

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Many older youth are hampered by the notion that they have already “been-there-done-that.” This is especially true of those who have grown up in a community of faith. This Exploration is designed to help participants get out of their rut, showing them a brand new view—“making all things new”—of stewardship, something they have seen and studied before, while giving them a fresh look at some very old ideas. For those who are just starting to explore the idea of stewardship and the “jargon” that comes with it, this Exploration provides opportunities to explore new ideas and discover this essential element of the Christian faith.

About this Exploration

For many, stewardship is only or primarily about money and tithing. This exploration intends to help individuals and churches discover and imagine possibilities of what it means to live into a Christian sense of stewardship that involves all of life. We hope to explore both what this can mean and how we might integrate this with our life experiences. Because God is still speaking, we listen, envision, and embrace our responsibility as God’s people, drawing upon the stories found in scripture and the importance of continuing and sharing the story of what it means to be a disciple who is living stewardship.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Deuteronomy 8:7-18
Matthew 2:1-11

Leader Preparation

Think of these sessions as one of those family vacations with a very long car ride. You get to the hotel and collapse on the bed. Wonderful things will happen, but that's tomorrow. Right now all you need is the bed and a diner nearby that has booster seats for the children. These sessions are about that "Ahh" feeling as you flop onto the bed. God is bringing God's children out of the desert. The Magi have found the Christ toddler after a very, VERY long journey. As you lead these activities, do so with a sense of anticipation, that something wonderful is about to happen. As you begin to plan, remember that "group-think" is a common occurrence. (We say "group" because "mob" isn't quite appropriate.) Be sure to set aside a moment to take a deep breath to "center." Between the activity and the discussion is a good place for a snack of some kind.

Prayer: God, give me a spirit of calm and ease. I need to know that you are guiding me as I meet with my group. May my words and example inspire stewardship among the young people with whom I will be interacting. Be with me, and be with my group as it examines and thinks about these new concepts of stewardship. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Follow (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Try this activity yourself first. Look at your own answers and decide what questions you would ask of a teen who completes the activity. This is one of those activities that can build upon itself. Don't be afraid of where it might go.

Supplies:

- markers
- paper

Explain to your participants that the Magi had traveled a very long way. Even though popular understanding places these Magi at the nativity, they were not there at the stable (though if you tried to remove them from the Christmas pageant you might be removed from your job). The story goes that the Magi (aka, wise men, kings) followed a star. Invite participants to draw a five-pointed star on paper you have given them. At each "point" write the name of a person, idea, practice, or truth that is a guide on their personal journey. Have them draw five more stars, each one starting at the word you just wrote down. You now have twenty more available "points." Use these to write down valuable pieces of advice you have received over the years. You can leave up to five of them blank for future ideas. Invite participants to reflect aloud on what this activity teaches them about the value of following guides.

2 Gusher

Leader preparation: Have fun with the visuals in the passage from Deuteronomy 8:7-18. Exaggerate the images as you explain them. Don't be afraid to laugh at how difficult the words are to pronounce.

Supplies:

- paper
- markers

Ask your participants to make two lists on the paper you give them. One list is of all the words they can think of that mean "rock." The second list is all the words they can think of that mean "water." Encourage them to think in terms of extremes. (Note: You can divide your group into teams and see which team can come up with the most words. Discount any words that appear on both lists.) The Hebrew translation of this passage (Deuteronomy 8:7-18) uses two Hebrew words, *challamiysh* and *mayim*. *Challamiysh* means "hard" rock, as in granite; not crumbling sandstone rock, but the hardest rock there is. *Mayim* means "flood." The image this verse should bring to mind is something akin to Niagara Falls, but in reverse (maybe "Old Faithful" geyser): a deluge of water shooting up from the hardest possible ground.

Invite your participants to think about the "rock" in their life. Ask: Where is your life like immovable granite, dry, cracked, hard? Invite them to write the word *mayim* on the palm of their hand. Keep it as a reminder that God doesn't just send a mist to the *challamiysh* in your life. God's going to send a tsunami.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

3 This Land Is Your Land

Leader preparation: Encourage participants to think—not just big, but HUGE with this activity. Give them as much space as possible to work. (Note: This can work with regular copy paper but is more fun if you use lots of space and big markers. Another option is to use finger paint for added fun.)

Supplies:

- large sheets of newsprint, or cardboard or poster board
- markers
- finger paints (optional)
- wet wipes or paper towels (optional, but necessary with finger paints)

The scripture passage (Deuteronomy 8:7–18) makes reference to “the desolate place” and “that good land.” This can be taken in a very literal sense and in a more metaphorical way. Use the markers (finger paint) and create two pictures on your paper. One is “the desolate place”; the other is “that good land.” While your participants are working, talk about what these places really are in their own lives. Share a personal story about a time God brought you out of a desolate place and into a good land. Invite participants who wish to share one of their picture stories. Then ask the group to reflect on what this might teach us about following God. (Note: If you are using something messy like finger paint, set a time limit and stick to it. Provide wet-wipes or paper towels to clean up and bring the “level” down to where you can have a discussion.)

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Presence (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity is about presents and Presence. Help the participants understand that the whole gift-giving-getting thing is more than lists and shopping. Remind your participants to think beyond themselves.

Supplies:

- markers
- scissors
- card stock
- string or ribbon

The Magi traveled from very far away to bring gifts to the Christ child. Invite the participants to make a gift tag like they would find on any Christmas present, including details like borders and decorations. On the tag write “To: God” and “From: [participant’s name].” Discuss what gifts we give to God. Is it like trying to buy a present for the person who has everything? What does God want for Christmas? The point of this activity is to suggest that what God wants from us is to see us use and share the gifts we have been given. Provide plenty of time for reflection on this strategic stewardship/discipleship question.

5 Moses Madness

Leader preparation: If funds are available, provide some flavors of Ben & Jerry’s ice cream (or some other highly popular ice cream). If not, download several pictures of ice cream containers from the Ben & Jerry’s Web site or the Internet, in general.

Supplies:

- Ben & Jerry's ice cream cartons or pictures of Ben & Jerry's ice cream cartons

Keep the ice cream hidden in a cooler. Invite participants to read the scripture passage (Deuteronomy 8:7–18) and talk with them about what the early scripture writers meant about “a land of milk and honey.” These were images of pure joy and bliss to people who had been wandering in a desert for years. Ask participants to imagine what imagery might be used if writing for today's reader. What are your images of “milk and honey”? Suggest a world of Ben & Jerry's, and then pull the ice cream out of the cooler. Give participants paper and markers and ask them to create a brand new flavor called Heaven, Paradise, Moses Madness, or some other biblical version of paradise. Ask participants where their paradise is. What would it take you to pack up and leave behind something and go find that “paradise”?

6 The Sound of One Hand Wrapping

Leader preparation: Sometime it's easier to talk with someone whose hands are busy. You don't have to wait till the activity is over to start the discussion.

Supplies:

- boxes
- tape
- scissors
- Christmas wrapping paper

This activity is mostly for “grins,” but you can get a good discussion out of it. Divide your group into pairs or trios and invite them to wrap up the box you've supplied like a Christmas present. The “catch” is that everyone must put their nondominant hand behind his or her back. Try this as a timed activity, or judge who has the prettiest package. Although it is not really about competition, this can add some fun and keep the event from getting out of hand. Afterward, gather your group and talk about gifts. (You could also do this while they are working on their wrapping.) What was the best gift you ever received? What was the best gift you ever gave? What gift did you want so badly that you could not imagine not getting it? What gifts have we been given—globally? What if God gave you a gift that was the wrong size? What gifts have you been given by God? Would you ever return them?

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Outta' Here (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity will work better if you can set up a quiet space with some quiet music. You are taking your participants on a sort of guided dream. Talk quietly. Breathe deep. Encourage imagination. This activity is designed to think about priorities—what matters most as all consider what it means to be good steward and disciples.

Supplies:

- paper and pens

Invite the participants to close their eyes and then lead them through this imaginary activity. Take pauses between statements to allow participants to envision what you are talking about. Instruct them not to answer out loud, but to picture things in their mind in as much detail as possible.

Close your eyes. Imagine yourself in your house . . . you are standing in your living room . . . what does it look like right now at this very moment . . . what sounds do you hear? . . . what do you smell? . . . what are you wearing in this vision? Now I want you to wander around from room to room in your house and imagine that you are using all your senses. What do you hear and smell and touch in each room? How long have you lived in this house? Think of all the people who have been in and out of the house just since you've been there. Does your house have a sense of itself? In other words, does it have a feel? Is there a kind of sixth sense about your house? What are some of the worst or best moments in this house? Think about those.

Now imagine yourself in the living room or common area of the house . . . you are holding a box. It is a cardboard box . . . perhaps, like a packing box or a box you'd find at a store . . . it's about three feet long, by two feet high. I want you to imagine what this empty box feels like in your hands. Now imagine you have to leave your house and never come back. There is a car on the way. It's going to take you far away. You have ten minutes to pack forever, in this box. Open your eyes and make a list of everything you would take with you as if this scenario were true.

After the imaginary trip is completed and the lists have been made, invite a sharing of the lists—perhaps asking for the most difficult decision made about something cherished. Ask your participants why they took certain things and left others behind. Now ask your participants to think a little more metaphorically. What do you take with you on a “faith journey”? What challenges do you think you will face along the path? What is the most essential tool or item to bring along? How do you generally find your way? Make a list of five essential things you would “pack” for a journey of faith.

8 Far

Leader preparation: This is both an outdoor and a learning room activity. Outdoors, it will be a fun and noisy activity, so don't expect your participants to behave as though they are indoors. Allow for noise, joking, and giggles. When you go inside, there is need for a mood change. Perhaps there is a song, a passage of scripture, or a prayer that you could ask them to recite as you go into the building that will refocus them on the task in front of them. Make up the water balloons prior to the meeting.

Supplies:

- water balloons
- butcher's paper or newsprint
- permanent markers (such as Sharpies) in various colors

Outside: Lay the sheets of paper on the pavement, spreading them around so they are separated from each other. Determine in advance how many participants will be involved at each sheet, and then direct the participants to toss a balloon in the air so that it lands as close as possible to the center of each sheet. Quickly, have participants trace around the “splat” and all the “splash-ettes” with the permanent markers. Allow these to dry, and then take them back inside to hang them on the wall of the meeting room.

Inside: Invite participants to spend time looking at all the designs. Then ask them to talk about the way God enters our lives. When do we most feel dry and cracked? When God hits us with God’s love, what happens? When did this happen to you? Talk about a time when you felt splashed with God’s love—invite them to do the same. You might also connect this to the Deuteronomy passage (8:7–18): How do these images speak to the experience of the promised land?

9 Follow Stars

Leader preparation: You will need to cut about a hundred (or so) paper stars. (You might also be able buy these at a hobby store or invite a few of your participants to help you cut them out.) Prior to the meeting, place the stars around the building so they can be followed. Get creative. Make use of the space that you have. Tape stars in some hard to reach places. (Note: you can number the stars and tape them in order to let the participants know they are on the right track.) If you have a large group, make multiple sets of stars and hide them in different places. (Note: If time or lack of volunteers is a factor, draw a star on one hundred index cards and get the same results.)

You can find the tune and the lyrics for the hymn at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>.

Supplies:

- stars or construction paper
- Bible
- copies of the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your love” (tune: Chereponi), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>

Divide your group into smaller sized groups. (Note: For fun you can tie them together at the wrist with some yarn or string.) Say something like: Today you are going to follow your stars and see where they lead you. There are paper stars around the building. I want you to follow the path of stars wherever it leads you from the point where you discover your first star.

Note: Eventually the stars should simply stop (be sure that the there is one less star than the total). When the participants wander back to the meeting room complaining they found all but one, show them the last star has been in the Bible you have been holding the whole time. Now read the scripture from Matthew 2:1–11. Talk with your participants about getting lost (literally). Ask: Have you ever been lost? What was it like? How much preparation did you put into the trip? How did you get found? Or find your way home? What is the best way to find your way out of “lost”? Have a similar discussion while speaking “figuratively” or spiritually about being lost: Have any of you ever been lost in the sense that you didn’t know who you were? Or what your relationship with God really was? What was that like and how was it the same or different than being literally lost? Sing the song “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your love” (tune: Chereponi).

Reflect

If you are reading these words, chances are you already know what gift you are giving to the Christ child. Your work and your wisdom are greatly appreciated, even if you don’t hear that often enough. The greatest way to say “Thank you” to God is to use the gifts you were given. Listen for God’s “You’re welcome.”

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Older youth (ages 15–19) are growing through experiences of faith and faith practice. Today's youth are products of an esteem-driven system of learning. They are shaped by the team experience whether at school, on the playground, in sports, or at work, but they can also be very alone. Often they have entered the stage of searching faith. As they grow into relationships with others, they test their sexuality and consider life commitments. Some have discovered talents that take much of their time to practice and express. They distrust being marketed to and bombarded with commercial messages, yet are loyal to trusted brands. They are developing a faith vocabulary that gives voice to their ideas and emotions. While they may engage in some practices of faith, they eagerly explore others and seek to become more practiced in the disciplines of faith practices both individually and corporately. They often believe they have all the answers, so teaching this age can be a challenge. The focus of this Exploration is to help older youth recover a sense of wonder, to surprise them with new ideas, and to show them that ancient wisdom does have a place in their lives today.

About this Exploration

When we hear Scripture as a community, we discern its life-giving blessings and reconcile its history of abuse and its potential for misuse with its power to generate health and wholeness. Scripture gives us a foundational image of God that is relational and that embodies difference within the whole. God blesses each part of creation as necessary for the well-being of the whole. We are called to reject an understanding of "dominion" as power over creation. Scripture invites us to accept the gifts God provides for the enjoyment of all, and to embrace "life that is really life" rather than storing up treasures and individual possessions.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 1:26–31
1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

Leader Preparation

Too often we blame God when things don't go well—our team loses, a favorite relative dies unexpectedly, a major expense comes at the worst time. Ultimately it is ourselves who are responsible for who we are and what we will become. God guides us. God holds our hands on the way, but God never trips us or pushes us away. In fact, God does quite the opposite. These activities are about helping participants realize that they are in charge of their lives—good and bad—and that God is there for them through everything.

Prayer: God, I pray now for these I am preparing to meet. Grant wisdom. Grant insight into the Scriptures. Grant wisdom to use the Bible in an honorable manner that also encourages participants in their own authentic use of Scripture. Calm me and help me to love and seek to understand the youth with whom I will be meeting. Amen

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Tangible Love (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: We are a culture that must see, touch, taste, smell, and hear in order to believe—we want proof; yet our faith often asks us to forgo proof. The existence of what we cannot prove will come up in the discussion. Don't be afraid of these questions. Share your own thoughts, doubts, and questions; remind your participants this is a journey we are *all* on, together.

Supplies:

- Bible
- copies of song “Say It! Sing It!” Attachment: Activity 1

Before looking at the song, ask participants to make a list of intangible things: light, farts, music, peace, and so on. (Note: You can turn this into a game by dividing the group into teams and inviting competition to see who has the longest list. Subtract any words that appear on both lists.) Read the creation story in Genesis 1. Note that God simply said it, and there it was. God spoke the world into existence. Discuss ways to make the intangible, tangible. A gas can become liquid and solid, but how do we make music something you feel or taste? How do we make love tangible?

Sing the song “Say It! Sing It!” (by Jo Ellen Miller) <http://www.tinyurl.com/tppsing>. How do we let the world know love is real? How can you let friends know?

2 Franken-Zebra

Leader preparation: This activity is both silly and sweet and can bring out your participants' childlike and childish qualities. Laugh along with them, but keep the conversation going throughout. Try to bring the participants to an understanding that the earth and all that is in it is a gift from God and must be treated as sacred, and the responsibility that goes along with that gift is a sacred duty. (Note: This activity is more fun if your time, kitchen, and budget allow you to use premade cookie dough.)

Supplies:

- Bible
- animal crackers
- plastic knives
- frosting
- premade cookie dough (optional)

Author Garrison Keillor once said that people who direct Christmas pageants gain a new respect for God, who directed the first one. The same would have to hold true for creation itself. Have the group take about 20 minutes to create their own animals. You might develop a few as examples, such as a Franken-Zebra. If you are working with animal crackers, break them apart in advance and then use frosting as glue. If you are working with cookie dough, be as creative as possible. Ask questions like: Do you think this is how we got the platypus? Reread the scripture passage from Genesis 1:26–31. Note where the passage says that we “humans” are given “dominion” over the animals. Ask what this means. This does not mean dominance. Some translations say “given responsibility for.” God

Living Stewardship

church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

gave us the earth and everything in it and told us we are responsible for it. How do you think we're doing? What is the difference between being given everything we need and everything we want? How does this fit in with the ideas from 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19?

Gotta' Be Me

Leader preparation: This activity will help you to emphasize the uniqueness of each individual. Participants will closely examine their own fingerprints as well as those of others. Ponder the nonrandomness of this idea. Let no part of the conversation be negative. Even if you have participants who put themselves down or say “God screwed up on me,” don't put up with that. Encourage and affirm as often as possible. (Note: You can “expand” this activity with permission to use the church copier.)

Supplies:

- ink pad
- markers
- 3" x 5" index cards
- Bible

Invite your participants to place their thumbs in the ink pad and then on their card. Using the print as the center of the activity, ask them to take the markers and turn the fingerprint into a personal representation: something you like to do, a talent you have, a gift from God you have received. (Note: If you have the time and permission, put the prints on your church copier and enlarge them for greater detail before drawing.) Have your participants consider the entire creation story; perhaps you could read it as they work on their art. Pick out individual words for them to find like “good” or “Then God said.” Finally, ask them to find the word “oops.” (Hint: It's not there.) So if God never said oops, can anything God made be wrong? Invite participants to share their art and describe their uniqueness.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Day Six (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think beyond the words read here and to the intent behind them. We gather our meanings from stories and use them as they fit our own lives. Be open to participants' ideas on this one. Encourage them to follow where their imagination leads. Emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer. Make this personal. This activity is about making what some participants see as “unreachable” and putting into their own hands.

Supplies:

- paper
- pencils
- Bibles

Review the creation story beginning in Genesis 1:1. Working in reverse order (start with day 7), write down one word for each day of creation. For example, words that could be used for Day 7 include chill, rest, quiet, Sabbath, peace, shh-hhhh. When finished, say out loud Genesis 1:1 and have the participants, one at

a time, say their word; continue with this verse by verse until finished. Then ask what insights emerge from this “backward” creation process? What surprised you?

5 From a Distance

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is to encourage participants to see the big picture. If we pull back far enough from one another, we are all the same. God made us all and God has never, not once, said, “Oops.” Lines of differences are created by us, not God. Try to steer any conversation in the direction of the complete and total awesomeness of what God has done.

Supplies:

- finger paints (green, blue, and white)
- black paper
- wet wipes

(Note: Purposely avoid giving participants an opportunity to wash their hands until after the activity.) Give participants paper and place dishes of paint on the table. Explain that they are to create a picture of the earth. There are no other instructions than that.

Several will dislike getting their hands messy; some may insist on washing their hands between colors. Tell them that was not part of the assignment. When everyone has created something, then offer up the wet wipes. Ask questions like: How do you know when you are done? Do you think God “finished”? Do you like the image of God with paint under his nails or some other image? What does this process teach us about God? About creation? About our role in it?

6 Watch It

Leader preparation: Safety first. Make sure your participants know that this is not a party game. There is something to be learned here and if they spend their time trying to mess with another participant, they are taking that opportunity away from someone else. If you take it seriously, so will they. Feel free to get personal with your participants on this one. Share your own story and listen—really listen—to theirs.

Supplies:

- blindfolds
- Bible

This activity is an “oldie but a goodie” and is entirely appropriate given the Scripture selection. Divide your group into pairs. Give each pair a blindfold and instruct one youth to blindfold the other. The “seeing” youth must guide the blindfolded youth—safely—around the entire building. (Note: This is not a chance to poke fun at someone. Do not lead someone into the wrong bathroom or a place where they might fall or get hurt.) After ten minutes, they are to return to the meeting room and switch places. After everyone has gathered again, read both the Genesis and 1 Timothy passages. Talk about the word “illumination” in both its literal and figurative meanings. How important is light? Why do you suppose God created light first? How does it apply to the scripture we read and the activity we just finished? What was the biggest illumination in your life?

Sending & Serving Activities

 **7 Reflections Are (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: You will need mirrors for this activity. You can put participants in their respective restrooms or bring some mirrors from home. This activity is a great opportunity to encourage and affirm your participants. What do you know about them personally? See if you can offer at least one personal affirmation per youth during the conversation. (You will need both a male and a female adult leader for this if you have to use bathroom mirrors.)

Supplies:

- paper and markers
- mirrors

Give the participants paper and markers and seat them in front of a mirror. Invite them to draw a portrait of themselves without looking at the paper. Hang the finished productions on the wall and talk about our part in creation. Invite comments. Is creation ever “done”? If creation is still going on, what part do we play? Is our own creation ever complete? Should it be? Do you know anyone who is “done”? Is it a comfort or a concern to think that we might not ever be complete?

8 Seeded

Leader preparation: An activity you can eat—does it get any better? Keep the discussion going during the activity and not just at the end while they are eating. Again, this is a “see the bigger picture” activity, and sometimes that has to be drawn out of this age level.

Supplies:

- peppers (red, green, and, perhaps, one jalapeno)
- tomatoes
- limes
- a little cilantro for flavor
- tortillas or tortilla chips
- blender or food processor

Cut open the vegetables and fruits and remove the seeds. Put the remaining ingredients in the food processor and make salsa. Explain to the group that in the creation story the Hebrew word *dasha* is used. This word refers to the plants and trees and vegetation, and it means “sprout.” Creation was created to be in the process of creating. The creation process includes the seeds so the creation can continue. How does this apply to humans? How are we created to be partners in the creation?

9 Passing Go

Leader preparation: Encourage participants to think beyond the scripture here. They may be afraid to impose their own thoughts on the passage, but tell them that we are invited to bring ourselves and our own experiences to the stories in the Bible. People have been doing that for years, and great new insights often emerge.

Supplies:

- paper and markers
- Bibles

Read aloud (or have your participants read aloud) the passages from Genesis and 1 Timothy. (Find a contemporary translation or two.) Be sure each teen has a Bible to follow along with the reading. Ask the participants to write down God's commands from each passage. What is God telling us to do? Invite them to take their lists and rewrite them in their own words. How are we fulfilling those commands today? How about us as a church? As a community? As a species?

Reflect

Where did your own thoughts take you as you went through these activities? It's okay if you don't know all the answers. Anyone who tells you they have all the answers is either lying or selling something. You are here leading these sessions because this is what the scriptures teach us. It's not about being all-knowing; it is about one beggar showing another where the bread is.

Attachment: Activity 1

Say It! Sing It!

$\text{♩} = 132$



If you can say it! Sing it! Let peo-ple know how you feel. If you can

pray it, play it, know it, show it, let them know God's love is real!_____

1. Ma - ny are search-ing for mean- ing, mak-ing their way all a - lone.
2. We are to help_ one an - oth - er; help one an - oth - er be - long.

Hop - ing that some-one will guide them. In - to the path that leads home.
Wel-come the weak and the wear - y. Join in the fam - i - ly song.

From *Sing! Prayer and Praise*®, Copyright ©2009, The Pilgrim Press.
Words and Music: JoEllen Miller, Copyright ©2007. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

This is where it gets hard. Following Jesus is not easy. Older youth often still hold on to the Jesus of their Sunday school coloring pages. Jesus had hands, feet, an infectious laugh, and a huge heart—maybe he even had bad breath. He also taught lessons that were contradictory to the status quo. It is this rebellious Jesus that we lead older youth into knowing. This Exploration introduces the “hard” Jesus who can take the participants into the next phase of their lives.

About this Exploration

Generational and experiential differences condition how we perceive, understand, and practice discipleship. Discipleship involves the stewardship of our whole lives, as well as enabling our stewardship. Being an intentional disciple of Jesus assumes being a person of faith who embraces life as a journey of discovery and discernment about who Jesus is and what it means to live as a steward of God’s creation.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 55:1–3
Mark 10:17–22

Leader Preparation

These activities provide us with an invitation to go beyond—beyond what is expected, what we think is required, and what we think we can accomplish.

It is our choice. We can do the minimum, or we can go so far beyond the maximum that we can't measure it. Someone asks you for a drink of water, you can hand them a water bottle or you can drop a six-gallon water balloon on them. (Figuratively speaking . . . ahem!) Here's the kicker—extravagance is reflected back.

Prayer: God, you call all of us to be disciples of Jesus. Help me to follow him—not because I have to, but because I love you and want to be Christ's disciple. Help me now as I prepare to meet with my group. I acknowledge that I am not perfect in my own discipleship and stewardship, but I want to do better. Help me, so that my discipleship and stewardship may be contagious, and the young people with whom I interact will "catch" the same desire that I have to follow Christ. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from "Exploring and Engaging," at least one from "Discerning and Deciding," and at least one from "Sending and Serving." The first activity in each category

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Full (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: As you plan this activity, be prepared to push the participants continually to go one step more. How much bigger can you make this? Also, you can adjust this activity according to the time of year. We use Thanksgiving here, but you can just as easily use a Fourth of July picnic. (Note: Depending on the size of your group, a piece of pie for each participant would be a wonderful way to close this one out.)

Supplies:

- paper and markers
- pie (optional)

Ask your group to draw the "Thanksgiving table" as if they were looking down on it from above. Draw the plates, the centerpiece, and all the food. You don't have to be an artist; you can draw symbols or simple line drawings, but be complete. Don't leave anything out. While they are drawing, ask: How many people do you usually have at your table on Thanksgiving? Now make a list of as many words you can think of that mean "full." (Examples: complete, packed, bursting, topped-off). When everyone is finished, say something like: How do you feel at the end of that kind of meal? Have you ever joyously filled yourself and then heard someone say, "Who's ready for pie?" In our lives, God wants to be the one who says, "Who wants pie?" We are responsible for making sure everyone has a full plate in life, and God is the one who says, "Here's more!" What would happen if we applied this understanding to everything in life? Think of some examples of how "God piles on." How do we (positively and negatively) respond?

2 Here – Now

Leader preparation: You have become a sales agent for this one. The goal here is to help the participants understand it's important to know whom they listen to. Where they get their information is important. This is one of those "less is more" lessons. Prior to the meeting, you'll need to get your hands on a variety of tabloid newspapers or download and print a bunch of hokey over-the-top headlines. A great site to find some classic headlines is Google Images. Search for "Tabloid Headlines." <http://www.tinyurl.com/2egjawn>

Supplies:

- tabloid newspapers
- Bibles
- scissors
- tape

Give your participants a stack of tabloid newspapers with scissors and tape. Instruct them to cut out the headlines from the articles and tape them to the walls around the room. (Note: Depending on your group, leave the room if you can while they complete this activity.) When there are dozens of headlines posted on the wall, say something like: Okay, come in close now. Bring your group in close to you. Act like this is a huge secret. Get them in really close with whispers and motions and then very quietly whisper. "God . . . is . . . here." Then sit in silence for as long as you can stand it. (Note: This will seem longer to you than to them.) Just let the silence hang.

is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

After some time, whisper: Why are you all listening to me? (pause) Because you thought it was going to be something really important didn't you? If I had just walked into the room and said, “God is here,” would you have even paid attention?

Invite the participants to have a seat and talk with them about how we get information. We may not listen to the teacher, but if a friend says, “Oh my gosh, you will never guess what just happened,” we are all ears. Which person do we listen to? Flight attendants have some of the most important information in the world to impart, yet their words are ignored or even ridiculed by the people who most need to hear them. What is it like to tell someone something they need to hear and did not want to hear? How can we make people *want* to hear about God's love? Explain to the participants (from a personal story, if possible) that we have been entrusted with a very important message and we have to share it.

③ A Little Better All the Time

Leader preparation: Encourage your participants to be positive during this activity. Some participants may try and take the easy way out on this one. Emphasize that there is something to be learned in this activity, so it is important to make this work together. The underlying idea here is that faith and love are not magic wands that make it all better. Faith and love help us make it better for one another.

Prior to the session you will need a sheet of paper for each participant with different phrases written in small letters at the bottom of each page. Create story openings such as these:

- Jimmy forgot to study for his English Lit quiz .
- The girl Sean really wanted to go out with just turned him down flat .
- Maria slipped and fell in the lunch room, dumping turkey pot pie down the front of her brand new t-shirt.

Supplies:

- sheets of paper with story opening phrases
- paper
- pens

Fold over the opening line so it is now, essentially, at the top of the reverse side. Hand out these sheets, and ask the participants to write one sentence about how things got just a little better—one short sentence about how things got just a *little* better than the state of things in the first sentence. Say something like: It would be easy to just say, “and then she won the lottery,” but that's not what this is about. I want you to really try and keep to the task at hand and make things a little better all the time. Participants then fold the paper so that all that is showing is the sentence they just wrote. Pass the paper to the next person and repeat the process. Keep folding and writing and passing until the sheets are full. Unfold the paper and read the stories out loud. How is this work like God's love? Is God's love ever finished? What is the “catch?” Is there one? Does God “pile on?” For good and for bad? How does God invite us to “abundant life?” Conclude with something like: God never said, “I am going to solve all your problems for you.” However, God did promise to be there for us in the midst of those problems.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

 **4 Prosper! (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: There are those who have a problem with what others call “bumper sticker theology” and consider it a “dumbing down” of the biblical message. But without the bumper sticker, some may not get any theology at all. Encourage your participants to look up these verses and those around them and to develop a bumper sticker for what they think is the most important idea. Invite them to share their thoughts with anyone who comments on the sticker/signs they create.

Supplies:

- make-your-own-bumper-sticker paper (available from most office supply or craft stores)
- permanent markers

Look at Genesis 1:28 from the King James Version:

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Now look at the same verse from *The Message*:

God blessed them: “Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.

Read the scripture passages from 1 Timothy. Use your favorite translation or the same ones for the Genesis verse. Pick out the commands and rewrite them in one or two word phrases.

Invite participants to put their bumper stickers in a place that may invite questions from persons who may see them. Do not put a bumper sticker on a car without permission. In a later session, you can ask for any stories about bumper sticker theology.

5 Taste

Leader preparation: (Note: Adjust this activity according to the size of your group.) This activity requires some advanced preparation and creativity. Prior to the meeting, prepare a plate of mayonnaise sandwiches on white bread. Cut these into quarters so that they are ready to serve as participants arrive. Behind the scenes have a loaf or two of bread with a lot of flavor and texture. Have jars of thick salsa, flavored peanut butter, spicy cream cheese, and cheese dip (along with spoons and knives for each participant during flu season). Note: The idea is “full flavor,” not “hot.” Have the discussion while the participants are dipping and eating.

Supplies:

- mayonnaise sandwiches on white bread
- loaf of nine- or twelve-grain bread
- thick salsa, flavored peanut butter, spicy cream cheese, and cheese dip
- knives and spoons
- plates
- Bibles

Tell your participants that you brought along a snack for this meeting. Pull your mayo on white bread sandwiches out of the cooler and serve. Do not give any indication that an alternative is coming. Act like this is the biggest treat they have ever had. After some complaints or disbelief, bring out the other breads and toppings. Encourage the participants to dig in. Don't slice the new bread, rip it. Don't just spread a thick layer of topping—smear it!

Read Mark 10:17–22. Talk about the phrase “eternal life” from Mark. That phrase does not refer to “heaven” or an “afterlife”; it means living a life fully connected to God. Ask: If life is a swimming pool, do you test the shallow end with your big toe, or do you cannonball off the high dive? Life can be a drop of water on your shirt, or you can stand in a hurricane and be drenched with it. What keeps us from living life in the deluge?

6 Fluff and Nonsense

Leader preparation: Play this one up for all it's worth. Open yourself up for some creativity and be prepared to go with the flow. Rely on your own knowledge of your participants to make this work—and go buy some Twinkies. (Note: We're not talking about generic imitators, but the real thing. Did you know there are thirty-nine ingredients in a Twinkie?) You can also download various Twinkie related videos from www.youtube.com. (Example: <http://www.tinyurl.com/6kgbpx>.)

Supplies:

- Twinkies
- pens
- paper

Show the participants one of the videos you found about Twinkies, or share your research. If you have a “colorful character” or two in your congregation who would be willing to come in and tell some Twinkie anecdotes, bring them in.

Divide your group into pairs or trios and give them a few Twinkies for inspiration. Tell them they are to create (at least on paper) an art project, poem, science experiment, or outlandish recipe using the Twinkie. In their thought process they can use as many Twinkies as they want. Even if you only have one in front of you, think in terms of “unlimited.”

Gather your group together and discuss your ideas. Talk about substance. Generally, Twinkies are thought of as having no substance—in other words, fluff. Ask if they can name a celebrity or TV show that is all “fluff.” What parts of their own lives are “fluff” and what parts have “substance”? Thinking of the bigger picture, how did they—or could they—take the “fluff” and make it “substantial”? How can use the same process in their lives?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 The Middle

Leader preparation: Hold this activity in a large room. If you have a youth room with used couches, label one couch TRUE STUFF and the other couch FALSE STUFF. If you are in regular meeting room, label one wall as TRUE and the other as FALSE. You can also search and download pictures of current celebrities or other famous people who have money but whom contentment seems to have eluded. The main focus of this activity is to help young people be able to make decisions about who they are and what they think. “I dunno” is not an acceptable answer.

Supplies:

- signage
- pictures of rich people who don’t seem very happy (optional)

Say something like: I’m going to ask you a series of TRUE and FALSE questions. When I ask the question, go and sit on the couch (or stand by the wall) that best represents your answer. If there are people sitting the couch when you get there, crowd in with them.

TRUE OR FALSE

- He who dies with the most toys wins.
- He who dies with the most toys still dies.
- Money is the root of all evil.
- Finders keepers.
- People with a lot of money should be made to share.
- God blesses some people by making them rich.
- Rich people are stuck-up.
- If you are going to survive high school, you have to have the right clothes.
- Money makes the world go around.
- Money doesn’t buy happiness.
- Will work for food.

(You can use these statements or, better yet, create several questions that are specific to your area or group.)

Did you always think this way? How close are your answers to what you think your parents would answer? Who has been the biggest influence in the “you” that you are right now? Whom have you influenced?

8 Hi-Lo (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity works like the “Price Is Right” game. Stop at your local supermarket before the meeting and pick up several snack-food type items. (Note: You can eat the food later as a snack. If your budget is tight, instead of purchasing you can download pictures of items, from a can of soda-pop to a brand new car.) Keep track of how much things cost. Use your best “game show announcer” voice when leading this activity. This activity is designed to help understand the concept of value.

Supplies:

- grocery items or downloaded pictures

Choose volunteers to be contestants. Show them an item (or a picture) and ask Contestant One to guess how much it costs. Tell them if the actual cost is higher or lower. Next give Contestant Two a chance to guess. Keep going till someone gets it right. One point is awarded for each correct guess. Play until everyone has participated. Look at the scores. Do any of your participants know what it takes to get by in the world . . . to just feed yourself? What is the highest value you put on something you own? Is your most prized possession prized because it is expensive, or because of the meaning you assign to it? Of these: faith, hope, love, charity, a car—which one has the highest value to you? Why? (Remember, just because something is a thing does not mean it can't have real value.)

9 Take My Gifts

Leader preparation: You will need to make copies of the hymn “Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You” (tune: Talavera Terrace). You can find the lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>.

Find someone who can play the song on guitar or piano, or simply have the lyrics ready to pass out and read. Try to work the concept of self-esteem into the conversation without actually saying “Let’s work self-esteem into the conversation.” Encourage the participants to see not only their own gifts, but to see themselves as gifts.

Supplies:

- various gift catalogs

To begin the activity, pass out the gift catalogs. Have participants scour the pages and rip out the pictures of gifts they would like to receive. They can rip out as many as they can in two minutes.

Sing or read the lyrics to the hymn “Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You.”

Ask your group questions about materialism. Here’s a few to get you started:

- Have you ever gone shopping on the day after Thanksgiving?
- Have you ever worked at a store on the day after Thanksgiving?
- Have you ever seen people get hurt or fight at a giant sale?
- What did you get for Christmas last year? The year before that? The year before that?
- What was the best nonmaterial gift you were ever given? By whom?
- If you had absolutely no money, what gift would you give your best friend?
- What gifts has God given you? When was the last time you shared them?
- Why do you think the writers of this hymn used bread as a reference? What does it signify?
- Look at the items you tore out of the catalogs, what would you be willing to give up to get them?
- What is grace?

Reflect

Be comfortable sharing yourself. You have amazing gifts to share with your participants; your experience is one of the best. Don’t hide or belittle your particular gifts. The best thing you can give to your participants is you.

Say something like: God has given this group, this church, this community, this country, this world a gift—it’s you. Sometimes we say, “Oh he or she thinks he or she is God’s gift.” Usually we interpret this to mean that someone has a big ego. But what would happen if you truly saw yourself as a gift from God. What responsibility comes with that?

Copyright ©2010 The Pilgrim Press. Permission is granted for use by a single congregation for one (1) year from the purchase date of the subscription. No part of this download may be reproduced or transmitted—beyond the group using these materials—in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the written permission from the publisher.

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

This Exploration is less about who we are and more about *why* we are. Where did we come from, and why we do what we do? It is both an explanation of identity and an invitation to identity. The Christian Tradition Exploration brings the past into focus and offers participants a sense of place and history.

About this Exploration

God continually invites us to extravagantly welcome others into abundant life. We are not the first to experience questions, failures, accomplishments, joys, and sorrow. Our Christian tradition gives us ancestors in the faith whose stories and life experiences inform our own. Every drop of water reminds us of Christ's baptism. Shared meals recall Jesus' breaking bread and sharing the cup. Grounded in Hebrew tradition, Jesus displayed radical commitment to the poor. Love for the poor continues to characterize Christian community. God invites us to welcome those whom we encounter in daily life, and those we might not otherwise encounter, to see them as God's beloved people and treasure the diversity of humanity. We are called by God to create a safe, welcoming environment for all. We join the faith family of all time.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Deuteronomy 14:22–29
Acts 4:32–5:11

Leader Preparation

You are heading into sensitive territory here. People don't like to talk about how much money they have or how much money they give, so you may want to avoid those particulars. Our responsibility as leaders is to have the conversation and let it work its way into your participants' hearts and minds. Inevitably the question will arise, "What is God going to do with my money?" The answer is this: "What are you going to do with God's money?"

Prayer: God, thank you for the church, and for the many loving, generous, and compassionate acts of devotion and service that have been done over the centuries in your name. And thank you for the saints—both those who lived a long time ago and those who live now—who performed and continue to perform such acts of mercy and grace. Help us to follow in their tradition. Help us also to deal honestly with the church's past and current sins and indiscretions. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Happy (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity requires that you give the participants some freedom. Send them off in pairs or trios (note: Safety first), and then gather them up. Trust your own instincts when it comes to the answers. Listen as the participants respond and go with the flow. See where the discussion will take you.

Supplies:

- paper and markers

This is a one-question survey. Divide your group into pairs or trios and send them off into the building or the neighborhood. (If you have the time and transportation, take them to a local mall or supermarket.) The instruction to the participants is to ask as many people as possible—and get as many different responses to as possible—this question: How much money would it take to make you happy—not gloriously uber-wealthy so you never have to work another day in your life—but happy?

After the survey during the allotted time, gather your group together and allow them to share what they heard. What did they hear that they expected to hear? What surprised them? How many of them got answers like "just a little bit more." How many people already were happy? What seems to be the secret? Conclude the time together asking the group to summarize what they discovered.

2 Long Division

Leader preparation: If you have the time, do a little research on the cost of living in your area. Here's a good place to start: <http://www.tinyurl.com/2fgum32>. What does it take to rent an apartment, buy a gallon of milk, or pay for gasoline? What is the average income for people in your part of the country? (This information isn't necessary to lead the activity, but will add to the conversation.) Part of being good stewards is understanding how we use (or misuse) our treasure. The activity may help participants understand where their money goes and why it's so hard to hang onto it sometimes.

Supplies:

- copies of cash
- scissors
- markers

Prior to the meeting make a copy of a dollar bill for each youth. (This is more fun with a higher denomination, such as a fifty-dollar bill.) Hand out the copies along with a pair of scissors. Tell them to divide up their bill according to their spending habits. How much of every dollar goes into savings, into bills, for church-related activities, into having fun? You may want to have extra dollars on hand for participants who decide halfway through that they need to start over. Ask: What does this say to you about your priorities? What does the way you distribute your money suggest about your stewardship?

3 Pieces of Eight

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Leader preparation: You’ll need to stop at a grocery store or bake some large cookies before the meeting. There is a pay-off to this activity, but you’ll need to keep the box of cookies or snack cakes hidden until the end.

Supplies:

- Twinkies or large cookies
- rulers
- sharp knives
- Bible

Talk to your group about the importance of sharing. Bring out one cookie or one Twinkie (adjust according the size of your group). Tell them the object is to cut the cookie/Twinkie into as many equal pieces as possible. After the snack has been divided, give everyone a share. Ask someone to read the scripture from Acts 4:32–5:11. While they are reading, remove the hidden boxes of treats and pass them out. Sharing is one of the first things we are taught in school, often in preschool. Why is it so hard to do? How many adults do you know who are good at it? At what point do we begin to lose the lesson?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Cash Flow (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity is incredibly effective with ten real \$10 bills, but it can work with any denomination you can afford—the larger the better. The money will stay with you; you are not actually giving any away. You can also use Monopoly money and really push the sales job. “Imagine this is REAL money.”

Supplies:

- ten bills (\$10 bills are best) of equal denomination

Ask for a volunteer and tell him/her that you are going to give him/her some money. Count the bills out loud as you give them. Say something like: There. That’s yours. When the volunteer has all ten bills, ask for one back. You may get some resistance. It may be just a blink in the eye, or it may be something more noticeable, but most likely you’ll get that moment of “But this is MINE.” (If you don’t get that response the first time, ask again, until you do get such a response.) Talk about this with the volunteer and with the participants. What is it that makes us hold on to money? Why does it seem like the more we have the less we are willing to part with it?

Take back the cash, and talk with the group about the way “offerings” work. This money is God’s to begin with. God blessed you with it. You have it because of God. Say something like: “Imagine I am God. (*Ha-ha!*) I’m going to give you all this money; all ten bills and all that I ask in return is that you use this one (*hold up one bill*) for my purposes.” What’s your response?

Talk with the participants about the difference in the two scenarios. Ask them to spend time this week praying about how they use their money.

5 One

Leader preparation: You will need to find a copy of the song “One” by U2. It is available on YouTube; there is also an excellent version on Johnny Cash’s disc American Recordings. You can find the lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/23eg8ey>. Stewardship calls us to community. It calls to be one body, one spirit, one hope, one faith, and one baptism. It is group-think instead of I-think.

Supplies:

- paper and markers
- music

Divide your participants into teams and ask them to write down as many titles or famous phrases as they can think of that contain the word ONE. (Examples: “One bad apple doesn’t spoil the whole bunch,” the countdown “three . . . two . . . one,” or “One Singular Sensation.”) See which team can come up the most.

After that, ask your group questions like: What does team spirit mean? Have you been a part of such a team? Have you ever felt that in church? If you were a part of a body, what part would you be and why? (Example: I’m the ears because I listen well, or I’m the shoulders because people tend to lean on me.) What does it mean for us to be “one body, one spirit, one hope, one faith, one baptism”?

6 Passing the Buck

Leader preparation: This activity is just a fun little tie-in with Acts 4:32. The game itself is not a lesson, but it is a good opener.

Supplies:

- dollar bills

Have your participants take off their shoes and socks. If some participants are squeamish, they can leave their socks on—although it won’t work as well. Divide your group into two teams and have each team stand in a circle. The object of the game is to pass a dollar bill around the circle using only your toes. (What your participants may not pick up on right away is that they will probably have to rely on each other for balance while passing the buck. You can bring this little tidbit up later.) After you play, read Acts 4:32–5:11. Ask your group: Could you live this way? What is the difference between needs and wants? What do you think would happen if your church used this verse during the next stewardship campaign?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Use This (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Part of the point of this activity is “the reveal.” Keep the mirror out of sight until the end of the activity. You can have participants working in teams or individually. (Note: You can also make this an ongoing project. Post the participants’ answers on the wall and encourage them to make their ideas real.)

Supplies:

- a dollar bill
- a penny
- a balloon

- a can of food
- an empty box
- various things you find in your building or that are specific to your area or season
- a mirror
- paper and pens or pencils

Allow participants to work individually or in pairs. Explain that you are going to show them a variety of items and their job is to write down the most creative way they can think of to use it for God's purposes. Show each item and allow time for them to write some notes. Finally, bring out the mirror. (You might have to explain that they are not trying to use the mirror, but are writing down how they can use themselves for God's purposes.) Help your group to understand that many things can be used in a variety of ways, but Christian stewards must always think of uses in light of the Jesus ethic.

8 Share and Share Alike

Leader preparation: For this activity you can use poster boards, couch cushions, or a piece of yarn tied from a doorknob to something fixed on the other side of the room. This activity is designed to help participants find their personal "shades of gray" in a world that wants black and white. Call on individual participants after each statement. You are not trying to tell them they are wrong, but you are trying to find out what their reasoning is. Acknowledge at the beginning that some of these statements are not easy. Compliment your participants for their honesty even before you begin.

Supplies:

- poster board
- couch cushions
- yarn (depending on the size of your group)

Lay out the poster boards or cushions, or set up the yarn. Explain that one end of the line is ABSOLUTELY and the other is NAH, I DON'T THINK SO. The boards (cushions) are all various levels of agreement or disagreement. As you read the statements they are to move to the various spot that best denotes their opinions. To make it more fun, they must always be touching the poster board, cushions, or string.

Shared Statements:

- I can share my lunch with a friend who forgot hers.
- I can share my lunch with a kid in school I don't really know.
- I can share my locker.
- I can share my opinion effectively and succinctly.
- I can share a cab.
- I can share a ride to the airport.
- I can share one of those arm rests between the seats on a plane.
- I can share my house.
- I can share my one last slice of pie that I was hoping to eat all by myself.
- I can share a secret recipe.
- I can share Christ.
- I can share the cost of a pizza with my friends.
- I could share my life with another person for the rest of my life.

Invite your group to reflect on this quietly and introspectively: Am I a good sharer? Yes or no? But why?

9 Son of a . . .

Leader preparation: This activity is meant to foster some self-examination. If you're not careful, it could easily turn into an insult-fest. Encourage your participants to be honest with themselves and kind to others.

Supplies: None

In the Acts 4 Scripture passage, there is a man named Joseph to whom the disciples have given a nickname, just as Simon was called Petra (Peter), which means rock. Joseph was called Barnabas, which means "Son of Comfort" (or "encouragement"). That nickname speaks volumes about this Joseph. He was probably a man of wealth who didn't have to work for things. Positively speaking, it probably meant that he brought comfort or knew how to help people relax—how to help people do what God called them to do.

Invite your group to take a few minutes to create their own word. Start with the Hebrew root word *bar* (for male) or *bat* (for female), which means "the offspring of or "child of." What is a word that would speak volumes about you? (Plan your own name in this way to illustrate. You can also identify a number of persons in the Bible who carry this "child of" connector. Another approach to this would be to allow persons to name another person in the group—and explain why. Either way, be sure to allow time for all to talk about their "child of" name.

Reflect

Taking personal responsibility is difficult sometimes. Our current culture is good at the "blame game." When you teach this concept to teens, it may not look like you are being effective. It is more like seed planting. What they learn now will go with them and sprout later in life.

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Working with older youth, we often find we are dealing with minds, hearts, and lives that have not yet experienced the world—but they are hungry for it. They see the one puzzle piece they have in their hand and the world tells them this is it; this is all there is. God calls them to see the bigger picture. This Exploration's goal is to be an awakening of sorts, that is, to provide opportunities to see the world beyond their current view point.

About this Exploration

We live in relationship to God and one another in a world created and sustained by God. Scripture helps us discover how God intends us to live as members of a grateful community that goes beyond rituals to serve the needs and celebrate the potentials of our neighbors near and far with extravagant grace and generosity.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 1:10–17

Mark 14:3–9

Leader Preparation

There is a difference between mission and stewardship, though they are similar. Working with youth is less about teaching lessons than it is about helping them discover who they are and who they might become. Mission is the work; it is what we do. Stewardship is about how I live up to the responsibilities that go along with being a follower of Christ. We are given stewardship of this planet, of our lives, and of the message.

Prayer: God, help me to communicate clearly what stewardship means in the context of the work that you have given each of us to do. Help our young people as they seek to meet the needs of those they encounter—both near and far. Stretch their meager resources. Help us all to see our true interdependence—that we are our sisters’ and our brothers’ keeper—and that they are our keepers, as well. Give each young person—and give us all—a heart for people and a heart for service. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

 **1 Camels (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: This is a simple activity that can be played out in a number of ways: ask participants to write down their answers; break into teams and play as a game; or sit in a circle and take turns answering the question until someone gets out. Plan according to the size and age of your group. Talk to your youth about how we complicate things unnecessarily.

Supplies:

- pictures of camels (optional)

There is an old saying that “A camel is a horse designed by committee.” What do you think that means? We are going to see how many variations on this idea we can come up with. (Here are a few examples: A Twinkie is a cake designed by a soccer mom. An egg roll is Chinese food designed by an American.) Ask your participants for personal examples of when they have seen a good idea become something huge and unmanageable. How do we as Christians take the concept “God is Love” and make it impossible to understand?

2 Joyful? Joyful?

Leader preparation: This is your opportunity to truly ham it up and encourage “over the top” acting from your participants. Invite one participant who plays guitar or piano to be a part of the activity—but be sure to explain what the joke is about. Too often young people see church as boring and unchanging when the scriptures actually call us to be joyful. Suggest that your participants think of this activity as an encapsulation of the larger church. The words are joyous, but the hearts don’t always seem to be.

Supplies:

- words to “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” tune and lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/55tn53>

Lead the group in singing “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” as boringly as humanly possible. Sing ALL the verses. When you are done, look at each line, phrase, or verse individually and discuss ways to make what the song expresses actually “joyful.” How do we make joy real in our lives?

3 Second that Emotion

Leader preparation: A basic understanding of *Roberts Rules of Order* is needed for this activity. If you aren’t familiar at all, fake it, or go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/25c6tv5>.

Do this activity before you read Isaiah 1:10–17. The point is to make the process go frustratingly slowly. This is a great way to illustrate how we, as a church, can get away from Jesus’ message: Feed the poor. Heal the sick. Visit the lonely.

Supplies:

- bag of cookies
- milk
- Bible

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Ask your group to sit at a table and to be more formal in the meeting. Bring out the bag of cookies and ask, “Do I have a motion to eat these cookies at this meeting?”

(Get a motion)

(Get a second to that motion)

(Ask for discussion/questions)

(Restate the motion and ask for a vote—“ayes” and “nays”)

If the motion carries, say something like: “The motion carries. We will eat the cookies as a snack.” Repeat the process with *when* to eat the cookies. Continue with agenda items like: Do I have a motion to open the bag? Should we distribute the cookies or simply let us take what we want? Should we have a limit on cookies? Should we say a prayer first?

Take each item and give it the full treatment. You can even argue the point during the call for discussion. Eventually everyone will have some cookies. Start all over again with “Do I have a motion to drink milk with the cookies?” (At this point, you might want to duck.)

Say something like: Now let’s take the phrase “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know.” How many rules, regulations, stipulations, and complications can we put on this simple idea? Read Isaiah 1:10–17.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Gertie (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read aloud the story of Gertie to your group.

Supplies: None

Gertie

At seventy-six years of age, Gertie became concerned about the young people in her church, so she volunteered to help with the high school youth group. “What would you like to do?” the pastor asked. “I don’t know,” she said. “God and I will think of something.” Gertie wasn’t a speaker, she felt too old to play games, and she didn’t want to lead Bible studies or counsel at camp. But she had a camera, so she took pictures of every kid in the youth group and put them on flash cards and wrote biographical information on the back of each. She memorized the picture and the information on each flash card. Then she stood at the door to the youth room every Sunday night. As the participants entered, she welcomed each one by name. At the end of the meeting, Gertie stood at the door again, saying goodbye to each person by name and promising to pray for each one. Over the years, the church’s young people discovered that Gertie had the Bible almost memorized, so they came to her with questions and struggles in their lives.

Ten years of youth ministry later, at eighty-six, Gertie suffered three strokes. The prospects of her death distressed all the kids in the youth group. They wanted to help her, to tell her how much she meant to them, but they didn’t know how. One afternoon after he finished reading *Tuesdays with Morrie*, the youth leader had an idea.

“Gertie,” he told her, “I want to do your funeral.” “I know,” she said, “I want you to do my funeral . . . but I’m not dead yet.” “Yes, but I want to do your funeral while you are alive, so that you can hear how much you mean to our youth group and our church.” Gertie loved the idea, and the youth group and its leader planned her living funeral.

As you might imagine, young men and women packed the service. Many of them had graduated from college, married, and had children of their own. Ten years’ worth of participants shared Gertie-stories that night. At the end of the evening, a group of high school young people gathered mysteriously at the back of the room. To understand what they were doing you need to know something about Gertie. She may have been eighty-six, but she never lost her youth. No old people’s perfume for Gertie; she loved expensive designer perfumes like Estee Lauder’s *Beautiful*, which was her favorite. The young people walked down the aisle, all clumped up together in order to hide something. When they arrived at the front, they held up a giant expensive bottle of *Beautiful*, which they then broke and poured over her feet, anointing her in gratitude for all she had done. Gertie had given what she could. And like the widow with her tiny offering, Gertie’s offering will live on long after she’s gone.

—Taken from *Messy Spirituality* by Mike Yaconelli. Copyright © 2002. Used by permission of Zondervan.

5 Church People

Leader preparation: This activity is a lesson in sarcasm. Participants will be asked to think about what makes a “perfect” church member. Make sure your participants feel safe on this one. They may have opinions that they would not normally share. Encourage safety, openness, and listening. You will be making masks out of paper plates.

Supplies:

- paper plates
- rubber bands
- stapler
- markers

Pass out the plates and markers. Staple a cut rubber band to the sides of the plate. Cut out the eye holes. (Note: You don’t have to cut out the eye holes if you think you could make it work as part of the point.) Tell the group they are to make a mask of the “perfect” church person. Have some discussion while you are working as to what is a “church” person. Examples: The eyes could be huge for someone who “sees all.” A mask might include an arching eyebrow for someone who “judges others.” You might draw a log sticking out of the mask’s eye hole (see Matthew 7:3). Ask something like: So, if Jesus came back, could he be a member here? Close this activity by summarizing: What are the key elements of our definition? Who fits this definition?

6 Sit on It

Leader preparation: This is an old youth group game. It takes practice but can be used to make a variety of points. You will most likely have to make several attempts: the more the merrier.

Supplies:

- Bible

Invite the group to stand in a circle and then give these instructions: Everyone turn to the left so that you are facing the back of someone’s head. Now, with your hands at your sides, slowly side step toward the center until you are nearly touching the person in back and in front of you. The leader will say: ONE . . . TWO . . . THREE . . . SIT. When the leader says “SIT” everyone will *carefully* and simultaneously sit down. If you are careful and work together, everyone will have a lap to sit on. No one will fall. You may need several attempts, but don’t give up. It’s pretty cool when it works. Ask questions like: How is this like a congregation? How is this like the universal church? Do you think Jesus would have done this with his disciples? Read Isaiah 1:10–17. Why is God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, so honked off (that is, angry)? What is the congregation doing that has God so upset?

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Wunnerful...Wunnerful (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This is a fun little guessing game that can give you some insight into some of your participants’ lives. Be sure you participate as well.

Supplies:

- index cards
- markers

Ask your group to write down, in one or two sentences, the most wonderful thing that ever happened to them—EVER! (Note: It may not have seemed like a wonderful thing at the time, but it turns out that it was.) Further instructions: Do *not* share your answer out loud and don’t put your name on the card. Collect the cards and read them aloud one at a time. See if your group can guess who each person is.

8 Anointed

Leader preparation: Below is a “recipe” for basic anointing oil. Certainly ingredients varied in ancient times, but this recipe gets to the point. You can make this on the cheap, or you can go “all out” and borrow some ingredients from those in your congregation who know about such things. This is a good closing activity, designed to help participants pray that God will lead each and all in living a faithful life as a steward/disciple of Jesus Christ.

Supplies:

- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp fresh cinnamon
- 1 tsp of the most expensive perfume you can find
- 1 or 2 cloves of garlic (crushed)
- pine bark or needles (crushed)
- place all ingredients in a sealable glass container with a tight lid

Stand in a circle. Pray the following prayer as a responsive reading. Then hand the jar of anointing oil to a person next to you. Have each pass the jar around the

circle and “anoint” the next person, lightly dabbing their finger in the oil and putting a light mark on the forehead of the next person in the circle.

Prayer: Group response after each statement: *“We beseech you; hear us.”*

*God in heaven look down on us.
 We come with questions, doubts, and concerns.
 We have read the words.
 We have heard the stories.
 We have sung the songs.
 And still we can feel lost.
 We wait for your light.
 We wait for your voice.
 We wait to feel your reassuring hand on our shoulders.
 Anoint us now so that we may find our way.
 Anoint us now so that we may be your servants.
 Amen*

As you “anoint” the person next to you say, “You are God’s good and faithful servant.”

9 Listening In

Leader preparation: You will need a copy of Diego Rodriguez’s “The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus.” Note: Sometimes this painting is called “Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus.” While that puts the kitchen at the supper at Emmaus, this activity transports her to another meal in another place.

Supplies:

- poster: “The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus Maid” by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCRresources>
- Bible

In the year 591 CE, Pope Gregory declared that the woman in the scripture passage from Mark, the woman taken in adultery, and Mary Magdalene were the same woman. There is no biblical evidence to back this up. In fact, there is no reference to the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet and head anywhere else in the Bible except for one story. This woman will be talked about for generations, and yet we don’t know her name. Participants can take away the idea that there is really no such thing as “insignificant.” We all play a part. We are all important in God’s eyes. Even if no one else does, God knows her—and our—name.

Did you know Adolf Hitler applied to art school, but an administrator told him he had no talent? A man once asked a woman named Rosa Parks to give up her seat on the bus because she was African American. She refused. Someone handed Buddy Holly his first guitar. Do you think God has designated certain people to be “bit players” in history, forever remembered, but not really known?

Look at the picture. What if this kitchen maid were the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet? Notice in the picture how she seems to be eavesdropping on the conversation in the other room. Imagine this is that woman. Imagine she has the

expensive perfume with her. Read the passage again (use several translations if possible). At what moment do you think she would take her “cue” and rush in? During the dinner? After?

Do you want to be remembered? How? Would you rather have your name on a building or a scholarship? Would you rather change the world, or change the life of someone who will change the world? What if you could change the world and no one would ever know your name?

Reflect

This is important. What you are doing right here, right now? This matters a great deal. When you plan these sessions, when you prepare a snack, when you take a moment just to talk with a youth before or after the activity—it matters. Never underplay that.

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group or Setting

Some fear the future, some gaze at the future, some run headlong into the future; but older youth have an overwhelming sense that the future is there. Other people are planning for it. Some are even making plans for their own future. But the future is looming. This Exploration is meant to be reassuring, to spark discussion that will serve as preparation, to install a sense of joyful anticipation and put aside the vision of a coming storm.

About this Exploration

As we move into the future, we do not always have a clear vision of where we are headed. So too with the practice of Living Stewardship: To go forward, our understanding may be enhanced as we consider far-ranging questions like: What kind of persons do we want to be? To what purpose do we want to devote our lives? What are our core values and beliefs? We will also benefit by wrestling with more narrowly focused questions such as: What kind of choices and decisions are we making every day in our use of the money, time, talents and abilities, the environment, and other resources that have been entrusted to our care? What will our relationship to God and to the church be? Living stewardship comes down to you, and me, and the communities we are becoming. Living stewardship involves acting in new ways; reflecting on how we're living our lives and the journey we are on; discerning the messages that we've received throughout our lives from culture, family, and God; experiencing ourselves in community; and deciding our next explorations.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
1 Chronicles 29:1–19
Revelation 21:10,
21:22–22:5

Leader Preparation

Although Faith Practices is not a linear package—you can do any of these activities and any of the Explorations at any time in any order—it is important to let young people know that life is full of beginnings and endings. All of them probably know someone who cannot “let go” of the past and move on into something new. This is a very difficult life lesson to learn. Help your participants understand that many adults struggle with this. If young people can grasp the concept of letting go of what matters least and moving on to what matters most, they will be able to do something that many cannot (and are hurt in the long run).

Prayer: O God, as I get ready to meet with my group, calm me. Assure me of your presence. I pray for the young people in my group, and for all of the important decisions they have to make. They have so many things going on in their lives; they feel pressure at home, pressure from their peers, and pressure from the church and at school. Help them to figure it all out, and to help them to make the right decisions for their lives. Inspire the important people in their lives, so that they can give wise advice and be there for them. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 The Price Is Right (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Choose two of your most dramatic volunteers. If possible, let them see a copy of the “Price is Right” script prior to the meeting. Encourage the participants to see the bigger picture, that is, the meaning behind what is going on in the dialogue.

Supplies:

- copies of “The Price Is Right” script, Attachment: Activity 1

Talk with your participants about why they think the script ends on a question. How is this like deciding how much money we can give to the church? Of time, talent, and treasure, which is easiest to give? Why? What is this drama really about? Are there other names for the two characters? Are you in this story? What does this tell us about priorities?

2 Size

Leader preparation: You’ll need to do a little research for this one. Find out in advance how many square feet your church has as well as other measurements like, property size, miles from one end of town to the other, number of pews, and seating capacity of the sanctuary.

Supplies:

- tape measure
- paper
- pens
- Bible

Ask your group to write down how large they think their meeting room is. Pull out the tape measure and have them check. Then ask about the size of the building: square footage of the property? Square mileage of the city? The county? Do they know how far it is to the moon?

Then ask them the size of the table where they are sitting. How tall are they? How long is their fingernail? Talk about the time when Jesus compared himself to a “temple.” When King David was on his deathbed, he talked about building a glorious temple. Ask your participants how their church is a “temple.” What do we do with the Holy Spirit? How do we make ourselves, our community, our world a soaring place for God?

3 Last Words

Leader preparation: The scripture passage from 1 Chronicles 29:1–19 is one of several accounts of the last words of King David. (The writer here evidently decided David’s last words would be in a board meeting.) Encourage your participants to take this event seriously; many of them are still thinking they will live forever and have never seriously considered the possibility that they might die. The answers to the questions have been provided. *Do not* read those aloud. You are asking your participants how they want to be remembered. This is a difficult question for most adults, but especially challenging for youth. You might even

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

ask: Would you rather donate a statue or a scholarship? Read Matthew 5:16 and Luke 6:27. Ask your participants how “good works” are a part of being good stewards of the faith.

Supplies:

- paper and pens

Say something like: I’m going to read this list of “Famous Last Words” and see if you can guess who said them. After guessing, tell them who is quoted.

“Is it the 4th?”—Thomas Jefferson
 “Jefferson still lives.”—John Adams
 “The comedy is finished.”—Beethoven
 “Josephine”—Napoleon Bonaparte
 “Et tu, Brute?”—Julius Caesar
 “My God. What’s happened?”—Princess Diana
 “KHAQQ calling Itasca. Gas is running low.”—Amelia Earhart
 “It’s beautiful over there.”—Thomas Edison
 “Into your hands I place my spirit.”—Jesus
 “I have offended God and mankind because my work did not reach the quality it should have.”—Da Vinci
 “Go away. I’m all right.”—H.G.Wells
 “Does anybody know where I can get some shit [meaning some heroin]?”
 —Lenny Bruce
 “And now, O priests, I take my leave of you; all the elements of being are transitory. Work out your salvation with diligence.”—Buddha
 “I’m shot.”—John Lennon

Now, take a few minutes and ask participants to write down what they’d like their own last words to be. Ask if they know the meaning of the word “legacy.” (If not, define it: something handed down from the past, or a reputation.) Talk with them about their legacy. What do they want people to think when they look back at their lives? If 50 years from now, someone were to find a drawer full of stuff that was important to this youth group, what would they find?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Timeless (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity will help bring “the future” into a little perspective. Many young people see “the future” as being far, far away . . . as in science fiction. Their future, technically, is tomorrow, and next year, and the next decade. Help them see how things can change. This activity is more fun if you can give each participant a giant sheet of newsprint.

Supplies:

- maps and photos of Tomorrowland at the Disney parks: ‘
 maps: <http://www.tinyurl.com/267y3zl>;
 photos: <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cr6r4c>
- paper
- markers

Start out by asking if any of your participants have been to Tomorrowland at any of the Disney parks. Show pictures and drawings of Tomorrowland. Tell them this little known fact: When Walt Disney conceived this park in 1955, he was envisioning what he thought the world would be in Nineteen EIGHTY-FIVE (1985)! Just 30 years out. Pass out the paper and markers and ask your participants to revamp Tomorrowland as it might be 30 years from now. This is a great activity for talking while they are drawing.

Ask questions such as:

- How old will you be in 30 years?
- Computers have gone from being the size of a room to a size that fits in your pockets. What do you think is next?
- Are you scared about the future? What worries you the most?
- Do you think we will ever really have flying cars?
- Do you think your grandchildren will go to high school on another planet or in a space station?
- Is the future you are envisioning for your park happy or frightening?
- What would happen if we solved all of the hunger, medical, and war issues in the next quarter of a century? What would happen if people didn't have anything to complain about?

5 Juiced

Leader preparation: You'll need one or more blenders, depending on the size of your group. Prior to the meeting put twelve kinds of fruit in the freezer for 24 hours. Also display the poster of the baobab tree. Ask one of your participants, in advance, to do some research about this remarkable tree and allow him or her to share the research before you do the blender activity. (Note: You can adjust this recipe based on your location and time of year.)

Supplies:

- poster: "Baobab, Okavango Delta, Botswana" by Pete Oxford
<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters5>
- raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, bananas, kiwi (skinned), yellow and red apples (peeled and cored), grapes, (red, purple, green), pears (peeled)
- blender

Place frozen ingredients by the handful into a blender. Add grape juice in equal parts to the frozen fruit. Pulverize. Pour and drink immediately.

Part of the activity here is how God provides for us. Walk the activity backward. Where did these flavors come from? Where did we get the fruit? How many different ways do the trees provide for us? What is God trying to teach us? How are this drink and the baobab tree the same—demonstrations of God's love for us and the world?

6 Thin Skin

Leader preparation: You may want to practice this one a few times to see just how far you can push it. Fill several balloons with water. Test to see how much they can actually take. (Note: It might be best to hold this activity outside.)

Supplies:

- balloons
- water faucet

Take your group to a water faucet with lots of room beneath. Fill one balloon with water so it is about the size of a grapefruit. Fill the next balloon as full as you possibly can without it bursting. Tie it off and hand it to a participant. Take the balloons outside. Explain that these balloons are like the heart (not in a cardio sense, but in a metaphorical sense). Which heart is the heart of our church and why? Which one is the heart of Christ? What are the advantages of having either one as your “heart”? What does it mean to have a full heart? How can we fill our heart more fully?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 I, Me, Mine (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: You’ll need a sharp ear for this one. Plan out a few questions based on the current events in your community or school. Include something that already has participants talking.

Supplies:

- M&Ms (any sort of candy works, but M&Ms don’t melt in your hand) or any small object such as pennies or paper clips
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

Give each participant five M&Ms or small objects. Write the words I, ME, MINE, MYSELF, ONE, and NO in a column on newsprint or a whiteboard. In a second column write the words OUR, UNIVERSALLY, COLLECTIVE, IN COMMON, YES, and GROUP. Ask participants questions such as: How was your weekend? Tell me about your teachers. Or ask a question based on community or local issues. Each time a participant says a word from Column 1, they must give a piece of candy back to you. Each time they use a word from column 2, they get another candy. How difficult is it not to talk about yourself? How does God ask us to change our focus from inward to outward? Can you live “outward?” How?

8 Pointless—Stuff and Nonsense

Leader preparation: You’ll need a whistle or a “boom box” of some kind. After the game, talk with your participants about the ways we overload our lives, both figuratively and literally. Share a personal story about a time when you “dropped” something because you had overloaded or overbooked yourself. Participants will get their own supplies on this one, but you’ll need to contribute a “trump” object that has meaning to your group.

Supplies:

- “trump” object appropriate to your group, such as a Bible, hymnal, votive candle
- “boom box”

Send your group out of the meeting room into the building. Give them five minutes to return with an object. It can be as big or as small as they like, but it must be something they can carry. Give one participant the “trump” object. Stand your group in a circle and begin to play a song on the boom box. The participants must begin passing their objects from person to person around the circle. When the music stops, the person holding the “trump” object is out of the circle. But the object is handed to the next person and remains in the game. Begin the next round. Now someone is passing two objects. Repeat the process. Eventually you will have just a few people passing an enormous amount of stuff back and forth. The game gets funnier as you go along. The point of this game is to emphasize how important each person is to the group and its ministry. Also, it helps to talk about how busy we can be—so busy that we are dropping important stuff. Ask them to tell you why they think you had them do this “pointless” activity.

9 The Biggest Fan Poker

Leader preparation: Be ready to make a judgment call here. You’ll have to judge “the biggest fan” in your group. Look up a dictionary definition of the word “devotion.” Write this on a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard and keep it out of sight for the beginning of the activity.

Supplies:

- index cards and markers

Gather your group around a table and tell them the name of the game is The Biggest Fan Poker. Begin with the number one and have someone relate what they have one of (Example: I have one Kiss CD). The next person must use the number two (I have two Sponge Bob DVDs). Keep going. When someone gets stuck, count slowly to eight and then put them out of the game.

See how high the numbers can go. When you are done, reveal the word “devotion.” Talk to your group about what they are devoted to. (This probably has become quite obvious in the last few minutes). Have each participant write on an index card one way he or she can show devotion to God. Share these answers. Collect the cards and send all the answers to the group by e-mail in the next week or so.

Reflect

The greatest way to say, “Thank you!” to God is to use the gifts God gave you. The greatest way to find out what those gifts are is to realize what you are doing when you think, “I could do this forever.” When you are doing what it is that makes you feel the most alive, you may be in the presence of God.

Copyright ©2010 The Pilgrim Press. Permission is granted for use by a single congregation for one (1) year from the purchase date of the subscription. No part of this download may be reproduced or transmitted—beyond the group using these materials—in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the written permission from the publisher.

The Price Is Right

Characters:

Mr. Smith

Trader Joe

The scene is the Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia, PA, home of Pat's Cheese Steaks and Old City Coffee. It is probably the closest thing you will get to knowing what walking through the markets in Jesus' time was like. There are wondrous smells and music and books and people yelling in different languages and a spirit in the room that seems to connect everyone.

Mr. Smith is on his lunch hour and walking through the market with a cheese steak sandwich in a brown paper bag. He sees a man with a table full of old books. Smith, a collector of first editions, spots a rare find.

Smith: How much is that?

Trader Joe: That book, oh that's a very rare edition.

Smith: Really, I didn't know.

Trader Joe: Cut the crap. You did too. Let's just lay our cards on the table, shall we?

Smith: . . . all right, how much?

Trader Joe: Beautiful isn't it.

Smith: Very.

Trader Joe: There is only one of these; all other editions have been lost to the ages.

Smith: I thought they all were.

Trader Joe: All but this one.

Smith: How much?

Trader Joe: How much do you have?

Smith: (sarcastically) That's very funny

Trader Joe: I'm completely serious. How much do you have?

Smith: I'll give you five thousand dollars.

Trader Joe: And?

Smith: What do you mean "and"?

Trader Joe: Look at that binding; it's immaculate.

Smith: Ten thousand.

Trader Joe: There aren't any more of these. This is it.

Smith: Twenty-five thousand dollars and that's my final offer.

Attachment: Activity 1, page 2

Trader Joe: No, it isn't.

Smith: Thirty.

Trader Joe: This is going to take all day, why don't you come back when you are ready to . . .

Smith: I have \$123,000 in my bank account.

Trader Joe: And?

Smith: AND?

Trader Joe: Do you have a retirement account?

Smith: Yeah but . . .

Trader Joe: Only one of its kind.

Smith: Half a million.

Trader Joe: Got a house?

Smith: You want my house too?

Trader Joe: Yes.

Smith: Next, you'll want the boat.

Trader Joe: You have a boat?

Smith: It's old.

Trader Joe: I assume you pull it to the lake with something.

Smith: You want my money, my house, my boat—and my truck?

Trader Joe: What's in the bag?

Smith: Cheese steak.

Trader Joe: Provolone or Cheez Wiz?

Smith: Cheez Wiz.

Trader Joe: I want that too.

Smith: That's everything. You know that, right? You are asking me for EVERYTHING I own.

Trader Joe: Yes, I know.

Smith: Deal.

Trader Joe: Now I want you to understand something. Are you listening?

Smith: Yeah.

Trader Joe: I'm going to let you keep it all, but it belongs to me. Understand?

Smith: Uh . . . no.

Trader Joe: You can have the book. I'll let you keep your house, your truck, everything else—even the cheese steak—but these things belong to me and every time you use them, I want you to think about me . . . think about what I've done here. Maybe the occasional "thank you." Tell your kids about this, make sure they tell their kids about this. Can you do that?

Smith: I think so . . . I just . . .

Trader Joe: I'm serious here. These things are all mine and I'm just letting you use them. I'm giving it all back. All I ask is that you think of me once in a while. Can you do that?