lord is the Body of Christ. That's us! You and me! Who's going to build up this temple if we don't? It's our responsibility! We are the church. As parts of the church, it's our responsibility to keep the church in good condition. How do we do that? By following the Instruction Book.

1. Affirm (build up) the members of the Body of Christ. Strive for unity and harmony among our youth group. We want to be a refuge where others can find God's love.
2. By spending time reading the Instruction Book. We need to discipline ourselves in spending time reading God's Word on a daily basis.

Some of you, just like the people of Haggai's day, make numerous excuses for not spending time in the Bible. If we're not spending time in God's Word, then we're not building the temple. Haggai's people were experts on giving excuses and finding other things to do that were more important than building the Temple. They told Haggai they just didn't have time to build the Temple; but they had plenty of time to build other things they wanted. As a result, God withheld natural blessings from them.

“Is it then the right time for you to live in luxurious homes, when the Temple lies in ruins?” (v. 4, TLB). And is it right for you to enjoy being caught up in your own world when you *know* people are *hurting*? God continues, “Look at the result: You plant much but harvest little” (vv. 5-6, TLB). You come to church and do the right things, but when you try to read your Bible, nothing makes sense. When you pray, your prayers just bounce off the walls. What's the problem? You're not giving God what He deserves. When we take the time to read our Bible and spend time with our Heavenly Father, He blesses by helping us understand what His Instruction Book really means. When we give God what He deserves and pay Him our tithes and give Him our offerings, He blesses in a way that is beyond description.

Giving God ten percent of our earnings is not an option. It's not supposed to be if we have some left over, then we'll give our tithe.” God already owns one hundred percent of our earnings. It belongs to Him. We do not have an option in giving it or keeping it. It's already His. When we do not give

that ten percent, we are actually stealing from God Himself. Our offerings are our expressions of love to God who cares for us.

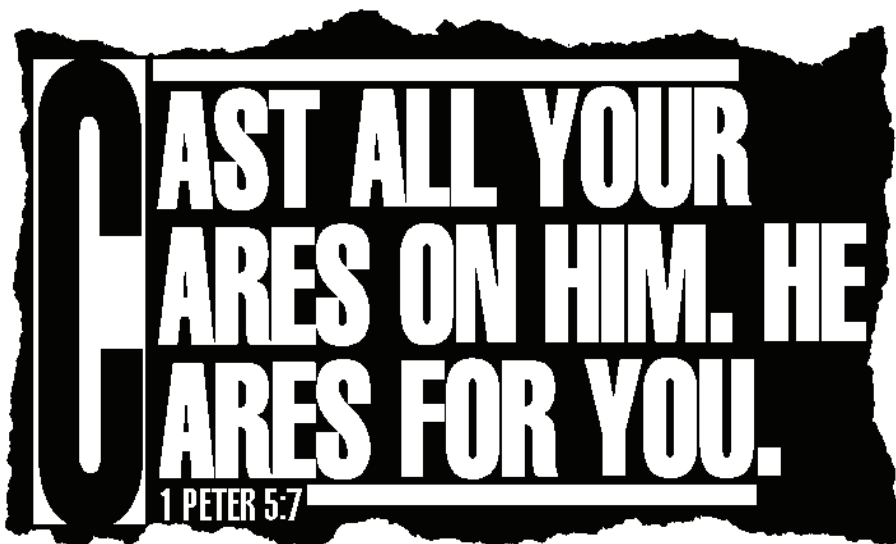
A few of the people in the land obeyed Haggai's leadership. They began to worship in earnest, began to reach out to others, affirmed one another, paid their 10 percent, gave cheerful offerings of love. They *began building the Temple!* An exciting thing happened! God blessed! He gave them bountiful crops. More important, He gave them the *desire* to rebuild the Temple. *After* they began rebuilding the Temple, *then* God gave them the desire to rebuild it.

We think that sounds backward. Many times we pray for the desire to read our Bible and for the desire to give cheerfully. We want so badly for God to place the desire in our hearts, while all along God simply wants us to obey Him, whether we feel like it or not! As we obey Him, He blesses. You may not have the desire to give your tithes and offerings. Some of you may not have the desire to read your Bible after you've put in a long day of work or finished your homework. Instead of sitting around hoping that God will give you the desire, just go ahead and obey Him and believe the desire will come as you follow!

God commands us to build the temple. Are you building the temple? Or are you sitting around making excuses like the people of Haggai's time? How do you build a temple? Here's a quick checklist.

1. Get an Instruction Book (Bible) that you understand and one that you're proud of.
2. Read it! Follow the instructions in it.
3. If you follow the instructions on how to build the temple, you will:
 - a. Affirm (build up) those in the Body of Christ
 - b. Pay your tithes
 - c. Cheerfully give offerings

We are the temple. He has commanded us to build the temple. If we don't do it, it just won't get done. Will you build the temple? Will you spend time daily in the Word? Will you pay your tithes and give in cheerful offerings? Let's commit to building the temple, right now. (Close with a prayer of commitment.)



TEMPLE OF DOOM

(Part Two of a Two-Part Series)

By Susie Shellenberger

PURPOSE: To help youth become aware of the necessity of nurturing and affirming the Body of Christ.

PREPARATION:

1. Advertise.
2. Announce a week before the rally the following details:
 - a. Team Competitions.
 - b. Everyone needs to bring a pillow and pillowcase (or stout shopping bag).
 - c. Points will be awarded for team attendance and for bringing guests.
3. Familiarize yourself with Haggai; 1 Chronicles 28:10, 20; 29:1; and 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Choose one or all of the following Group activities to get started.

Doomsday Pillow Fight. Stretch a board across two chairs ahead of time so the fighters will be above ground. Call up one person from each team and use two at a time on top of the boardwalk. At the signal, the two opposing players are to begin hitting each other with their pillows. The object of the game is to knock the opposing person off the board. Take the winners and place them together in a second round, until you finally have one overall winner.

Case Race. Instruct the teams to queue up in single file for this relay. At the signal, the first person from each team is to hop to the opposite end of the field (or room) with both feet in his pillowcase. When the first person has completed the race, the next person on the team takes the pillowcase and does the same thing. The team who finishes first is declared the winner.

Eggs Benedict. You will need a hard-boiled egg and a spoon for each team. The teams need to line themselves up single file. At the signal, the first person on each team carefully carries his egg in the spoon to the goal line and back. If the egg falls, the player must pick up the egg and go back to the starting line and begin again. Once the first person has returned from the goal line, the next begins. The winning team is the team who finishes first. *For variation:* Use raw eggs instead of hard-boiled eggs, or have the players skip or hop instead of walk.

TRANSITION: (These are designed to help you make the transition to the message.)

Announcements. Announce the winners of each team competition. Award the winning teams with a large number of points or a small prize. Give updated team point totals.

Group Singing.

Acquaint a Saint. If you have an older member in your church whom you feel the youth would benefit from knowing better, ask the adult to give a five-minute testimony at this time, or plan a short five-minute interview with the person. This helps expose the youth to mature spiritual adults in the congregation they might otherwise not know very well.

Group Discussion.

“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames” (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Paul warns us to be extremely careful when building the temple, or when working with the Body of Christ. We are all commissioned to build the temple of the Lord, but we must be careful to have pure motives and use the right materials. Many people build the temple and do things for the church for selfish gain or public recognition. Others use the wrong materials when they build. In 1 Chronicles, King David commissions his son, Solomon, to build the Temple of the Lord and gives him valuable materials out of his own private collection. If we are serious about following Christ, we will have to make some sacrifices. We cannot build the temple of the Lord and be involved in worldly activities at the same time.

Discussion Questions – Divide your youth into groups to discuss the following questions:

1. What is the foundation of the church?
2. How does one build on the foundation of the church?
3. How will the quality of work be revealed?
4. Who is God's temple?
5. What is the purpose of the temple?
6. What happens to those who destroy it?
7. What are some other foundations people try to use, other than Christ, to build upon?

Prayer. Have someone lead the group in prayer before the message is given.

MESSAGE: “Temple of Doom” (Part Two of a Two-Part Series)

(Materials needed: one small wooden block for each youth, plus some extras for visitors.)

In our last rally we talked about the temple of the Lord and how to build that temple. Tonight we're going to share some thoughts on continuing to build the temple and what happens to those who do not build the temple.

In 1 Chronicles, God calls Solomon to build the Temple. What an honor, to be called of God to build His holy Temple! Tonight, God calls you to build the temple. Let's take a look at our calling in First Chronicles 28:10, *“Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work.”*

Solomon, you are the temple of God. Evaline, you are the temple of God. Jake, you are the temple of God. Y-O-U are the temple of God! This is meant as a group commission as well as an individual commission. We, our youth group, are the temple of *God*. You, as an individual in our

youth group, are the temple of God! We are the living stones. Christ is the Cornerstone, the Head, the Foundation, the most important part.

I could ask you to gather into your teams quickly and form a pyramid. Each one of you would be the living pieces of the pyramid. It works the same way in the Body of Christ. We are the Body. We are the temple. Each one of us is a living stone, an important stone in the temple of God.

“Be strong and courageous and get to work. Don't be frightened by the size of the task, for the Lord my God is with you; he will not forsake you. He will see to it that everything is finished correctly.” (1 Chronicles 28:20,TLB).

God is not asking us to do the impossible. We *can build the temple of God!* We are the living stones of God's temple. We – our youth group! The temple of God is a place where people find the Lord. It's a place of joy and encouragement. It's a place where affirmation should happen almost naturally and warmth and security are given in abundance. That's what the temple of God is all about. We are that. Are we that? Our youth group needs to be a place where people can find God, a place of joy and affirmation. Are we that kind of temple? Just as King David announced that his son, Solomon, was to build the Temple, so God announces tonight that we are to build the temple. God believes in you! He is asking you to be involved in an enormous task, but He equips you with everything you need to do the job, and to do it really well! You serve a God of possibilities. He believes in your abilities.

It's kind of embarrassing to have your parents brag about you in front of a crowd. That's exactly what King David did with Solomon. That's also what God is doing with you tonight. As I read the scripture, silently insert your name whenever Solomon's name is read. “Then King David turned to the entire assembly and said: 'My son Solomon, whom God has chosen to be the next king of Israel, is still young and inexperienced, and the work ahead of him is enormous; for the temple he will build is not just another building—it is for the Lord God himself!’” (1 Chronicles 29:1, TLB).

What a terrific honor! What an exciting responsibility! God has chosen you to build the temple! God has chosen you to be the temple! Whew! That's a thrilling command from God. Notice, it's a command, not an option. We are told to build the temple. Period. Not, “Build the temple if it's convenient.” Not, “Build the temple when you have some extra time.” Simply, “Build the temple.”

How can you build the temple? What tools do you have? Can you sing? Give a testimony? Listen well? Some of you have a great sense of humor. Others are quiet and warm and sensitive. *Everyone* can affirm. We have to use our resources to build the temple. Are you doing your part to build the temple? Are you using your own private resources? Listen to what King David says in 1 Chronicles 29:2-3 concerning the using of our resources: “Using every resource at my command, I have gathered as much as I could for building it ... And now, because of my devotion to the Temple of God, I am giving all of my own private treasures to aid in the construction” (TLB).

Building the temple of God requires some sacrifice. We must use our own private gifts and abilities to glorify God. We must give Him the skills and talents He gave us. We have to use our resources plus our very selves! Many of you have given God your lives, but some of you are still struggling with giving God your whole self. Many of you have given God your lives but are using your gifts and abilities for other things than glorifying Him.

You have a choice tonight. If you choose to build the temple of God, we will become a godly temple. If you choose to destroy, we will become a temple of doom. Those of you who choose to

build the temple and exemplify a positive, affirming attitude to those around you will help our temple to become a godly temple. By reaching out to others in the Body of Christ and in the world, you are being a bandage to someone's hurting heart. That's how our youth group can become a godly temple. That's how each one of us, as living stones, can shine like rubies.

Those of you who choose to be negative and remain wrapped up in your own world, not inviting or reaching out to others, those of you who choose to destroy, God will destroy you! By using your gifts for your own selfish gain, or by adding dissension to the group, you are turning the godly temple into a temple of doom.

"I'm not going to sing in the choir."

"Did you see that ugly dress she had on?"

"This is stupid."

"I wouldn't be caught dead with him."

Negative remarks and bad attitudes lead to destruction of God's holy temple. First Corinthians 3:16-17 warns: "Don't you realize that all of you together are the house of God, and that the Spirit of God lives among you in his house?" "If anyone defiles and spoils God's home, God will destroy him" (TILB).

Are you proud of where He's living? Do you need to clean house? We are the temple of God. We are the living stones. It is our responsibility to build on the temple. Edify it. Keep it clean.

HOW DO YOU BUILD THE TEMPLE?

1. You get an Instruction Book (the Bible).
2. You become *consistent* in reading it daily.
3. Follow the instructions.
4. Use your resources that God has given you: your talents, abilities, your very self.

You have a choice. Either do your part to build the temple and help produce a godly temple; or do your part to destroy and produce a temple of doom. The Bible warns us that if we destroy the temple, He will destroy us. I want to read one more passage of scripture to you as we close. (*Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-17*)

Bow your heads, please. Would all of you close your eyes and evaluate carefully your relationship with Christ right now. What are you doing to build the temple? Are you the holy, godly, living stone you need to be? Have you learned the disciplined daily process of reading the Instruction Book? Are you following the instructions? What kind of a temple stone are you? Are you at a place where others can find God? A source of joy and encouragement? Are you using your resources? Your own private self? Does God have control of *all*? *You* are the temple. Do you need to do some housecleaning? With every head bowed and every eye closed, I want to invite you tonight to become the kind of godly living stone you need to be.

I brought some blocks with me tonight. I have them up here at the front. During the next few minutes, I want you to come and receive a block as a reminder every time you see it that you are a living stone of the temple of God. I want to challenge you to put this block where you'll see it often. But before you take a block home with you, I want you to kneel and spend a few minutes alone with

God. Make sure your priorities are where they should be. Allow Him to do some housecleaning if necessary. Come now.

(You will want to have the blocks stacked on a table at the front, before the message begins, so you won't have to stop and get them out.)

CLOSING (After everyone has received his/her block, end in prayer or ask for testimonies.)

BE THE GREATEST

by Ted Taylor

PURPOSE: To teach that God's view of greatness is being a servant.

RECOMMENDED USE: Best used before a service opportunity for your youth. Cleaning homes, painting, or lawn work for the handicapped or elderly can be a great way to put your faith into action.

PREPARATION:

1. Advertise
2. Announce. A week before the rally, announce:
 - a. The Greatest Hunt. Each team member is to bring at least one of the following:
 - A picture of the greatest (most admired) person in their area or nation or on TV.
 - The greatest (most valued) thing at his school
 - The greatest (most valued) thing in the world

Tell each team that if they find something for all categories, they will receive points.

b. Points will be awarded to every youth for bringing guests.

c. Read and become familiar with the following passages on servanthood: Matthew 18:1-6; 19:25-28; 23:11-12; Luke 22:24-26; John 13:1-15.

GROUP ACTIVITIES: Get your youth involved by using some or all of the following:

1. **Chariot Races.** Line out an obstacle course (people make great obstacles); or, if your room is big enough, have the youth race around the room. Or you could have it outside. Have two people lock arms to form a chair. A third person sits on their arms, and off they go. Race each of your team members or an equal number from each team around the track or through the obstacle course.
2. **People Relay.** Each team picks up a member of the team over their heads and carries him about 10 meters to a marked finish line. If your teams are large, have 8 people carry 1 person, then run back and let another group go. The first team to carry 10 people to the line wins. If a team has fewer than 10, they can carry someone twice.
3. **Artist Charades.** Each team sends one representative to the middle, where the leader gives them an object name or word. At the signal, they must run back to their team and draw on a piece of paper (no words) to get their team to guess the exact word. The person drawing can't say anything until the word is guessed. The first team to guess receives a point. The first team to 10 or 15 is the winner.
4. **Servant Search.** Give everyone in your group a copy of the statements below. Each person attempts to get people to sign their names beside the statement that truthfully describes them. The first one to get all the statements signed, or the one with the most completed, wins points for their team. People can sign more than one box as it truthfully describes them.
5. **Servant Search Statements:** 1) I made someone else's bed today. 2) I invited someone to the youth meeting today. 3) I listened to a friend tell a story today. 4) I told my mom or dad "Thanks" today. 5) I speak to most strangers. 6) I enjoy washing windows. 7) I am afraid of the dark. 8) I fight with my brother/sister a lot. 9) I love to wash clothes. 10) I washed dishes

today. 11) The last time I did something with my friends, I had a terrible time. 12) I read my Bible today.

TRANSITION: Choose as many of the suggested activities as you wish. They are designed to help you make the transition from the high-energy activities to the message.

1. **Group Singing.**
2. **Offering.** If you are taking an offering, do so at this time. You may want to make it a contest between teams and award points. Have your offering go to some local service project or use it to support a hunger and relief fund that supplies food and medicine in needy areas. If you choose to do this, you will need to announce this competition 1 or 2 weeks in advance.
3. **“The Greatest Hunt” Judging.** Have each team bring their items forward and use them to begin your lesson. Everyone will assume that you will judge the items, but instead they will get points for bringing each of them and you will use them as object lessons.

MESSAGE: “The Most Valuable Thing”

(As the leader begins, he picks up a towel and wraps it around his neck.) (Pick up each of the items the youth have brought as the most valued possessions at school: a football, a certain brand of clothing, a textbook, and so on. Talk about each item. The following is an example.)

Everybody wants to be liked and accepted. To be the star of the school football team can be a big honor. But 10 years later, the football star may be fat with grey hair and false teeth. School honors are fleeting things and have no lasting value.

(Pick up the pictures of the most admired people) The desire for wealth and fame is very strong in our society. It's also the story of tragedy as you look at television star's troubles, high divorce rate, lawsuits, alcoholism, drug abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and even suicide.

(Pick up the most valued things in the world. Some may have money. You might say the following.) I've lived with it, and I've lived without it. It may be better with it, but it's better without it if it rules your life. The things of life that are the most valuable are really free. Take your eyesight, for instance. Not long ago a woman used an eye makeup that caused her to go blind. The court gave her \$1 million. Would you honestly trade places with her? You give her your eyes and you get her money? Truly the most precious things in life come free to you at birth. Money and possessions don't mean a thing compared to the value of your sight, smell, hearing, and so on.

(Other valuable things may represent power or position. Explain how these are fleeting thrills and they soon pass. At least one of your youth will probably have a Bible. If not, display your own.) Only God's Word is the greatest. Our Lord said in the Bible, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Luke 21:33).

Discussion Questions:

1. Who is the greatest person you know and why?
2. What makes a person great?
3. Why is it so hard to get people to really give of their time to other people?
4. If Jesus lived in our town and went to our school, what are some of the activities and things He would be doing with His time?

God views things totally different than we do. If God had a Hall of Fame where He placed His greatest people, who would be in it? Would it be the famous people? Singing stars? Somehow I believe it won't necessarily be well known evangelists or Christian performers. God's Hall of Fame would be full of unnoticed, selfless people who gave their lives totally to win someone to Christ. Again the Lord said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mark 10:43). *(A personal example of someone great in your life who led you to God would be appropriate here.)*

The world tells us that it's how much we get that matters. The Bible tells us it is how much we *give* that is really important. Most youth, even Christian youth, are self-centered. They care about their wants, their needs, their desires. But Christ asked, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Being the greatest is being the servant: doing the unnoticed things, paying attention to the outsider everyone else makes fun of.

Matthew 20:25-26 tells us that the world shows power by having and being in authority. So often there is a quest for power, popularity, or money. The kingdom of God is quite the opposite. The one who is to be the greatest is the one who serves. Jesus Christ is the greatest Example. He didn't come to live comfortably in palaces or order people around. He could have had all the wealth of the world, but His life was one of service to others. In fact, on the last night our Lord spent with His disciples before His death, He taught them a powerful lesson. While each of them argued about who was going to be the greatest and get to sit next to Jesus, Jesus took the role of a servant and washed each one of the disciples' feet. Then He commanded them to wash each others' feet. Have you washed someone's feet lately? It's not always fun and sometimes pretty smelly. However, when you put someone else's needs before your own, when you take the time to show someone you really care, that's when you'll be most like Jesus. *(Take the towel from around your neck and stretch it out to them.)* Go ahead, be the greatest.

CLOSING

With every head bowed, how many of you would say that you have been pretty self-centered? You have spent most of your time concerned just about yourself, but with God's help you want to learn to be a real servant? *(Ask them to raise up their hand. Close in prayer and then announce upcoming service projects.)*

GOD'S WINNING TEAM

By Ted Taylor

PURPOSE: To show youth how to compete God's way.

RECOMMENDED USE: This could be used during football season, possibly after a ball game.

PREPARATION:

1. Advertise.
2. Announce.
 - a. Everyone is to dress like a participant at a football game, such as fanatical fan, pom-pom girl, coach, referee, player, newscaster. Give points for each youth and adult who dresses up. Give bonus points for the most creative.
 - b. Study Colossians 3:23; Philippians 37-8.
 - c. Prepare for the skit. Find someone who will spend some time preparing for this. It is best memorized.

GROUP ACTIVITIES:

1. **Let's Hear a Cheer.** Have each team come up with an original cheer for their team. Tell them to create a new one, not just copy an old one. Use your judges to select a winner.
2. **Ultimate frisbee/ball/etc.** Form two teams. The object is to advance the object (ball, frisbee, etc.) up the field to the opponent's goal. The object can only be advanced by throwing it. Once a team member catches the object, he can only take 2 steps and then must throw it to another team-mate (while the opposing team is trying to catch it as well). If the object is dropped, it is given to the opposing team member who is closest. After a goal is scored, the object is given to the other team, and they must try to score. The team with the most goals wins.
3. **Blob.** Set large playing boundaries. One person is "it" and must catch others. When he catches someone, they join hands and then go to get more people. Each time they touch someone, that person becomes part of the "blob". The bigger the blob becomes, the harder it is to run fast, but the more area it can cover and it can corner people easier. The object is for the blob to catch everyone. The last person to be caught is the winner.

TRANSITION: Choose as many of the suggested activities as you wish. They are designed to help you make the transition from the high-energy activities to the message.

1. **Special Song.** Use your youth to share songs through solos and small groups.
2. **Offering.** If you plan to take an offering, do so at this time.
3. **Skit.** This can be done by the leader, a youth, or another adult. This is best done in the dark with a light shining on the coach.

(A man comes out wearing a T-shirt with the word "COACH" written across the chest. He talks gruff to the group like it was his team. He carries a gym bag with him.)

My name is COACH. That's C-O-Aaaa-C-H. Got it right here on my T-shirt, and don't you ever forget it. I am your coach. Now that we have established who I am, we'll talk about who you are. You are nothing! That's right. I am the coach, and you are nothing. You are nothing to look at. You are no good to anybody as you are. You are like a foundation. But we are going to build something

great out of you. Individually this team isn't worth anything, but if you work together and do what the coach tells you, we can build something worth looking at out of you.

Now there is one thing you must remember (Looks through gym bag. Throws out dirty socks, shirt, shorts, etc., and pulls out a Bible.) This here is your game plan. Don't let me ever catch you out there not following it. It will tell you everything to do. If it says, "Don't go to the left", don't let me catch you out there making a left. If it says, "Don't go to the right", you'll wish you never knew where your right was if you go right. This here game plan contains all you need to know to face the opposition. Whether you win or lose will be determined by whether or not you follow your game plan!

The other side is out there ready to tear you up. If you don't follow your game plan, you can't fight them. It's time to get out there. Remember this thing. (Holds up Bible,) Listen to your coach, play together as a team, and follow your game plan. Now get out there and get 'em.

(The coach acts like he pats the team as they are leaving. He stops and looks up to heaven.) How did I do, Coach? Did I tell them what You would have told them? Have I followed Your game plan? I try to teach them just as You taught me. (Blackout; then lights up.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (Divide into small groups to discuss. Then discuss as a whole group.)

1. What does it take to be a winner in sports?
2. Can you lose and still be a winner?
3. How are sports (winning and losing) like being a Christian?
4. How does striving to be a Christian relate to being the best athlete, musician, student, etc, that you can be?
5. What would happen if our church and our youth group played together as a team?
6. What would our team's (youth group's) goal be?

MESSAGE: "Spiritual Champions"

Being a Christian means you do your very best in everything you do. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23).

God does not have any third-string Christians. We may not all be World Cup champions, but we are to set our goal to be overcoming Christians. Can you imagine a football game—65,000 fans present, two teams, referees, and a football—with no goals? It sounds ridiculous, and it would be. Those guys just running in all directions. It's just as ridiculous for you as a Christian not to set a goal. Philippians 3:7-8 reveals the Christlike attitude: "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ."

Paul knew that knowing Jesus Christ was far more valuable than any achievements and honors.

1. Strive to win in everything you do. Winning isn't everything, but the effort to win is. Whatever we do, we are to do our very best. We should strive to be the best employee, the best

athlete, and even strive to make our home life the best. Remember, we are not working for man's approval but for God's approval.

2. When you win, give God the glory. To Him goes all credit. He is the One who gave you the talent, strength, and ability. You couldn't have scored the winning goal without the legs God gave you or played your instrument without lungs or fingers. To God goes all the glory and honor. Without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

3. If you lose, no matter how badly, give it your all. You never have to feel bad when you have given all you could. When you play on God's team and for His approval, by giving it your all, you have won no matter what the score. Defeats will come, but we don't have to be defeated if our attitude and spirit is right.

There was once a five-year-old boy who showed exciting promise at the piano. There was an old man who was a master of the instrument. The old man agreed to teach the boy. For three years daily the master diligently taught the boy. At the end of the three years, there was a concert. A large hall was rented and packed out by anxious people to hear the lad. In the balcony sat the old man by himself. The boy played beautifully, and the crowd leaped to their feet at the conclusion of the performance, while the boy sat motionless on the stool with his eyes fixed on the old man. The old man paused as the crowd yelled on. Finally the old man gave the nod of approval, and the boy leaped from his stool to take a bow.

The message of this story is that the world's applause will come and go. Our approval is to come from our Heavenly Father. Whether we win the ball game or the band honors or make the cheerleading squad or even make the grade, what *we* want is not what matters. By striving to attain *God's* approval, you can be on this winning team every time.

CLOSING (Close in prayer. Ask those who would like to join God's team to join you in prayer. You might ask those to raise their hands who would like God's help in this issue of winning and losing. You may want a leader to quietly go over to them and pray at that moment or meet with them later. Encourage them to be part of this winning team by surrendering their lives to Jesus Christ and asking Him to forgive their sins and live inside them.)

FESTIVAL OF CHANGE

By Kendall Franklin

PURPOSE: To encourage youth to change. Change is necessary if one is going to follow Christ.

RECOMMENDED USE: At the beginning of the school year.

PREPARATION:

1. Advertise.
2. Announce upcoming activities.
3. Read and study Acts 9:1-19; 1 Samuel 10:6.
4. Pray.

GROUP ACTIVITIES:

1. **Football Follies.** Materials Needed—reproduction of Follies (below); pens or pencils for each person. The first youth to complete this activity should be awarded a prize.
 - a. Grab three people. Together, recite or sing the national anthem as loud as you can. Have them initial here: _____
 - b. Find two other people and together do 15 jumping jacks. Have them initial here: _____
 - c. Find one other person and have him give you a high five. Initials: _____
 - d. Get two people to march with you the length of the room, humming a song. Initials: _____
 - e. Find someone who knows what team _____ (someone famous in your area) plays for. Have that person sign here: _____
 - f. Get three other people and yell at the top of your lungs, “We've got spirit, yes, we do; we've got spirit, how about you?” Continue cheering until another group responds. Initials: _____
 - g. Find two other people and do five push-ups together.

Variations:

- (1) Add two or three additional items that relate to the youth' schools or local teams.
- (2) If your group is small, have them do all the activities with 1 person instead of 2 or 3.
3. **Elastic Band Facial.** Get a representative from each team or 3-4 volunteers. Have each volunteer put an elastic band around his head and on the end of his nose. (On the ears is a nice touch, too.) When the signal is given, the first person to get the band off his face and down around his neck wins. He can use anything (a wall, the floor, a post) except his hands and arms to move the elastic band down his face. Award points to the winner.
4. **Football Pass.** Materials Needed—a football for each team. queue up the teams into even, single-file queues. At the front of the queue, a football is given to the first person. He/she passes it back over his/her head. The next person passes between his/her legs, and so on in that order. Whichever team finishes first wins.

Variation:

- a. Add several footballs in assorted sizes.

b. Use several other sports balls.

5. **Penguin Football.** Materials Needed—enough strips of cloth (old rags or sheets) so that every person has a piece to tie around his knees, and a football. Each person ties a rag tightly around his knees. No running is allowed. The only advancing movement that is allowed is shuffling. (The rags should always stay around the knees.) Play a football game using the football.

TRANSITION: Choose as many of the suggested activities as you wish. They are designed to help you make the transition from the high-energy group activities to the message.

1. **Team Skit.** Give each team four minutes to come up with a spontaneous skit using the following props: a leaf, a tin of something, and a football.
2. **Announcements.** Announce the winners of the games and give point totals.
3. **Group Singing** or special music by an individual or small group.
4. **Offering.**

MESSAGE: “A Time of Change”

(Have an object that changes size or shape according to the time of year.)

The beginning of school is a time of change, and can be a great time of the year. Things change. (*Bring out the object and hold it up.*) This signifies change. Just a short time ago this object was different. Now it looks like this. Today, I want to talk to you about *change*.

Once there was an ordinary guy named Saul who was a tall, lanky kid. God chose him to be king over Israel. (*Read 1 Samuel 10:6-7.*) You see, Saul really wasn't that much of an impressive young man, but with God, things can change. In fact, as you heard, God *changed* Saul into a different person. He made him a successful leader and a military general. He was not just a man after God changed him.

Years later, a man by the very same name had an interesting life, as recorded in Acts 9:1-19. (*You may read the scripture, or you may paraphrase it as you speak.*) Being in on the stoning of Stephen, Saul was very dedicated when it came to being a Pharisee. He was a very smart, well-educated Jewish kid who had so much zealotry he frothed when people talked about Christians. Saul believed in the strict, careful obedience of Moses' law and felt that Jesus and His followers broke the law. Saul hated anyone who broke the law. Breaking the law of Moses was a crime. He enjoyed his work of beating, killing, fighting, or imprisoning anyone who didn't believe as the Pharisees believed.

The rough, tough guy named Saul viewed the early Christians as a warped cult and enjoyed beating them. Saul did anything he could to make life miserable for anyone who followed Christ. News reached Jerusalem, the headquarters of Saul, that Christianity was growing and spreading through the whole country like wildfire. The more the Jewish leaders tried to stamp it out, the faster it grew. Saul worked himself into a frenzy, “I will stop this crazy religion yet!” he promised. So Saul went to the high priest for permission to go to Damascus and search for those so-called Christians. Saul planned to kill them or make them prisoners. The high priest, who was the head leader of the Pharisees, gave Saul written orders to search for and destroy all Christians. It instructed all Jewish synagogues to help weed out all believers.

So Saul got prepared to go do some Christian hunting. Saul was so excited before his trip. He couldn't wait! Finally morning came. With a few of his favorite Jewish delinquents, Saul set out. Finally around noon, the group could see the walls of Damascus. All of a sudden, ZAP! Saul fell to the ground. An awesome light from the sky blinded him. Saul heard a voice call out, "Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?" Saul yelled out, "Who are you, Lord?" Finally he understood: It was Jesus whom he was fighting against, yet he *thought* he was fighting for what was right. Saul was *changed*. Eventually, a man named Ananias, following instructions from Christ, laid hands on him, and Saul received the Holy Spirit and his sight.

What an excellent example of someone changing! Not only did Saul change his name to Paul, but he changed from being an enemy of Christ to one of the most effective apostles ever! Paul totally changed the whole Mediterranean area because God used *him* to change so many lives. *Paul* actually influenced human history. Paul was beaten, stoned, and spat upon for following Christ. He was a radically different person.

What these stories tell me is this: God, because of His love and care, can change me. He can change you. (*You may want to give a brief testimony here of how God changed you.*) No matter what you are into, or have done, He can *change you!* Even if you've done drugs or experimented with sex, He can change you into a completely different person. He *loves you so much* - He's calling out to you. If you've hurt others and still do, He can change you! God can change you from a shallow, noncaring person to someone who can impact your community. He can change your attitudes, life-style, and beliefs - if you believe and will *let* Him change you. Don't turn away from this chance to change. Let me invite you to let Him change you.

(Give an invitation to let God change their lives. A song of invitation would be good. Close with prayer.)



A REFILL ON SECURITY

By Susie Shellenberger

PURPOSE: To remind youth that our only source of real security is Jesus Christ, and to encourage them to place their security in Him.

PREPARATION:

1. Advertise.
2. Announce. A few weeks before the rally announce the following details:
 - a. Team competitions
 - b. Points will be awarded for team attendance and for bringing guests.
 - c. Familiarize yourself with the first two chapters of Ecclesiastes and Romans 8:38-39.

GROUP ACTIVITIES: Choose one or all of the following Group activities to get started.

1. **Fruit Basket Turnover.** Instruct your group to sit in a circle. The names of several fruits are selected, one fruit for every three to four players. Each player is assigned a fruit. The person designated as “it” stands in the centre. When he or she calls out the name of a fruit. All players with that fruit name must find a new seat before the player in the middle finds a chair. The one who is left without a chair is the new it.” “It” may also call, “Fruit Basket Turnover” in which case *all* players must move to a new chair.
2. **Monster Walk.** If you are working with a large group, instruct the youth to assemble in their usual teams. If your group is smaller, you may want to combine two teams together. Mark a starting line and a finish line approximately 5-10 meters apart. Each team forms a unit by joining hands, interlocking arms, riding on backs, or any other means that can be devised. The only limitations are the number of arms and legs that may be used for the task of walking. The number of arms and legs that can be used in the walking process are determined by subtracting two from the total number of people on the team. For example, if there are six people on the team, only four arms and four legs may be used to keep the “monster” together and walk it down the field. Assemble the teams on the starting line. At your signal, they begin the race toward the finish line.
3. **Musical Balloons.** Instruct your group to stand in a circle. Give each youth except one a balloon. You will need to have someone be in charge of starting and stopping the music. When the music begins, all players begin passing the balloons in the same direction around the circle. When the music stops, the player who does not have a balloon is taken out of the game. If a balloon pops, the person holding it is out of the game. A balloon is taken out each time a player goes out.
4. **Balloon Pop.** One youth from each team will have a balloon that is already inflated. At the signal, each team representative will try to pop his balloon, using only his left hand. The first to pop his balloon will be declared the winner, and his team will receive a large number of points.

TRANSITION: (These are designed to help you make the transition to the message.)

1. **Announcements.** Announce the winners of each team competition and give updated team points.

2. **Group Singing.**

3. **Group Discussion.**

Romans 8:38-39. We look in a lot of different areas for security. We try to find security in fashion, in friends, etc. The only real source of security is Jesus Christ. His love can never be taken away from us. We want to encourage youth through this rally to come to a realization that God has to be their source of security. If they are placing their security in anything else, it will soon be gone.

Discussion Questions:

- * What are some things that make you feel secure? (*You may want to write down the list.*)
- * What is security?
- * What do most of your friends at school place their security in?
- * What would happen to our security if some of the things we've talked about were taken away?

4. Prayer.

MESSAGE: "Refill on Security"

(You will need to prepare for this skit ahead of time by obtaining a box enough to hold a person. (You may also use a large cloth, and then adjust the lines accordingly.) The person inside the box should know her lines well enough not to have to rely on reading them.)

Box: HELLO OUT THERE! Can anybody hear me? Is anyone out there?

Leader (tries to find out where voice is coming from; finally goes to the box): Let me get you out of there.

Box: NO! DONT TAKE AWAY THIS BOX! (calmer) It's ... it's kind of nice in here.

Leader: Oh really? What's it like?

Box (excited at first, but tone of voice shows she doesn't really like it in there): It's got a real sharp crease over here, and a tough little corner there, and it's got a lot of cardboard, and a flap, and of course there's the ol' top, and then there's that spider web in the bottom left-hand corner, and it's got a bottom ---

Leader: You don't really like it, do you?

Box: Naaah.

Leader: How long have you been in there? All day?

Box: Oh, it's been a lot longer than that. I'd say it's been about two or three years now.

Leader: Two or three years? Were you forced in there?

Box: No. I chose to get in here.

Leader: If no one forced you inside that box, and you don't like it in there, why don't you come on out?

Box: I think I'll do just that! (building up courage) I think I'll crawl right out of here right now! I think I'm gonna get out of here and rip this box to shreds! (shakes the box, then dies down) I think I'm gonna stay right here and admire the scenery.

Leader: How did you end up in there?

Box: Can't tell.

Leader: Why not?

Box: I just can't. I'm not sure I even know.

Leader: Maybe I can find out ... if I find out more about you. What do you look like?

Box: That depends.

Leader: Well, then, what type of personality do you have? Are you funny? Quiet? Shy? Happy? Loud? What are you like?

Box: Well ... I guess that depends.

Leader: At least tell me how you wear your hair!

Box: I would, but ... it depends.

Leader: DEPENDS ON WHAT?

Box: Depends on who I'm with. When I'm with Maggie's group, I wear my jeans with a Mickey Mouse T-shirt and sandals. I'm a little taller because I try to walk on my tiptoes. My hair is loose, and I tell every joke I can think of. When I'm with Kelly and her group, I wear my name brand dress and my patent leather shoes. The hair gets the curlers. Instead of jokes, I sit back and laugh at all of Suzan's boyfriend's jokes and comment on how wonderful he is.

Leader: I think I'm beginning to see why you're stored away.

Box: But when Paula's group comes by, I put on my tracksuit. The hair gets the parted-down-the-middle treatment, and the feet wear the soft leather shoes. No time for jokes then. We're usually out chasing boys or playing tennis.

Leader: I think I know what your problem is, but it sure would be easier to talk about it if you'd come out of that box.

Box: Oh, I couldn't do that!

Leader: Sure you can. Come on. It's just you and me.

Box: Well ... you promise you won't make fun of my nose? I've got awfully big nostrils.

Leader: Promise.

Box (comes out slowly; doesn't see crowd at first, then when she does see the crowd, she screams and tries to get back in the box)

Leader: Hey, come on! They aren't even listening.

Box: Well ... it does feel kind of nice being out. Why have I been feeling so "boxed in" lately?

Leader: It's called INSECURITY. Let me give you a simple definition: insecurity happens anytime you base your desires, your affections, or your life-style on something that can be destroyed or taken away. (pause) You sound like you've lived your life on what other people approve or disapprove of. That results in insecurity. There are other things people base their lives on that result in insecurity also. Sometimes a boyfriend or girlfriend gives a person a false sense of security. Everything is great until that boy or girl leaves. Then we are even more insecure than before. Other things, GOOD THINGS, such as family, parents, a job, can also be sources of security that aren't really very secure at all.

Box: So what's the answer? Just expect to get burned in life?

Leader: No. It would be better to rearrange your life-style around something that cannot be taken away. Listen to this, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

Box: I tried Christ once! Some friends and I went down to the altar at summer camp and prayed and prayed. But after we got back home, my friends always found other things to do on Friday nights, so I went along with them.

Leader: A lot of people do that. The insecure ones are many times the ones who shout the loudest. Not always, but sometimes. They do this to show others that they have a new crutch. But the new crutch isn't Jesus; it's usually the admiration of those people in the service or other friends who prayed also. You said yourself that when your friends no longer admired you for being a Christian or for going to church, then you quit too. That's not Christianity! When one becomes a Christian, the desire for the crowd's approval begins to fade. Your happiness is no longer dependent on what others think about you.

Box: You mean things like crowd approval, being dropped, or being in don't matter? I can still be happy?

Leader: You are still human. Christ Himself was sad when His friends all left Him. But when these things leave us, our final source of peace and security still remains if it's in Christ. He teaches us how to love ourselves.

Box: YUK! I've seen people who are in love with themselves, and I'd just as soon be in my box.

Leader: This is different. Loving yourself is realizing how much you are worth. You are a child of God. He had a purpose in making you just the way you are.

Box: His purpose in making me was to show He had a sense of humor.

Leader: No, you can only discover His purpose for you when you surrender yourself to Him and let Him be your security.

Box: Sounds easy.

Leader: It is easy to make the decision. But when it comes to changing a life-style from insecurity to security, it takes work. It's a process, an exciting growth process that involves reminding yourself many times over that you no longer base your decisions on what the people around you think, or whether or not you have that guy or girl to depend on. You now care about one thing: “Is Christ being properly reflected in my life?” The decision is immediate, but the changing of a life-style could take awhile. But..

Box: But what?

Leader: But it's a lot better than that box!

Box (looks at box; pauses): Yeah, I think you're right. I'm going to start living for Christ's love that neither death nor life nor angels nor all those other things can separate me from. (pause) I feel so relieved! That box was getting smaller all the time. (Leaves, dragging box with her.)

Leader: Hey, where are you taking that thing?

Box: Sorry ... I guess it got caught on my watch.

MESSAGE WRAP-UP

Many of you have friends who try to find security in a variety of things: a boyfriend/girlfriend, money, clothes. When we place our security in those things, and those things are suddenly taken away from us, our security is gone. That's why God wants to be our Source of security. When we place our security in Christ, we are placing security in a *Rock* that can never be moved. In Ecclesiastes we read about someone in the second chapter who tried to find security in drinking, in education, girlfriends, and a lot of other things. By the 12th chapter, the search is ended, and security is placed in God alone. Some of you are not really based securely in Jesus Christ. You can be, tonight. When everything else blows away, your relationship with Him will remain. THAT'S SECURE! Are you tired of trying to fit into everybody else's mold? Tonight God opens His arms of security to you.

CLOSING (Allow youth to make a decision to accept Christ or to deepen their walk with Him.)

OPTIONAL OPENING ACTIVITIES AND GAMES

(Please feel free to adapt these activities according to the situation and group.)

Queue them up. According to the size of your group, this activity can be done as one group in a certain time period or as a competition between two or more groups. Tell them: "Beginning now, queue up as quickly as possible according to ... height from shortest to tallest." In addition, you can have them queue up by birthdates, alphabetically by name, by height while on their knees, and any others you can think of.

Right or Wrong. read aloud five questions and have the youth write their answers on a piece of paper. Tell them to truthfully answer four of the questions, but put a wrong answer for one of the five questions. As the youth read their answers, let the others try to guess which answer is wrong.

Rumors. Select one young person to leave the room. While he or she is gone, have the rest of the youth write an untrue statement (a rumor) about him. The statements can be humorous but they must be kind. Collect the statements, and when the player returns, read the statements to him one by one. He then tries to identify the author of each statement. If he guesses one correctly, that author then takes his place and leaves the room.

Finish The Sentence. Ask each youth to finish the sentence, "If I were _____ (my mother, my father, a famous celebrity, my country's best football player, the president of my country, the richest person in the world, etc.), I would . . ." "Decide on the type of person you want them to answer for and allow them to finish the statement any way they choose. There are no right or wrong answers.

Draw the Youth Leader. This activity is to be done in groups of three people. The first person must draw the head and neck of the "youth leader" (or another person of your choice) on one piece of paper. At the same time, the second person must draw the body from the shoulders to the waist on his piece of paper while the third person must draw the rest of the body and legs on the third piece of paper. Each group member must draw his or her portion of the picture without looking at the drawings of the other group members. When all three group members are finished, tape the papers together to show the completed picture. Finish by showing the entire pictures to the entire group.

Quick Draw. Divide your group into teams. The size and number of teams will depend on the size of your group. Give each team a sheet of paper and a pencil. Then one person from each team will go to the leader to receive the word to be drawn. (Example: sock, basket, chicken, tree, etc.) At the same time these people will run back to their team and draw a picture of the object. They must not talk or write any words. The first team to guess their object gets a point.

If You Love Me, Smile. Have everyone sit in a circle and choose someone to be "it". "It" stands in the centre of the circle and tries to make someone smile. If that person smiles, then they must change places. "It" tries to get someone to smile by going to that person in the circle and saying, "If you love me, please smile" (using all the charm he has). The person chosen must look at "it" and say (without smiling or laughing), "I love you but I just can't smile." "It" must keep on doing this until he gets someone to smile.

Mystery Guest. Have each youth secretly write on paper three true facts about himself that no one knows (for example: I have met someone from Rwanda; I once ate 14 pieces of chicken at

one time; My favorite food is pizza; I don't know how to swim, etc.). Collect the papers. Read each person's list, allowing the other young people to try to figure out whose facts they are.

Story Time. Before the activity time, cut out pictures of people and places from magazines and paste them on paper, one picture on each paper. Divide the group into teams and give each team eight pictures. Tell each team to make up one story that uses all their pictures. Have each team tell their story and vote for the best story.

Sounds Good. Divide your group into pairs. Blindfold one of the people in each pair and tell the other person to be his guide. The guide can only tell his partner where to go; he cannot touch him. Set up an obstacle course indoors or outdoors. The team who completes the course in the shortest amount of time is the winner.

Groups. Have all the youth spread out and walk in a circle around a room while music plays. During the game, the leader will stop the music, and then bang loudly on a pan. Everyone must quickly get into groups of the same number of times the leader banged on the pan. If you have 15 youth and bang the pan 7 times, you will get two groups of 7 and 1 person is left out. That person is out of the game. Continue until you get down to 2 people. The final 2 people are the winners.

Musical Chairs. Set up chairs in a circle, making sure you have one less chair than the number of young people. This is a simple game. While the music is playing, (use a tape player or radio and have someone to stop and start the music), everyone walks around the chairs. When the music stops, everyone must sit down. Each time one person is left out. Remember to remove a chair each time the music starts. Continue until only one person remains.

Bread Jam. Choose four boys and four girls. The boys should stand next to each other and face the rest of the group. The girls are to put small pieces of bread in the mouths of the boys, one at a time. After each piece of bread is put in the mouth, the boys must say, "Fuzzy bunny." If they swallow, spit out, or cannot say "fuzzy bunny", they are out of the game. The person with the greatest amount of bread in his mouth is the winner. You may then want to change sides and see how much the girls can keep in their mouths.

Bread/Toothpick Game. If possible, choose two teams that are the same size and have them each stand in a queue. Give one toothpick to every member of the two teams and give one small piece of bread to each team. The way to play this game is for each person on the team to hold a toothpick in his or her mouth, with most of the toothpick sticking out. The bread is put on the toothpick of the first person. The first person must then pass the bread to the next person's toothpick, without using his hands. Once the other person has stuck his toothpick into the bread, the first person releases the toothpick from his mouth. The second person must now pass the bread, along with the toothpick still sticking out of it, on to the next person on the team, and so forth. The winning team is the first to pass the bread, and all the toothpicks stuck into it, all the way along the queue to the last person with the toothpicks from the first person to the last person, so that the last person has not only the bread but also all the other member's toothpicks stuck in the bread.

Bread Throw. Choose pairs according to the size of the group. Have the bread throwers queue up beside each other. Have the bread catchers queue up at a distance of at least 3 meters away. Give the throwers 10 pieces of bread each. The object of the game is for the thrower to

- throw the bread to the catcher. The catcher must catch the bread with his mouth. They are not allowed to use their hands. The pair that catches the most bread is the winner.
- Take A Stand.** Tell the group to sit in a circle. Have the group start with one person saying the number “1”. Continue on around the circle until you get to number “20”. If there are two or more groups, see who can do it the quickest. After you have done this, explain that this time they must stand if the number they are about to say starts with an S or a T. (They must stand before they say it.) If there are two or more groups, see who can do it the quickest. They must start over each time they miss.
- The Self-Control Game.** Bring one member of your youth group to the front of the room. Tell him that he must not smile, under any circumstances. Then, for one minute, tell the rest of the group to do whatever they can to make him smile. The only rule is that the group cannot touch that person. They can only use words and actions. Give a small prize to the youth that can go a whole minute without smiling.
- Trust Walk.** Explain to your youth that the opposite of worry is trust. This activity will help them to understand what it means to trust instead of worry. Tell the young people to get into pairs. One person from each pair will be blindfolded (or trusted to keep their eyes closed). The other person will lead the “blind” person on the trust walk. The person who has his eyes closed cannot look where he is going and he cannot touch or hold on to the person who can see. The other person can only lead him with his voice. This activity will show the youth what it means to trust another person and to totally rely on his guidance and leadership. Give everyone a time limit of five minutes.
- Newspaper Hunt.** Divide your group into teams and give the teams identical copies of the same newspaper edition. Before the session begins, look through the paper and make a list of items found in that paper. This list can include names, faces, facts, advertisements, etc. The first team to find all the items in the winner. You may wish to set a time limit and determine the winner by the team that finds the most items.
- Newspaper Race.** Have your teams stand in two queues, (one person behind another person) behind a starting line. Choose a goal line on the other side of the room. Each team member (one at a time) must race to the goal by stepping on newspapers. Each team is given two pages of newspaper. As they stand on one, then place the other one ahead of them. If their foot touches the floor, they must go back to the starting line and begin again. When they reach the goal line, they can pick up both pieces and race them back to the next team member in queue. The first time to have all their players reach the goal line is the winner.
- Krazy Kwizz.** Give everyone in the group a piece of paper. Ask half of the group to write a question beginning with the word “how”. (Example: How do you peel a carrot?) The other half of the group must write an answer to the question they have not seen. They must write answers beginning with the word “by”. (Example: By dropping it into boiling water.) Collect the completed questions and answers. At random, read a question and then answer. The results can be very funny. Reshuffle the questions and answers and you can enjoy it again.
- Blow Hard.** Divide your group into teams of four to eight players per team. Give one square of toilet paper to each team leader. If the toilet paper is two-ply, then separate the two sheets, because this game works better if the paper is lighter. At your signal, the team leader is to drop the paper from above the group by standing on a chair. The object is to see which team

can keep the paper in the air the longest by blowing upwards. If the tissue lands on a person, it must be blown off within two seconds or that team is out. You may want to play two or three rounds of this game.

Elastic Band Man. Have each team choose two players before you explain the contest. Have the players queue up in a straight queue facing the rest of the group. Players on the same team should stand next to each other. Give a elastic band to each player. Have them put them over their heads. At the back the elastic band should be down around the neck and at the front it should be across the tip of the nose. The object is to get the elastic band down to the neck using only facial movements. Everyone starts at your signal. Explain that the contest is not over until two people from the same team have successfully gotten the elastic band down to their necks.

Name Game. Almost any size group can play this game. When possible, the young people must sit in a circle. The first person begins by saying the first and surname of someone. The next player has three seconds to say the first and surname of another person whose first name begins with the first letter of the previous person's surname. (For example: the first person says "Elvis Presley," and the second person says "Pablo Cruz," and the next says "Chris Ndhlovu".) When someone cannot think of a name in three seconds, he is out of the game. If you have time, you can keep going around the circle until only one person is left. That person is the winner.

Human Knot. Make a circle, join hands, your left with their right, with those across from you (not with person beside you or both hands of the same person). The object is to untangle yourselves – making a circle (without letting go of hands).

Backwards Shoe Relay Race. Instruct the teams that they all will hop, one at a time, on one foot from one side of the room to the other. When they reach the opposite side of the room, they are to remove their shoes and put them on the opposite feet, and hop back on the opposite foot they hopped down on. The team who finished first is the winning team.

Pass The Orange. You will need one orange for each team. Teams must stand in a queue. Give the first person in queue an orange. They must place it under their chins and at the signal pass it to the next person without using their hands or arms. The orange must be passed from chin to chin all the way down the queue and back. If a team should drop its orange or touch it with hands or arms, that team must start over. Give points to the team that finishes first.

Red Light, Green Light. Everyone stands against one wall facing the leader. The leader calls "green light" and they all proceed to move toward the finish line. When the leader calls "red light", everyone must stop. Anyone moving after "red light" is called, must go back to the start. The youth leader can try to trick everyone by shouting out things like "green fight, green bite, green lightning bug." Give points to the first team to finish.

Octopus. Mark out playing field. One person is the Octopus. queue everyone up at one end of the playing area, with the Octopus standing in the middle of the area. When the Octopus counts to three, everyone must run to the other end of the playing area without being touched by the Octopus. If they are touched, they must stop where they are touched. Everyone who was touched is now on the Octopus' team and must try to "capture" others by touching them. However, they cannot move their feet. They must stay where they are touched. On the count of 3, everyone runs to the opposite end of the playing area again,

- while the Octopus and his “arms” try to touch them. (Remember that the “arms” cannot move their feet!) The game continues until everyone has been touched.
- Fruit basket.** Everyone sits in chairs in a circle. Assign everyone the name of 1 of 4 fruit. Person in middle of chairs calls out name of a fruit – those people must switch places with one another while person in middle tries to sit in one of the vacated chairs, and person left without a chair is then in the middle. When they call out “upset fruit basket”, everyone must switch places.
- Co-ordination clapping test.** Youth are to clap when the leader crosses his hands. They are out when they clap when they aren't supposed to or don't when they're supposed to.
- Balloon ankle pop.** Tie balloons on to each person's ankles with string. The object is to pop everyone else's balloon while protecting your own. This can be played as teams with each team given a different color.
- Electricity.** Two teams sit facing each other. Team members hold hands. The first person in each queue watches the leader as he flips a coin. If the coin is heads, the first person must squeeze the hand of the next person, and that person squeezes the next, and so on. When the last person feels his hand being squeezed, he must grab an object placed at the end of the row. The first team to complete the “circuit” and grab the object wins. The end person of the winning team then goes to the head of the queue. The game is over when one team has made an entire rotation. (When a team squeezes when they aren't supposed to, and they grab the object, they must rotate in the opposite direction – so the first person goes to the end of the queue. Also, don't allow team members to watch the front of the queue to see when people are squeezing. Everyone is to watch the end of the queue.)
- Shuffle Your Bum.** Everyone sits on chairs in a circle. One person is chosen “it” and must stand in the middle of the circle, leaving one chair open. The object is for that person to sit in the open chair before someone next to it scoots over into it, and so on. The people in the chairs must try to keep the person from sitting in an empty chair by moving over into the empty chair. If the person manages to sit in an empty chair, the person to the left of where the person sat down is now “it”.
- Hook Up.** Everyone hooks one arm with a partner, and all the pairs stand in a large circle. Then one pair is unhooked and put in the middle. One person must chase the other person. The person who is chased must try to “hook up” with another pair before being touched by the one who is “it”. When he hooks up with another pair, the odd person in the pair must leave and find someone else to hook up with. If the chaser catches him, the roles are reversed and now the chaser becomes the one who is chased.
- Wink em.** Girls sit in a circle with one guy behind each girl. One guy has an open chair in front of him. The object is for the guy to wink at a girl, and then that girl must try to go sit in his chair before the guy behind her can reach out and touch her. The guys cannot look at the guy who is winking, but must just watch the girl in front of them and try to catch her when she moves.
- Handshake Knockout.** One person is chosen ahead of time to be it. Then everyone must mingle and shake one another's hand and introduce themselves. The one who is “it” knocks people out of the game by giving their hand 3 quick squeezes. The person whose hand is squeezed in such a manner must then shake hands with 3 more people and then announce they are out

and leave the game. The object for “it” is to knockout everyone before someone guesses who he is. Once someone’s hand has been squeezed 3 times, he cannot tell anyone who is it. A person is out if he guesses the wrong person as “it”.

Circle Knockout. Everyone sits in a circle and holds hands. Someone is chosen as it beforehand. “It” knocks people out of the game by sending a certain number of hand squeezes around the circle. If he squeezes the hand of the person to his right 3 times, that person then squeezes the hand of the next person 2 times, then that person squeezes the hand of the next person once. When someone receives one squeeze, they are knocked out of the game and they must leave the circle. The object is for “it” to knock everyone out before he is guessed. A person is out if he guesses the wrong person as “it”. This game is best if played in the dark or very low light.

Blanket name game. Two teams gather on each side of a blanket which is held up between them. Then each team sends one team member up to the blanket. On the count of 3, the blanket is dropped, leaving the two opposite team members facing each other. The first person who calls out the correct name of the other person wins, and the loser must then go over to the team of the winner. The game is over when one team has no more members.

Stack em up. Everyone sits in a circle. The leader reads out a description, and if the description applies to anyone, they must move one seat to their right. Ex. - If you have long hair, move one seat to your right. If you have a green socks, move one seat to your right. If there is someone already in the chair, they cannot move. The person changing chairs simply sits on their lap. One chair could end up with 3,4,5 or more people stacked up on it. Read 15-20 descriptions per game.

Football cricket. Play cricket using a football ball. Roll the ball to the batter instead of throwing it. The batter must kick the ball and run to the wicket (or 1st base). He may stay there or try to make it back to where he kicked it from (home). Then it’s the next person’s turn. No one has to leave the first base until he wants to. You may have 15 people on the base. Points are scored when someone successfully makes it to first base and then back home. A person is out if a fielder hits him with a ball while he is running from home to 1st or from 1st to home, or if a fielder catches the ball in air after the batter has kicked it. After everyone on the team has kicked, the teams switch positions. The winning team is the team with the most points.

Crows and Cranes. Played much like Gorilla, Gun, Woman. Two teams queue up on center line. One team is the Crows, and the other team is the Cranes. On the count of three, the leader calls out the name of “Crows” or “Cranes”. The team whose name is called out must run to catch the members of the other team before they can run to their end line. Each captured person is brought over to the winning team. Then teams queue up again and do the same thing again. The game is over when one team captures everyone on the other team.

Gorilla, Gun, Woman. Played like rock/paper/scissors. Mark out field with a middle line and two end lines about 15 meters from the center line. Divide into two teams. Each team must huddle on their side of the line and decide what they are going to be. Gorillas beat women, gun beats gorillas, and women beat guns. After each team decides what they are going to be, they each step up to the line. On the count of three, the team must pose like what they’ve chosen (woman – pose like a woman with hands on head and hip, gorilla – pose like mean gorilla, gun – point fingers like a gun). The team who wins must chase the other team, while the losing team must run as fast as they can to reach their end line. If a winning team

- member touch anyone of the losing team before they reach their end line, they get to take the captured people over to their team. Then, the teams huddle up again, choose who they will be, and do it again. The game ends when one team is completely captured by the other team.
- Count them up.** Two people stand facing each other with their hands behind their backs. On the count of three, they are to bring their hands out in front of themselves, showing a certain number of fingers held up. The object is to be the first to call out the total of all fingers being held up. Play the best out of 3 games. The winner from each pair then plays the winners of other pairs, while the losers sit down. Keep going until there is one winner remaining.
- Sardines.** Reverse hide and seek. One person is chosen as it and must go hide. Everyone must then look for the person who is hiding. Once they find that person, they must then hide with him. The last person to find “it”, and everyone hiding with him, is then “it” for the next game.
- Tin Pan Bang Bang.** Played with large groups. Group marches around a predetermined circle while music plays. When the music stops, the leader will bang loudly on a large pan or drum, and people must get into groups with the same number as bangs. Example, 3 bangs means they must get in groups of 3. The last ones to get in a group, or groups that have the wrong number of people – are out. Then start the music and continue.
- Water-balloon volleyball.** Give each team one large bed sheet. Use a balloon filled with water instead of a volleyball. Instead of hitting the “ball”, the team must put the water balloon on their sheet, and then working together, toss the balloon over the net. The other team must then catch the water balloon in their sheet. No one may touch the water-balloon with their hands. Points are scored just like regular volleyball.
- The Blob.** Set a large playing boundaries. One person is “it” and must catch others. When he catches someone, they join hands and then go to get more people. Each time they touch someone, that person becomes part of the “blob”. The bigger the blob becomes, the harder it is to run fast, but the more area it can cover and it can corner people easier. The object is for the blob to catch everyone. The last person to be caught is the winner.
- Guess the leader.** Explain the game and then send a volunteer out of the room. Everyone else stands in a circle and chooses a leader. The group must do what the leader does. The volunteer comes in and stands in the middle of the circle and tries to guess who the leader is by watching what everyone else is doing. He gets three chances. If he guesses correctly, the person who was the leader must then go out of the room. If he doesn’t guess correctly after 3 tries, he then chooses who will be “it”.
- Rhythm.** Play with 15 or less people. Everyone sits in a circle and counts off. Then all together in rhythm, everyone slaps their hands on their legs once, claps their hands together once, snaps their fingers on their left hand, and then snaps their fingers on their right hand. Everyone must do this in rhythm while the game is being played. #1 begins first. He will say his number on the left hand finger snaps and then the number of someone else on the right hand snap. Then the person whose number he called must stay in rhythm and say his own number on the left hand snap and someone else’s number on the right hand snap. If the person says his number wrongly or breaks rhythm, he must loose his place in the circle and go to the end of the circle, and becomes the last number, and everyone changes their number accordingly. The object of the game is to reach the #1 spot.

Ultimate frisbee/ball/etc. Two teams. The object is to advance the object (ball, frisbee, etc) up the field to the opponents goal. The object can only be advanced by throwing it. Once a team member catches the object, he can only take 2 steps and then must throw it to another teammate (while the opposing team is trying to catch it as well). If the object is dropped, it is given to the opposing team member who is closest. After a goal is scored, the object is given to the other team, and they must try to score. The team with the most goals wins.

Tail grab. Divide everyone up into teams of 5-10 people. The team holds hands. The person on one end is the leader, and the person on the other end is the tail. Give the tail person a tail to tuck into the back of his pants. It should hang out at least 1/3 of a meter. The object of the game is for the leader of each team to pull out the tails of the other teams while protecting their own tail. When a team loses their tail, or it breaks apart, that team is out. The last team remaining wins.

Bedlam. This game requires four teams of equal size. Each team takes one corner of a room or playing field. On a signal each team attempts to move as a group as quickly as possible diagonally across to the opposite corner, performing an announced activity as they go. The first team to get all its members into the corner wins the round. The first round can simply be running to the opposite corner. Following that, a number of possible activities like walking backward, piggybacking, hopping, skipping, and so forth, can be attempted. There is guaranteed to be mass bedlam as the groups criss-cross in the centre and go “over and through” others to become winners.

Mashed Potato Mayhem. Before the session, make a batch of mashed potatoes (or other gooey food), enough to fill three bowls. Each of the bowls should be wide and deep enough that a person can fit his entire face inside it. Put a small round object in the bottom of each bowl and pile on the mashed potatoes. Have these three bowls sitting on a newspaper on the floor when the group enters. Have each team select one person to participate. Ask each participant to put his hands behind his back and get on his knees in front of the bowl. When you give the signal, they should put their faces in their bowl to search for the ball with their mouths only. When they find the ball, they must sit up with it between their teeth and turn so that you can see it.

Ring Relay. Divide the group into two queues and give each player a toothpick, which he will place in his mouth. The leader will place a small ring on the toothpick of the players at the head of each queue. It is then passed from toothpick to toothpick until it reaches the end of the queue. If it is dropped before it reaches the end of the queue, it must be started all over again at the beginning of the queue. The winning team is the one whose ring reaches the end of the queue first.

What Does That Mean? Select 5-10 words from the dictionary that your youth will not be familiar with (examples: *jetsam*, *grimalkin*, *oppugnant-go ahead*, look them up, they are real words). Write the words where everyone can see them. Then hand out slips of paper to each member of the group. Ask the youth to write what they think the definition of the words are. When you collect the papers, separate them by word headings. Read four or five definitions written by the group along with the actual definitions. See if group members can guess which is the actual definition.

Emotion Sculptures. Divide your youth (and leaders) into groups of four to six persons. Then name an emotion, action, structure, etc. Each small group is to create a sculpture with their bodies to represent what you named, either literally or abstractly. Give the groups several minutes to create their sculptures, then one at a time have them show their sculptures to the other groups. Then assign a second one, and so on

The Web. Have your group stand in a circle. The more people the better (include leaders). Give one of the circle members a ball of string. Ask him to tell the group one thing that makes him happy (or sad, or excited, or bored, etc.) That person holds on to the end of the ball of string and tosses the ball to someone else, who in turn does the same thing. Soon you will weave a web.

Hit the Bucket. Queue up five or six buckets of various sizes. (You can also use small wastebaskets, large aluminum cans, etc.) Give each a point value, depending upon the difficulty (Determine this by doing a trial run of this activity in advance.) Give each individual a small ball and have him stand 2-3 meters from the buckets. The object is to bounce the ball into one of the buckets. The ball must bounce at least once and must remain in the bucket to be counted. For additional excitement, mark the balls so they can be identified and have several youth playing at the same time. As they all aim for the higher point buckets, their balls will hit each other.

Zip-Zap Game. This naming activity is designed to reinforce the use of first names in the group. It is a particularly good activity if you have several visitors. As the group sits in a circle, the leader points to an individual and says either, “Zip, one, two, three, four, five” or “Zap, one, two, . . .” The individual in the circle must tell the first name of the person to the right for “Zip” or to the left for “Zap” before the count of five, or he must be “it” in the middle of the circle. Continue play until most everyone’s name has been called. As a variation you may want the group to change seats once or twice during the game.

I Like Everyone But ... This active game is played like Fruitbasket Upset. As the group is seated in a circle (with no extra chairs), the leader states, I like everyone but . . . “ and names a characteristic common to at least two people in the circle (e.g., blondes, people who wear Nikes, people who don’t wear socks). Those individuals who fit that description must move from their seat to another seat that has been vacated. The person in the middle will also try to find a vacant seat in which to sit. The person left standing begins again by saying, I like everyone but . . . “ and the game continues. The caller may state, I like everyone!” and the entire group must change seats. This activity can serve as a fun introduction to the leader’s presentation.

Doomsday Pillow Fight. You will need to stretch a board or plank across and above the ground ahead of time so the fighters will be above ground. If your group is small, you may be able to get two teams at a time on top of the plank. If you’re working with a larger group, just use a representative from each team and use only two at a time on top of the boardwalk. At the sound of the whistle, the two opposing players are to begin whacking each other with their pillows. The object of the game is to knock the opposing person completely off the board. If you are using a representative from each team, take the winners from round one and place them together in a second round, until you finally have one overall winner. Afterward, give the group 5-10 minutes Doomsday free time with the pillows and allow them to hit anyone.

Case Race. Instruct the teams to queue up in single file for this relay. At the signal, the first person from each team is to hop to the opposite end of the field (or room) with both feet in his pillowcase. When the first person has completed the race, the next person on the team takes the pillowcase and does the same thing. The team who finishes first is declared the winner.

Chariot Races. Line out an obstacle course (people make great obstacles); or if your room is big enough, have the youth race around the room. Or you could have it outside. Have two people lock arms to form a chair. A third person sits on their arms, and off they go. Race each of your team members or an equal number from each team.

Eggs Benedict. You will need a hard-boiled egg and a spoon for each team. The teams need to queue themselves in relay fashion, single file. At the given signal, the first person in each team carefully carries his egg in the spoon to the goal line. If the egg falls, the player must pick up the egg and go back to the starting line and begin again. The winning team is the team who finishes first. *For variation:* Use raw eggs instead of hard-boiled eggs, or have the players skip or hop instead of walk.

People Relay. Each team picks up a member of the team over their heads and carries him about 10 meters to a marked finish line. If your teams are large, have 8 people carry 1 person, then run back and let another group go. The first team to carry 10 people to the line wins. If a team has fewer than 10, they can carry someone twice.

Football Pass. Materials Needed—a football for each team. Queue up the teams into even, single-file queues. At the front of the queue, a football is given to the first person. He passes it back over his head. The next person passes between his legs, and so on in that order. Whichever team finishes first wins.

Variation:

- a. Add several footballs in assorted sizes.
- b. Use several other sports balls.

Penguin Football. Materials needed: enough cloth strips for each person to have one (old rags or sheets), and a football. Each person ties a rag tightly around his knees. No running is allowed. The only advancing movement that is legal is shuffling. (The rags should always stay around the knees.) Play a football game using the soft football.

Monster Walk. If you are working with a large group, instruct the youth to assemble in their usual teams. If your group is smaller, you may want to combine two teams together. You will need to mark a starting line and a finish line approximately 5-10 meters apart from each other. Each team forms a unit by joining hands, interlocking arms, riding piggyback, or any other means that can be devised. The only limitations are the number of arms and legs that may be used for the task of walking. The number of arms and legs that can be used in the walking process are determined by subtracting two from the total number of people on the team. For example, if there are six people on the team, only four arms and four legs may be used to keep the “monster” together and walk it down the field. To start the race, teams assemble on the starting line. At the sound of your whistle, they move their creation toward the finish line. The first team across wins and should be awarded a large number of points. If you have combined teams, award both teams a large number of points.

Musical Balloons. Instruct your group to stand in a circle. Give each youth except one a balloon.

You will need to appoint another worker to be in charge of starting and stopping the tape player or other music. When the music begins, all players begin passing the balloons in the same direction around the circle. When the music stops, the player who does not have a balloon is taken out of the game. If a balloon pops, the person holding it is out of the game. A balloon is taken out each time a player goes out. A large number of points should be awarded to the team with the last person to remain in the circle.

Sit Down—Stand Up. Have all the young people stand up. As you read the following statements, or statements like these, they are to sit down when a statement is true for them. When they hear another one that is true, they are to stand up if they are already sitting down. The youth will be standing or sitting, according to which statements are true for them.

Sit Down or Stand Up If . . . 1) You are at this youth meeting because you were forced to come. 2) You are taking a class at school because a friend talked you into it. 3) You did something last week you really didn't want to do, but were influenced by someone into doing it. 4) Today you forced a friend to do something that he/she did not want to do. 5) You missed church sometime this past month to do something else. 6) You drank more than one cold drink today. 7) Last week you said something that you wish you had not said, but said it anyway. 8) You have not finished your homework for school tomorrow. 9) You did not pray yesterday because you were in a hurry to go somewhere.

Influence. Before your meeting, choose four young people to help you with this game. They will be sent out of the room along with a youth you choose when the meeting begins. The four that you have chosen ahead of time will know what you plan to do. The fifth person will not. Have some of your youth put their shoes in a pile at the front of the room. Count the number of shoes you have in the pile. Ask all the youth you have chosen to come back into the room. Ask them to quickly count the shoes in the pile. (Give them only 30 seconds to count the shoes and then do not let them look at the shoes again.) The four people you had chosen before the meeting will know they are supposed to add one to the correct number. For example, if there are 10 shoes, they will say there are 11 shoes. The purpose of this game is to see what the fifth person will say. He counted the shoes and he knows there are 10. Will he say 10 and be different from the others? Or will he do as the other youth do and say 11 shoes?

Banana Competition. Have each team choose one player to represent them before you explain the game. Have all the players stand behind a table and face the rest of the group. Place a banana in front of each player. At your signal they are to peel and eat the banana without using their hands or arms. If the banana drops on the floor, they still must not use their hands or arms. A winner is not declared until the banana is completely eaten.

Introduction Name Game. Have the entire group sit in a circle. (Larger groups may want to divide into two or more circles.) The person beginning this game chooses a creative name for himself. Example: If the first person's name is George, he might introduce himself as "Good George". Then, Person 2 must introduce herself and then say the name of the first person - "My name is Happy Hanna. This is Good George." When you get to the last person in the circle, this person must introduce himself and every person in the circle, working his way back to the first person in the circle.

Back Snatching. Pass out two note cards, a pencil, and a piece of tape to every student. Ask them to make up a name or code word for themselves. They should write this on one of the note cards without anyone else seeing what they write. Now have everyone move to the edges of the room, tape their code name to their back, and put their backs to the wall. When you give the signal, everyone must move around the room, trying to write down as many code names as they can see (*back snatching*) without letting others see what is written on their back. Set a time limit of about two minutes, and see who gets the most names.

Blind queue-up. Quickly divide your class into two or more groups. You need at least four persons per team for this game to work. When the youth are divided, ask everyone to close his eyes. Emphasize, “No peeking!” Now instruct them to queue up from tallest to shortest, making absolutely no noise! When the group thinks they are finished, they should call out, “Done.” Tell the other groups to keep going, just in case the first team is not in correct order. To win, a team must be the first finished *in proper sequence*.

Animal Upset. On individual pieces of paper write down the names of animals. Make two copies of each animal (three if your group is 15 or more). Then on one slip of paper write the word “duck,” but do not make a match. Distribute a slip to everyone in the group, being sure that every animal has at least one partner except for the duck. At your signal, everyone begins making the noise of the animal on their slip as they try to find their partner, get with them, and sit on the floor. The “duck” person goes on quacking without ever finding a partner.

Goofy Relay. Choose up two or more teams. You need the same number of sack with instructions as the number of teams. In the sacks place slips of paper with goofy things to do (*find someone with a shaved head and scratch his head; sit on the floor, cross your legs, sing a song; take off your shoes and then put them on the wrong foot; touch all four corners of the room; etc.*). Make up crazy things and put the same instructions in each sack. At your signal, the first person in each group takes out one of the slips, reads it, and then completes the action. As soon as the action is completed, the next person on the team draws a slip from the bag, reads it, and completes the action. And on it goes. The first team that completes all of the tasks in their bag wins.

Human Ticktacktoe. Set up nine chairs in three rows of three - to serve as the ticktacktoe grid. Divide your group into two teams. Each team takes its turn by sending one person to sit in one of the chairs - a human X or O. The first team to get three in a row wins. Without labels for X and O the game is more difficult than it might seem. To make it even tougher, set a time limit for teams to make their moves, and allow no group consulting.

What Do You Know? This is great for getting youth to start talking about a specific topic. Bring a soft ball to the meeting, and have everyone sit in a circle. Toss the ball to someone and have them tell what they know about the subject you will be speaking about, or answer a question about a certain topic. The person shares one bit of information he/she knows, and then passes the ball on to someone else to continue the process. Let this continue for five minutes or so until answers start being repeated.

Balloon Pop Relay. For this relay you will need one balloon for each team. The object is to see which team can pop their balloon first (choose small balloons). Each team member is allowed one breath into the balloon, and then he must pass it on to the next person. If air escapes

while passing the balloon, encourage the team to continue. Once everyone has had a turn, start over again if the balloon has not popped. Be prepared for stubborn balloons that may not want to pop. In that circumstance, declare the winner to be the team with the largest balloon.

Charades. Divide your youth into several groups, and have the group all sit an equal distance from you. Then call one person from each group to come to you. You will tell them a word to be acted out. Once they hear the word from you, they are to run back to their team and act it out. Once the team correctly guesses the word, the original person must race back to you. The first team to send their person back to you wins that round.

Feet Ball. Line two rows of chairs facing each other with about a one meter separation. Have your two teams sit facing each other. The object is for a team to move the ball to their end of the line (goal). Everyone must hold his arms behind his chair. Start the game by dropping the ball in the centre of the line. You will want to have everyone remove his or her shoes as a precaution.

Catch as Catch Can. Divide into groups of four or five. Each group makes a circle, with one group member standing in the middle. The one in the middle must shut their eyes, and keeping their body straight, fall frontward and backward several times, and the group must catch him/her and push him/her back to a standing position. They must be careful not to let the one in the middle fall.

