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YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

LESSONS HANDBOOK

YOUTH LESSONS FOR ASSEMBLIES OF GOD BACK TO GOD CARDIFF CHURCH

Address: 45 Stacey Road

CF24 1DS Cardiff

# Assemblies of God Back to God Vision

The vision of the Assemblies of God Church is to win souls for God, Nurture souls in God and prepare souls for an eternity with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We value every man, woman and child and desire that they understand the genuine gospel of Jesus Christ and be provided with a church where they can grow in the Lord and fully exercise their God given abilities.

Assemblies of God, Cardiff seeks to teach the youth the importance of living a life of total surrender and reliance on God’s will. Cardiff aims to provide its Youth with a strong foundational biblical teachings that helps them to understand and enable them to rightly interpret the Word of God.

This will be accomplished through the facilitation of well-prepared lessons that will be taught by mature God fearing teachers of the word identified by the Pastor and his leadership board.

# YOUTH GROUP LESSON 1 ON THE PRODIGAL SON



### **THE PRODIGAL SON**

**Wasteful.**

That is the best definition we have for the “prodigal” son.

Prodigal is not a commonly used word today, but the story is all too familiar… an individual decides to live life however they want, without regard to the consequences, but when they stand face-to-face with results of their actions, they don’t know what to do.

The story of the Prodigal Son reminds us that it is never too late to turn back to our Father who will, without exception, welcome us back with open arms.

Use this lesson to teach teens that no matter how far we may run away, God will always love us.

**Bible:**Luke 15:11-32

**Bottom Line:**No matter how far we may run away, God will always love us

**TEACH**

This is the story of the “prodigal son” found in Luke 15:11-32.

Often, the Pharisees and religious leaders of the day, would complain that Jesus would associate with sinners – notorious criminals and tax collectors.

Jesus was telling this story of the prodigal son to those people.

Divide the students into groups and give each group a Bible.

**Say:** Each group is going to read the story found in Luke 15:11-32.

Read the Scripture and come up with a creative way to share the story.

Make sure to involve every person in your group because once you are done, we will have a chance for each group to share their retelling of story.

Also, try to tell us what you think Jesus was trying to get across through this story.

Give the groups 10-15 minutes depending on how involved and creative they get.

Then, give each group a chance to share their retelling.

Jesus chose to share deep things about God, the Kingdom, and faith through stories called “parables.”

These stories were real and easy to relate to.

Let’s see…

Are any of you the youngest child in your family?

How would you describe the younger son in this story?

What do you think about him asking his father for his inheritance?

Raise your hand if you are the oldest child in your family.

How would you have felt if you were the oldest son in this story?

See, there are heavy emotions and drama in this story because let’s face it… families can get really messy, right?

If you have a funny story, with some good drama, share a story about your siblings.

In this parable, the younger son basically goes to his father, and says:  “Hey, old man… you know how when you die I will get your money and stuff… yeah, I want it now”.

In a super selfish way, it is like he is acting like his dad has already died.

And then, the son leaves and goes crazy, wild doing all kinds of things that he shouldn’t do and blows all of the money.

He ends up wishing that he could eat what the pigs are eating and decides to go back and beg his dad to just let him have even a scrap of mercy.

And here is where we get to the real amazing part of the story.

If you were his father, what would you have done if your son came back after all of those things had happened?

But no, this father (who is supposed to represent God, by the way…) has been waiting and looking for his son to return.

And not just that, when he sees him, he runs to him, hugs him, and showers him with blessings.

This father is radical and does exactly the opposite of what you think he would do: He welcomes his son home with open arms.

And even so much that it really makes the older son super mad and jealous.

Maybe some of you can relate to the oldest son: He had stayed with the father and had done what he thought he was supposed to do.

But, here is where you can see a bit more into the hearts of the characters…

Yes, the older son seemed to follow the rules, but in his own way, he was rebelling because he didn’t trust his father.

And also, he was just kind of whiny!

Maybe he thought that he was the favourite son now that his younger brother was gone.

Whatever it was that the older son thought, one thing he didn’t about think was how relieved he was to see that his younger brother was home and safe, which kind of shows what was in his heart.

But, like the father tells the older son – this son was dead and is now alive.

See, Jesus told this story to each one of us.

In our own individual way, we have gone to God and insulted him… we have taken the love and gifts that He has given us and just thrown them away.

And all the while, you know what God wants for us?

For us to be home and to know that we are loved by him.

As hard as it must have been for the father to let his son go, it’s almost like he knew that he needed to go and try it his way.

But you know what, the father probably knew that it would end badly for his son.

So, he was waiting for him to return home and no telling how long the father had just been there waiting and watching for his son on the road.

And I think that Jesus wants those of us who think that we have gone so far away that God would never want to take us back to really stop and hear these words.

Feel the arms of God around us when we return home ashamed and broken.

No matter what you have done.

No matter how far you have tried to run away.

No matter how bad you have failed.

God loves you and will always be standing there waiting to see you return home.

And when he sees you, it’s like he runs to hug you and welcome you home.

That is the kind of love that God has for you.

You are his child and nothing will ever change that.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

* Which son in the story do you relate to the most and why?
* How do you think the father felt in the story?
* How did you expect the father to react when the prodigal son returned?
* How does it make you feel to know that God loves you no matter what you do?
* Think of someone you know who may be running from God *(don’t say any names, but think of them to yourself).*Take a moment to pray that they would turn back to God.

# Youth Group Lesson 2 – Relationship with God



# ****Youth Group Lesson on Growing Your Relationship with God****

**Bible:  Luke 10:38-42**

**Bottom Line:** Use this youth group lesson to help students make time to develop their relationship with God.

This lesson is a great tool to help teach youth about discipleship.

### **OPENING GAME: What’s Your Schedule?**

Divide students into groups

Give each small group a large sheet of butcher paper.

Ask leaders to write the days of the week (Sunday-Saturday) along the top of the butcher paper.

Instruct the small groups to talk about their weekly “schedule.”

Have students write their daily chores and activities on the schedule under the particular day.

Encourage them to think of things like school, sports, homework, chores, family time, getting ready, etc.

*The point of the activity is to get a visual representation of the extremely busy schedules we all have.*

After the activities have been listed on the butcher paper, allow groups to share some of the activities with the entire youth group.

**After the activity, say:**

We all have some really busy schedules.

From the time we wake up to the time we go to bed, we have to go-go-go to get it all done.

Do you ever feel like you’re going to forget to do something you’re supposed to do or be somewhere that you’re supposed to be? Do you ever get tired?

All of these things are good things.

We have to do chores around the house, go to school, eat, and shower (hopefully)….right?

And it’s a great thing to be able to play sports, play an instrument, spend time with friends, and all those things, right?

These are all good things, but sometimes we get so busy with good things that we miss out on some great things.

Let’s read the story of 2 sisters, Mary and Martha.

**Read Luke 10:38-40**

While Jesus and his followers were traveling, Jesus went into a town. A woman named Martha let Jesus stay at her house. Martha had a sister named Mary, who was sitting at Jesus’ feet and listening to him teach. But Martha was busy with all the work to be done. She went in and said, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me alone to do all the work? Tell her to help me.”

**Say:**Jesus was very close to Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus. Jesus loved them enough to decide to come to their home and spend time with them.

Can you imagine if Jesus was coming over to your house?  Do you think your parents would make you clean up if Jesus were coming over?

Probably so, and this is exactly what Martha was doing. She wanted everything to be just right for such a special guest.

Martha was very busy playing hostess. She had to cook. She had to clean. She had to make sure everyone had a place to sit down and relax.

She had to make sure that there was water and towels to wash everyone’s feet. The list went on and on.

There was just so much to do!

Meanwhile, her sister Mary is not doing anything to help her!

She’s just sitting at Jesus’ feet and listening to Him talk and teach.

You can imagine how this made Martha feel. She was MAD! In fact, she’s so mad that she goes to Jesus and tattles on Marry.

She says, “Make her help me!” Now, listen to how Jesus responds to Martha.

**Read Luke 10:41-42**

But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things. Only one thing is important. Mary has chosen the better thing, and it will never be taken away from her.”

**Say:**Jesus understood why Martha was so upset. He understood why she was working so hard to make everything right.

But Jesus wanted Martha to see that there was something more important. She was doing good things, but she had missed on the most important thing.

The most important thing is spending time with Jesus. Just like Martha, we can get so busy with other things that we miss out on the most important thing, spending time with Jesus.

In our busy lives, we need to focus on spending some time with Jesus.

You still need to do those other things, especially the things you’re asked to do by parents or teachers.

However, we need to be sure that we make time in our schedule to meet with God.

He loves us and wants to speak to us, so we need to take the time to listen.

Jesus told Martha that Mary had “chosen what was better.”

Mary has chosen to spend time with Jesus so that she could learn and grow closer to Him.

Jesus wants us to choose time with Him over anything else. This is the most important thing.

We can get busy doing lots of important things, but we need to make sure that we remember the main thing.

The main thing is spending time with Him and growing in our relationship with Him.

Spending time with God is a choice.

Just like we put all our other activities on the calendar, we need to set a time to meet with God.

Whether it is in the morning or evening, in the car or in our room, with our parents or by ourselves, find time to spend with God and grow in your relationship with Him.

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Was the work Martha was doing a “bad thing”? How did Jesus respond to her work and her complaining?

What was the “one thing” that Mary did? How did Jesus respond to Mary?

How does spending time with someone (God) show your love for them?

Which personality are you more like: the to-do list Martha or the laid-back Mary?

If Jesus spent a day at your house, what would be some things He might say are distracting you from spending time with God?

What are some ways or activities you can do to spend time with God?

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY – Make Time for God

Take another look at the schedule created in the opening activity.

Give students time to think about the places in their schedule that they would make time for God.

Encourage them to think hard about a consistent time that they could spend with Him.

It may mean they wake up 10 minutes earlier or spend less time on fun things, but encourage them to make time for God.

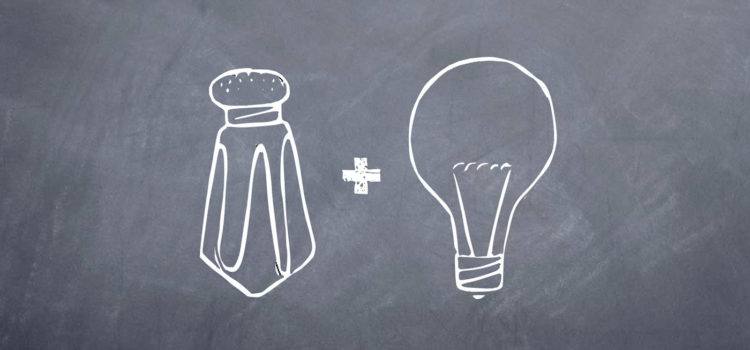
At the end of the discussion, give each student an index card and have them write down their chosen time.

Ask them to place the card in a visible place to remind them of their commitment to spending time with God this week.

If students have a smartphone (who doesn’t these days), lead them to set a calendar reminder on their phones.

This is a great way to help them remember the main thing

# Youth Group Lesson 3 on Salt and Light



**Opening Story**

When I was young, I didn’t understand what it meant to have a relationship with God through Jesus.

Neither of my parents were followers of Jesus, and the only exposure I had to God was attending a Catholic grammar school and high school.

I saw Christianity as a religion filled with ancient rules and rituals. I didn’t relate.

Around the age of 19, I started searching for God. I had a friend in college who had recently surrendered his life to Jesus.

I noticed something different about him. Something had changed, but I didn’t know what. I started hanging out with him more often.

He introduced me to a bunch of his new friends, who were all Christians. Some were young people, some were married with kids, and some were old.

I instantly saw something unique in all of these people. They went out of their way to selflessly serve other people. They affirmed and encouraged each other. Married couples seemed to genuinely love each other (a new experience for me). They accepted me as I was, and at that time I had a LOT of issues (I’m still a work in progress).

I wanted to know why they were different, and after spending some time with them discovered the answer. They were Christians. They followed Jesus. They had a personal relationship with the God of the universe. They were different because of Jesus.

Over the period of about 6 months I continued to search for God. I listened to what it meant to follow and surrender your life to Jesus, but what really hooked me was how different this new group of people were. I soon decided to follow Jesus. From that point on everything changed. Everything.

We all have our story of how we came to follow Jesus. That’s mine. Yours is probably different, or maybe it’s similar.

One of the most powerful ways the students in your ministry can communicate the message of Jesus is by how they live their lives.

Jesus calls us to be the salt and light of the world.

**YOUTH GROUP LESSON ON SALT**

**Bible:** Matthew 5:13

**Bottom Line**:  We are the salt of Christ to the world.

**SUPPLIES**

Salty foods such as chips (of different and strange varieties), sardines, dill pickles, popcorn, salted caramel candy, salted peanuts, and just plain salt. Each item needs to be divided into 4 parts for the taste test.

**HOW TO PLAY THE GAME**

For each round have all the salty items hidden

Once the contestants have eaten the item, put any of it remaining back in the box with the other items.

The contestants cannot take off their blindfolds until everyone has tried it.

**Say:** Today, we are going to test just how ‘salty’ you are.

At this table, we will be testing your ‘saltiness’ by having you taste different salty things, while blindfolded, and then you will write down on the pad of paper at each chair what you think the food was without saying anything.

Each person on the team will go at least once for this challenge, but you won’t know what item you will get, so choose your order wise

**TEACH**

**Say:**Can someone tell me what the word ‘salty’ means?

Give them a chance to give you all the different current meanings and they will probably give you the correct usage… this will be a funny time for you to show just how ‘old’ you are!

Ask for a reader and hand them the large salt shaker with ***Matthew 5:13*** from the Message inside:

“Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You’ve lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.”

Jesus is basically telling us to be ‘salty’ but he is redefining this to mean what?

(Give them a chance to share their understanding of what Jesus is meaning).

I’m going to divide you all back into your ‘salty’ teams and I here is your next challenge: create a virtual meme (humorous image) of what ‘saltiness according to Jesus’ could look like today.

Think of tough situations that each of you face every day and then think of what it would look like to add a different ‘flavour’ to that situation…a flavour that adds Jesus in a creative way.

I will give you 10 minutes to work on your meme!

After the teams seem to be done with their scenarios (or slight mayhem is breaking out) call everyone back together and call each group to share their ‘virtual meme’ of ‘saltiness according to Jesus’.

Share a personal story in which you faced a similar tough situation and how you did or didn’t add ‘saltiness’ from Christ to that situation.

Jesus had this amazing way of saying tough things in simple ways.

What are some of the things that salt is used for?

* The first written reference to salt is found in the Book of Job, recorded about 2,250 BC.
* There are 31 other references to salt in the Bible, the most familiar probably being the story of Lot’s wife who was turned into a pillar of salt when she disobeyed the angels and looked back at the wicked city of Sodom.

**Interesting Facts about Salt**

* Roman soldiers were sometimes paid in salt – which is where the word ‘salary’ comes from. Difficult to spend it in restaurants today though.
* Every cell in the body contains salt – an adult contains about 250 grams, equivalent to a box of Maldon Salt.
* In old Japanese theaters, salt was sprinkled on to the stage before each performance to prevent evil spirits from casting a spell on the actors. Sprinkling salt around your home may have the same effect today.
* Salt is used to remove traces of water from aviation fuel after it is purified.
* Salt was used to preserve Egyptian mummies (and in the pies eaten by Egyptian daddies).
* Salt removes red wine stains (though probably not from your best cream carpet).
* Sodium is key in the operation of all signals within, as well as to and from, the brain.

And from <http://www.maldonsalt.co.uk/About-Salt-The-many-uses-of-Salt.html>

**The Many Uses of Salt**

Most people probably think of salt as simply a white granular food seasoning.

In fact, only 6% of all salt manufactured goes into food.

Apparently, we use salt in more than 14,000 different ways from the making of products as varied as plastic, paper, glass, polyester, rubber and fertilizers to household bleach, soaps, detergents and dyes.

Everyone uses salt, directly or indirectly.

Jesus is saying in what seems to be a very simple way, yet has just as many ways to live it out as the 14,000 different ways that salt is used.

He is basically saying: you must be salty.

And only you can know what that looks like for you:  maybe you need to step up how you stand up for what you know to be right.

Maybe it means that the words you speak need to be filled with things that you know Jesus would want you to say.

And it doesn’t have to be ‘preachy’ but just think about what it would sound like to speak words of love, kindness, mercy, grace, and forgiveness into the hurt and rudeness of this world.

**Jesus is saying:  Be salty.  But by HIS definition of the word.**

Before you leave, each of you are going to get a salt packet (or salt shaker) and here is your challenge: Write how you will be ‘salty’ for Christ and this world and put it somewhere where you can see it to remind yourself to be salty.

The Jesus kind of salty.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

* What are your favorite salty foods?
* Which facts or uses of salt surprised you?
* What other situations can you think of in which it would be challenging to be Jesus salty?
* How are you feeling challenged to be salty in your everyday life

**YOUTH GROUP LESSON 4 ON BEING LIGHT**

**Bible:** Matthew 5:14-16

**Bottom Line**: We are the Light of Christ in a dark world.

**SUPPLIES**

Current newspapers (enough copies for the group to be able to read quietly)

Flashlights

**TEACH**

**Say:**Were any of you afraid of the dark when you were a little kid?

Have you ever stopped to ask – why are kids afraid of the dark?

Give the youth a chance to answer and if you were afraid of the dark, share your thoughts also.

The world can be a scary place to a little kid.

The fear of the unknown is scary…but sometimes the fear of what is known can be just as scary.

There are children around the world who have real reasons to be afraid – reasons that are much more real and scary than a make-believe creature under their bed.

There are probably people in this room who know exactly what I am talking about too.

Sometimes the world can seem like a dark place.

And the hurt and the pain and the darkness are real.

I’m going to give each of you a flashlight and then we are going to turn off the lights.  Not yet, though!

Around the room are newspapers and these pages are examples of just how dark and full of hurt our world is right now.

Take your flashlights and I’m going to give you 10-15 minutes to take your time and read the papers.

Find stories in these papers that stick with you.

Take your time and really read the stories and stay silent to give everyone a chance to read, think, and choose the stories that stick to you.

Then, tear out that page and tape it to the wall around us.

Once you’ve done this, keep on reading the papers and taping up articles.

As you read, you will have to use your flashlight to see because in a minute we will turn out the lights.

Give the groups 10-15 minutes to walk around and read from different newspapers.

As some youth get done more quickly, prompt them to go and find other stories or help others to tape their stories up around the room.

As more and more get done, prompt them to walk around the room using their flashlights to read the stories on the wall around the room, silently.

**Read Matthew 5:14-16** from the Message.

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Jesus told his disciples to shine and his words are true for us:  Shine so others see the light and see God.

Look around this room.

It might look like we are surrounded in darkness, but think about the challenge that Jesus is giving to us.

He agrees that the world is dark with pain and hurt and loneliness and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (let the youth fill in the words), but then here is the amazing thing that Jesus is sharing with us:  we are the light of the world.

We shine the light of Jesus or we SHOULD be shining the light and the love of Jesus in the middle of this pain.

Can we ‘fix’ each and every one of these situations?  No.

But what we can do is to shine the light and the love of Jesus through our actions.

Start where we are and shine.

Think about this – Where is there darkness around you?

Maybe at school or in your neighbourhood or at home even.

What would it look like to shine in those situations?

Give the youth a few moments to answer on ways they could shine the light of Christ.

It doesn’t have to be complicated or preachy to shine the light of Jesus.

Share an example of someone who you have seen shine the light of Christ in simple ways that they live.

Shine the light that Christ puts inside of you.

When we really let the light of Christ shine into our own lives, it leaks out without us really trying sometimes.

Shining becomes a part of who you are and you shine.

As we get ready to go to small groups, I want you to take a few moments to walk around this room once again using your flashlight to reread the stories and pray as you read.

Even this simple act is a way to shine the light of Christ.

Choose one of the stories to take with you to commit to pray.

Pray that the light of Christ would shine in these places.

Take your flashlight with you and put it somewhere to remind you to shine the light of Christ in your own life.

As Jesus said, “you are the light of the world.”

Don’t keep that light hidden.

Shine.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

* Give each youth a chance to share the story that they chose to take with them and why.
* Brainstorm about ways that others or even you could shine the light of Christ in these situations.
* Where are the situations in your life where shining the light of Jesus seems difficult? Why?
* What are some practical ways that you could shine the light of Christ in your life?

# Youth Group Lesson 5 – Fruit of the Spirit



**But before you dive into the lesson, here’s a quick story…**

Awhile back, I was driving my car on a two lane road, each lane going in the opposite direction.

The car behind me didn’t like my speed. He repeatedly honked his horn and yelled at me (actually I just assume he was yelling because in my head he was).

He drove his car just inches from mine and continued to honk.

This infuriated me. I went from calm Nick to angry road rage Nick in just seconds.

Next, he tried passing me up. I didn’t like that and turned into the opposing lane (no one was coming towards me) preventing him from passing me up.

This angered him even more, and in return escalated my anger as well.

So, I stopped my car and got out yelling at him face to face.

When I looked into the driver’s seat I saw a man in his 70’s yelling back at me.

At that moment, I came to my senses.

What the heck was I doing?!?! Yelling at an old man!! Goof ball.

I got back in my car and allowed him to pass me.

We all have those moments in life when we mess up. When we fail to live like Jesus.

It’s a part of being human.

**A Different Angle on the Fruits of the Spirit**

So often when we talk about the Fruits of the Spirit the core of our message is…

Be more loving, kind, forgiving, etc.

The problem is that we’re not designed to live that way in our own power.

It’s only when we stay connected to Jesus that those characteristics flow out of our lives.

Instead, the message needs to be…

Stay connected to Jesus and good stuff comes out of your life.

When we nurture our relationship with God, we become more loving, kind, forgiving etc. It’s what naturally happens as a result of what God is doing in and through us.

### **Youth Group Lesson – Fruit of the Spirit**

**Bible:** John 15:5, Galatians 5:20:22–23, Proverbs 16:32, Matthew 5:43–48

**Bottom Line:** Stay connected to Jesus and good stuff comes out of your life.

**OPENING GAME: KEEP IT UP**

**Supplies:**

* 2–3 beach balls (more if your group is large)

**Description:**

Split the group into two even teams and mark a line down the middle of the playing area with masking tape. Each group takes one side of the playing area.

Players spread out wherever they want on their side.

The game will consist of beach balls being thrown (or hit) and caught between the two sides.

Players attempt to keep the balls moving and not allow the balls to hit the ground on their side of the playing area.

If a ball hits the ground, the opposing team is awarded points.

The team that has the most points at the end of the game wins.

**Variations:**

* If your group is large, consider adding more beach balls.
* If your group is really big, consider dividing it into four parts instead of two.

**After the game, say:**

In life, we often react to others in the same way we are treated.

If your brother hits you, you hit him back. If your parents yell at you, you yell back.

Sort of like what happened in the game we just played.

If one team hit the ball hard, the other team reacted by hitting it hard too.

If one team got real competitive, the other team did too.

Today, we’re going to explore how we can react differently to others.

We’re going to discover how we can break the cycle.

If someone is mean to us, we’re going to learn the secret to how we can react in love rather than hate.

**Read Galatians 5:22–23 (NCV):**

But the Spirit produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. There is no law that says these things are wrong.

What do you think these verses means? (Get responses)

A lot of times people misunderstand these verses.

They think God is saying to be full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. God is saying more than that.

He is saying that those characteristics are formed in our lives when we stay connected to Jesus.

Let’s take a look at another verse that will help us understand this concept.

**Read John 15:5**

I am the vine, and you are the branches. If any remain in me and I remain in them, they produce much fruit. But without me they can do nothing.

Jesus is saying that a branch needs to stay connected to the vine in order for fruit to grow. Good fruit will naturally come out of a branch that is connected to the vine.

[Show good, ripe fruit]

The branch doesn’t need to try and create the fruit in its own power. Its job is to stay connected to the vine.

When it does, good fruit will be produced. Like this fruit I’m holding in my hand.

Jesus is saying that we are like the branch. Our goal is to stay connected to Jesus.

If we stay close to him in our everyday lives, then good fruit will come out of us.

The good fruit is the characteristics we read about in Galatians 5:22–23 – love, patience, kindness, goodness, etc.

Like a branch can’t make the fruit, we can’t simply choose to be loving, patience, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and have self-control.

It’s the Holy Spirit’s job to create those characteristics in our lives. Our job is to stay connected to Jesus.

When we do, good characteristics flow out of us.

We find ourselves naturally reacting to the bully at school with love and compassion. We are more likely to forgive our friends. We are more patient.

Sure, it’s a choice we make. But ultimately, it’s God working through us to make us more like Him.

[Show bad fruit]

So, what happens when we don’t take the time and effort to stay connected to Jesus?

Well, bad stuff comes out of our lives. Much like if you were to break off a branch from the vine, the fruit goes bad.

Our lives begin to look like rotten fruit, like in this fruit I’m holding. Yuck.

The Bible actually talks about what this bad fruit looks like.

**Read Galatians 5:20:**

…worshiping gods, doing witchcraft, hating, making trouble, being jealous, being angry, being selfish, making people angry with each other, causing divisions among people…

So, when we’re feeling jealous, angry, and selfish or causing drama around us, those things are the bad stuff coming out of our lives because we are not connected to Jesus.

We’re unconnected to Him.

We’re not spending time with God in prayer, worship or allowing God to speak to us from the Bible.

**Here’s the bottom line of today’s lesson: Stay connected to Jesus and good stuff comes out of your life.**

When we choose to surrender our lives to Jesus, the pollution of sin in our lives is cleaned up.

We now have an opportunity for good stuff to come out of our lives.

We have an opportunity to live the way God wants us to live.

We won’t be perfect. We’ll mess up often. That’s just a part of being human.

In order to have good stuff come out of our lives, we have to stay connected to Jesus.

When we do, the Holy Spirit will make us more loving, kind, patient, etc.

We’ll be able to return a sour pickle with a soft marshmallow.

We’ll be able to react differently than we were treated

# Youth Group Lesson 6 – Choices



Use this lesson to help students in your ministry make good choices.

Students are often blinded by what moulds and shapes the decisions they make.

This lesson helps peel back the “why”, “how” and “what” behind their choices.

This lesson really has the power to help your students in a big way.

Especially if you create some space at the end of the message, allowing students to reflect and go to God with the choices they make.

Doing that allows room for God to move in their hearts and minds.

# ****Youth Group Lesson on Choices****

**Bible:**Romans 12:1-2

**Say:**Ever think about the everyday choices we make?

Like for real!

Why do we dress the way we do?

Why do we talk and act the way we do?

Why do we hang around the people we hang with?

Why are we sitting in this room right now?

Before today is over, I want you to ask yourself three questions…

* Who makes my choices?
* How am I making my choices?
* Why am I making them?

## **Who Makes Our Choices?**

Who or what pressures us to do what we do?

Wear what we wear…

Talk how we talk…

If we are honest with ourselves, we would say that the culture around us has a huge say in what we do, what we wear, how we act, and how we talk.

And when I say culture, I’m talking about social media, movie stars, recording artist, athletes, where we live, the school we go to, and the friends we hang out with.

I’m talking about technology, books, and whatever social class people put us in.

Maybe your parents make all the choices for you. Either because they are afraid that you are going to turn into a heathen, or because they want to “protect you”!

Maybe your friends make your decisions for you. Because they are the closest family you have, and you’re afraid you will lose them too!

Maybe money makes your choices. Because you don’t have any, and you are tired of living broke! Or you have a lot of “stuff” and that’s what drives you.

That’s a few examples of what could be making your choices.

Let’s look at how we are making our choices.

## **How are we making our choices?**

How can music influence the choices you make? How does it influence how we act, talk, and what we wear? (Get responses)

Most of you have probably heard the phrase “YOLO”, you only live once. A lot of people adopted this “motto” and started to live life like there was no tomorrow because of a popular song.

Now what happens when you live like there is no tomorrow? Then all of a sudden, tomorrow comes.

You’ve been spending all you money.

Telling people what’s on your mind, because you know they deserve it.

Maybe you started gravitating towards drugs and alcohol.

Skipping school and sleeping in.

What happens then?

What happens when someone disrespects you and you’re like “YOLO”!

What happens when you are tempted to steal from the mall, knowing the police is in there, knowing they have people watching you, knowing they have cameras…but you’re like “YOLO”!

What happens when your boyfriend or girlfriend is pressuring you to have sex, and you’re like “YOLO”. Then a month later someone is pregnant!

That’s just one example of the culture around us can influence our choices.

The idea is to be aware of what is influencing you and how you make the choices you do.

## **What is the “why” behind our choices?**

Again, if we are honest – music, money, friends, movies, sports shape the choices we make for two reasons:

Acceptance and fear!

Pretty much any choice we make hinges on those two things.

We dress like our friends because we FEAR that we will look different, and we want to be ACCEPTED by our friends. We want to fit in!

We chase money or “stuff” because we FEAR that we won’t live a good life and have good things. We fear that we won’t be ACCEPTED if we don’t have a lot of money or “stuff”.

We flirt and sleep around because we FEAR that we are not good enough for someone to love us, and we want to be ACCEPTED by our boyfriends and girlfriends.

We get drunk at parties and do drugs because we FEAR that people will label us “goody goodies”, and goody goodies are not ACCEPTED by the circles we run in.

Listen to what Romans 12:1-2 has to say about choices.

**Read Romans 12:1-2**

*So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you*

(Note to leader – Talk a little about the meaning of this passage in your own words)

Let me give you a choice to make.

Live free following Jesus!

Or..

Be enslaved to FEAR and ACCEPTANCE

Who’s going to make that choice for you?

How are you going to make that choice?

Why will you make that choice?

I hope this message has challenged you to think about the choices you make.

I hope you’re inspired to ask God to show you the source of your choices, how you make them, and why you make them.

(Note to leader: End the message with a time of reflection for students. Have the worship band (if you have one) come up and play a song. If you don’t have a worship band, play a worship video or song. During the worship song, encourage students to reflect on the message, bringing their choices before God. Allowing Him to speak to them about the choices they make.)

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Say your name, grade, and if you prefer Apple or Android.

How easy is it to cruise through a day and not even think about the choices we make? Why is it so easy?

How do things like music, media, celebrities, sports, etc. influence the choices we make?

How/why do we allow our friends to influence the choices we make?

What does “the renewing of your mind” in Romans 12:2 mean to you and how can your mind be renewed?

# YOUTH GROUP LESSON 7 - DISAPPOINTMENT



You’ve heard the proverbial phrase, “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade!”

Its intent is to encourage us to take the most discouraging moments in life, and find the good in them.

When we study the life of Jesus, we see a man who was betrayed by his friends, misunderstood by those around him, and seemed to have lost everything – Jesus understood disappointment.

Every day, students encounter situations at home and at school that leave them feeling broken and discouraged.

Use this lesson to teach students: Never lose heart… God is always with you!

**YOUTH GROUP LESSON ON DISAPPOINTMENT**

Bible: John 16:33

**TEACH**

Think about one of the best days of your life: What happened?  What made it so great?

Wait for responses.

Okay… now, think about one of the most disappointing days of your life… what happened?

Wait! You don’t have to share with the group because it’s probably not something that you want to relive again.

But, I’d like to share one of my most disappointing memories with you…

Share a story from your teen years in which you were truly disappointed and things didn’t work out how you thought that they would.

Let’s face it, there are just some days that aren’t that great.

Life can be really hard.

And here is something that sometimes Christians don’t talk about much: God knows that life is hard.

God never promised us that this life would be easy, in fact, Jesus told his disciples and us these amazing words…

**Read John 16:33.**

And if anyone knows how hard this life can be, wouldn’t it be Jesus?

But listen to the amazing hope and promise that He gives to us – He has overcome the world and He has come to give us peace.

And you hear a similar reminder in other parts of the Bible too.

**Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.**

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal”

You start to get the idea that what Jesus is giving us is a peace that is beyond anything that can ever happen in our lives.

Life hands us lemons and Jesus says to just keep your eyes on Him and watch what He does.

Does it mean that everything is “poof… perfect!”?

You just magically get the grade on the test that you wanted… or you make the team?

Not necessarily, but what He does promise us is that if we look above the things of this life, and look to Jesus that we see things differently.

When the world sees chaos, we see peace.

When we should lose hope, we find joy.

It really doesn’t make sense, but it does.

And that is why Paul says in the verse that I just read – Don’t lose heart.

What are some of the reasons that you can think of as Christians that we shouldn’t lose heart?

Write down what the students share.

Not only do we have eternal hope and know that even when this world ends and our bodies die, we will be with Jesus… but even as our bodies get old and the world seems to be falling apart, God is making all things new.

The things that are eternal are beyond what this world sees.

Jesus came into a world filled with darkness and death and despair and turned things upside down.

And that is why we, as Gods people, are the ones that have hope even in the darkest times because we have a hope.

We know that this world is not all that there is.

We know that even though we might be disappointed or beaten down, that God is with us.

It really is all about perspective.

Choosing to see things from God’s point of view.

Choosing to see lemonade, instead of sour lemonade.

Choosing to see the love that God has for us that can’t be stopped. Not even death.

I want to give each of you a heart to put in your pocket, or to put somewhere that you can see it, to remind you to not lose heart.

In this life, we will have disappointments and hurts.

But, don’t lose heart because you are not alone and God loves you so much.

And the peace and the hope that comes through Jesus is honestly the kind of thing that won’t fade.

No matter what kind of disappointments you may face.

And when the times get tough, you know that there is one you can go to who understands disappointment like no one else: someone who was betrayed by his friends, misunderstood by those around him, and seemed to have lost everything.

Jesus knows disappointment and that is why his words to us should ring so clear…

**Read John 16:33.**

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

So take heart.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Who is someone that you have seen struggle with disappointment and how did they handle it?
2. What disappointments are you struggling with? Take some time to pray for one another.
3. Which disappointment that Jesus faced can you identify with the most?
4. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus had disappointments?
5. What is the heart that you received tonight going to remind you of?

# Youth Group Lesson 8 – Prayer



# Youth Group Lesson on Prayer

Use this quick lesson to help your youth ministry discover the importance of prayer.

I know that God can hear me when I pray, but when His voice feels silent in my life, I sometimes wonder if the connection only works one-way.

**Read 1 Kings 19:11-13**

“Go out and stand before me on the mountain,” the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave…”

**Say:** In this story, Elijah was searching for God. First, he looked for Him in a windstorm, then a powerful fire, but God was not in either of those things.

This was a very significant experience for Elijah because God had established a pattern of appearing in these ways over hundreds of years when communicating with His people.

God appeared in a burning bush to Moses in Exodus 3 and in billows of smoke on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19 with winds that shook the ground.

Despite these patterns, Elijah does not feel God’s presence until he hears the faintest of whispers.

Do you ever find yourself expecting God’s voice to come in windstorms and explosive fireworks?

I know that when I am desperately seeking God in prayer, I most often want to hear or see His response in very obvious, visible ways.

If I am sick, I pray for healing and want to feel better immediately.

If I need help with a problem, I want a clear solution.

If I am in emotional pain, I want God make the pain go away.

Sometimes, though, I feel the same way I did during my dropped call with my wife.

I talk to God in prayer and feel and see no change.

It is in those moments that I need to remember that God’s voice sometimes comes in a gentle whisper.

He doesn’t always work in dramatic ways.

Sometimes it is in the little things that God moves the most.

I might not feel healthy right away, but He may nudge me toward the help that I need.

A solution may not present itself to fix my problems, but He can use those problems to make me stronger.

The pain may not always go away immediately, but He sometimes uses that pain to remind of all that He has blessed me with.

These are just a few tangible ways that God speaks through a whisper.

How are you looking for God to respond to your prayers?

Maybe the connection hasn’t been lost.

Perhaps you are just not listening carefully enough.

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

How has God spoken or moved in your life in a way that seems like a powerful wind or fire?

How has God spoken or moved in your life in a way that seems like a gentle whisper?

What things in your life can make it difficult for you to hear God’s whisper?

Why do you think that God uses a whisper sometimes instead of a dramatic experience?

# Youth Group Game 9 : Wonderfully made.



This game is for all you crazy youth ministry leaders who LOVE messy games AND for the brave students in your group willing to get messy!

It’s a perfect game to play during summer camp or as an upfront game at a weekend/midweek service.

Not only is the game fun, but it also includes a short lesson to teach students how they are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14

**Topic:**You’re fearfully and wonderfully made

**Bible:**Psalms 139:14

**Fearfully and Wonderfully Made by God!**

Students often focus on what they don’t like about themselves.

It’s so easy for them to find stuff about their appearance, personality or character that they don’t like.

However, we have the power to affirm that they are perfect, just the way they are!

Why? Because they are God’s creation. His masterpiece!

Students need to hear this message, and hey…why not have a little fun setting up that powerful point!

Enjoy the game!

**Supplies:**

* A variety of summer time picnic condiments in squeeze bottles: ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise….

**Directions:**

1. Using the usual summer time condiments as “styling mousse” people will be creating the best hairstyles on their friend.
2. Ask students to volunteer with a friend for a creative upfront game.
3. Select a few pairs, as many as you like.
4. It might be a good idea to have a couple guy-guy teams, and girl-girl teams.
5. Once the partners are up front, ask which one is the most creative.
6. The person who is most creative will remain standing, while the other one has a seat.
7. Once they are in position, hand each standing person a couple of the condiments and explain the game.
8. They will have 2 minutes using the condiments to create the best and most creative hairstyle on their seated partners.
9. Give points for color, height, originality, etc…

**Say:** Okay that was really creative work everyone! Let’s talk about creativity.

**Ask:**

* How creative do you think you are?
* What are the ways that you are most creative?

**Say:** Everyone is creative in some way or the other, even if we don’t think so.

Sometimes our creativity isn’t even typical ways like art or music.

Some of us are creative in how we play sports, or how we think about things like math and science.

That is the way God as the ultimate CREATOR has created us.

Listen to this verse…

**Read Psalms 139:14:**

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful.”

**Say:** Isn’t that an interesting verse? It uses the word “fearful” and “wonderful” to describe how God has made us.

The condiment creations today were little scary, but is that really what this verse means…

**Ask:**

* What do you think this verse is saying?
* If there was one thing you could change about yourself, what would it be? Why would you want to change it?
* Why do you think it is so easy to compare ourselves to others (in appearance, personality, talents, etc.)?
* What’s the danger in comparing ourselves to others?
* Why is it important for us to remember that we are God’s special, wonderful creation?

**Say:** God took the plain and ordinary and made it wonderful when He created us.

We need to look at ourselves through His creative eyes of love! We need to look at ourselves with awe and respect…that is what “fearfully made” means.

(Note: Feel free at this point to elaborate on this topic with students)

# Youth Group Lesson 10 - Decisions



Teens are surrounded by decisions at seemingly every turn and those decisions seem to come with higher and higher consequences.

The world that teenagers live in can be incredibly unforgiving and decisions that seem of little importance to a youth can turn out to have life changing results.

As you begin preparing this lesson with the students in your ministry, you might want to share some of the bad decisions you made as a teenager. Talk about the consequences of those decisions. Students need to know you’re not perfect too.

You might also want to share some of the good decisions you made with God’s guidance, and the consequences of those decisions.

The more vulnerable and open you are…the more real this lesson will be for your students.

**YOUTH GROUP LESSON ON DECISIONS**

**Bible:**  Proverbs 3:5-6

**Bottom Line**: Let God guide you in making tough decisions:

**TEACH**

Share a story from your own life in which a small decision you made as a teenager had big consequences—try to think of a funny and light story if you have one.

We make tons of decisions every single day.

Hopefully, none of them are as silly as the ones that were in our game today, but your lives are full of decisions aren’t they?

What are some of the decisions that you’ve had to make the past year?

Give the youth time to answer.

Here’s the crazy thing about this time in your lives:  do you know how many adults look back at decisions that they made when they were your age that they think – “Wow that was stupid” or “I wish that I hadn’t done that”?

Some of these make great stories, but there are some decisions that stick with us.

Share another example from your life (or someone you know) of decisions that you made that you didn’t realize the full consequences of the decision until it was too late.

Here is a little secret:  sometimes when your parents or the adults in your life freak out about decisions that you have made or worry about decisions that you might make, sometimes it is because they have lived that…they’ve ‘got the t-shirt’ of that decision and they love you and don’t want you to make the same decision.

What is the answer?

How do you know what decisions to make or not make?

Ask someone to read **Proverbs 3:5-6** from the Message bible:

“*Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track.*

*Don’t assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life!*

*Honour God with everything you own; give him the first and the best. Your barns will burst, your wine vats will brim over. But don’t, dear friend, resent God’s discipline; don’t sulk under his loving correction. It’s the child he loves that God corrects; a father’s delight is behind all this.”*

God wants to help us make decisions.

And it starts when we walk with him in making the small decisions.

Do you tell the truth even if it I hurts or do you tell a small lie?

Do you speak the truth or do you act like you didn’t see it?

It is the small decisions that really do matter.

It’s in that picture that you send on Snapchat or the post that you write.

It’s in the ways that you treat others when you don’t think anyone is looking or seeing.

But here is the truth:  You see.  You hear.  You know.

And God does.

See, making your paths straight means walking with God when the roads are easy, because as the decisions get tougher, which they will, He is right there with you.

And when there are those times that you don’t know what to do:  He is there with you too.

Think about the decisions that you might be facing today:  maybe you are wondering if you should hang out with certain people or choose one way or another.

Ask God to help you to know what you should do.

Share about how you listen for God’s guidance in making decisions or an example of a time in which God helped you to make a decision.

I wish that I could give you “The 3 Steps to Hearing God’s voice” but honestly, it is about listening and seeing if you sense God leading.

Here is the one thing that I can tell you:  God won’t lead you to make a decision that goes against who you know God to be.

He won’t lead you to be dishonest or unkind.

God’s path is straight.

Now don’t hear me saying that God’s path is easy, because sometimes God’s way is really tough.

It can be lonely.

But what I do know is that when you walk with God:  you are not alone.

God is with you.

And once you make one decisions with God, hearing the next time is usually clearer.

Take a moment to think about a decision that you are facing.

Ask God right now to guide you.

To help you to know what His path is and to guide you.

God doesn’t expect you to have all the answers….the scripture today even says not to trust in your own understanding.

Ask God for his wisdom.

And then honestly ask yourself:  What would it look like to listen for God’s voice in all you do?

Keep your ears, eyes, and heart open.

God never meant for us to try to do life all on our own.

Walk with God.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

What are some of the tough decisions that teenagers have to make?

What are some of the consequences you have seen from others’ decisions?

Share about a time that you made a decision that had tough consequences.

Give each person a chance to share a decision that they need the group to pray with them about.

How does it make you feel to know that God never meant for us to walk alone or on our own strength?

# YOUTH GROUP LESSON 11 - POPULARITY



Who doesn’t want to be the ‘cool kid’?

They’re the ones that have the most friends, wear the name-brand clothes, and have the opinion that everyone wants to follow.

But, is that really what makes someone cool or popular?

Use this lesson to teach students that God’s opinion of us is the only one that really matters.

**YOUTH GROUP LESSON ON POPULARITY**

**Bible:** Galatians 1:10

**Bottom Line**: God’s opinion of us is the only one that matters.

**TEACH**

Share a story from your teenage years along with a photo: Go for the one in which you embarrassed yourself or where you realized that popularity might be less than you expected.

If you don’t have a story, ask some of the adults in the church to share… but, come on, we all have those stories.

Popularity.

It’s that thing that so many people chase, but have you ever stopped to really think about what makes someone popular?

Who decides who is popular?

Ask the students to share their thoughts on what it means or looks like to be popular.

But, please don’t say your number out loud!

Now, what are some of the things you’ve seen people be willing to do to be popular?

Write down these things on a card and hand it in.

I will read these and we can talk about them.

Give each youth a card and pen.

Why?  Because if they are really honest, these could be some ‘dicey’ answers and best to filter.

Read the cards and ask the students to agree or disagree on whether teens seem to do these things to be popular.

Here is something to ask yourself from now on: Who am I?  And what am I willing to do or not to do for others to like me?

**Read Galatians 1: 10.**

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Everyone will have an opinion about you.

But, the truth is, most people care more about what others think of them and really aren’t as worried about you as you might think.

That’s why it is really important that you decide beforehand who you are.

What do I mean by this?

Ask yourself if you are willing to compromise your character, who you really are, to become more popular.

Is popularity really worth making bad decisions, and more importantly, is that who you are?

Share a story from your life in which you faced this dilemma of who you are in Christ versus what others in the world want you to be.

See, the first thing that you have to think about is who you are in Christ.

So, tell me… who are you in Christ?

What words would Jesus use to describe who you are?

Write down what they say on a mirror with a dry erase marker.

Here are a few suggestions:

Beloved

Valuable enough to die for

Righteous

Bought with a price

You are loved by God and just think about the lengths that God has gone to show you His love.

Some of you see these words on the mirror and might think “That can’t be true about me”, but … these are true for you in Christ.

Jesus doesn’t expect you to be perfect, and in fact, he knows that you will probably fail, but that is why he offers us grace.

His strength and grace give us the ability to try again… and keep trying.

And His opinion of you is the only one that really matters because it is the only one that is truly correct.

I wish that I could tell you that living in God’s grace will make you popular with the rest of the world, but you and I both know that this isn’t always true.

Now don’t get me wrong, when you really live for Jesus, you will find that others are drawn to the ‘thing’ that they see different in you:  that’s Jesus.

But just look at the life of Jesus: Was he popular?

Yes, for a week!

One week everyone was praising him and waving palm branches, which is basically the equivalent of a parade in his honour, but the next week, the same people are screaming “Crucify him”.

His popularity was very quick and seemed to turn on a dime… which is a true picture of popularity.

Here one day and gone the next.

So, that’s why it is so important for you to spend some time really searching your soul and asking yourself, “Who am I?”  And “what am I willing to do to be popular?”

As you find yourself living day by day, ask yourself:  “Do I really want to do this or do I want others to like me? “

And then ask yourself this question: “Am I living in a way that is God’s best for me?”

Those are the real answers that matter because the opinion that God has of you won’t change based on what you wear, who you hang out with, what you have… his opinion of you is based on his love for you.

His love that will never change.

As you leave, I am going to give you a mirror.

I want you to write a word on that mirror that can remind you 0f who you are in Christ.

Maybe you need to write that you are loved or beautiful or righteous… pray about what word to write and take this mirror with you to remind you about who you are in Christ.

Close in prayer.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

* What is your struggle with popularity? What to wear?  Actions?  Friends?
* What are the ways that you see others around you trying to be popular?
* Are you willing to do these things to be popular?
* How does it make you feel to think about Jesus and how opinions turned so fast on him?
* What word did you write on your mirror?
* How can we pray and be there for one another through the popularity struggles some of us face

# YOUTH GROUP LESSON 12 - ACCOUNTABILITY



**Accountability.**

It is something that we all need.

We were created for community. We all need support.

Sometimes we need to hear the brutal truth. We can’t do life alone.

Use this lesson to remind students that they need support, encouragement, and accountability from others.

**Bible:** Ecclesiastes 4:12

**Bottom Line:** We need each other.

**SUPPLIES**

* String, which by itself will break easily, but when braided with 3 will not break (use this for a teaching object lesson)

**TEACH**

Share a funny story about you and a good friend (or friends) which illustrates how important it is to have good friends.

If you have embarrassing photos that will help to make this funny and a great way for the youth to heckle you the next few weeks!

We all need friends.

Not ‘frenemies’ or the kind of friends who talk about you when you aren’t around, but real true friends.

How can you tell if someone is a true friend?

Write down what the youth say and go back to these traits as you continue the lesson.

But sometimes really good friends, you know the kind who will tell you when you have a giant hole in the back of your pants or a piece of broccoli in your teeth, can be tough to find.

If you have these kind of friends, be thankful because most of us know that true and real friendship is a rare thing.

Look around this room.

I have a challenge to share with you.

Around this room are people who have your back.

And if we don’t, then we need to start today agreeing and committing to be each other’s ‘people’.

The Bible describes this kind of friendship using a really cool image.

**Read Ecclesiastes 4: 12.**

I need 3 volunteers.

How strong are you?

Give one volunteer a string and challenge them to break it.

Now, let’s have each of you take your strings and weave them together.

You could even get really creative and have them braid them, but don’t take forever.

Now, ask for one of them to try to break the three-corded string.

Hopefully, it doesn’t break for the illustration!

What do you think the point of this scripture is?

Give them a chance to really share their thoughts.

We are stronger together.

A fancy word for this is ‘Accountability’.

We need to have friends who love us, but will also be honest with us when we need to hear a hard truth.

Being a friend and always nodding and smiling and agreeing isn’t really being a friend.

The test of a true friend is whether they will tell you when you are wrong.

Maybe you have been a real jerk this week and being awful to the people around you – a real friend will pull you aside and say ‘Hey, is everything ok? I’m worried about you. You are kinda being a jerk’.

Holding each other accountable doesn’t mean that you take cheap shots or tell each other every single time you do something wrong.

Holding someone accountable begins with loving them and truly caring for them; wanting them to be a better person and expecting the same from them when you are struggling.

What are some ways that you can hold each other accountable?

Get in your group of three from earlier and come up with 3 examples of how friends could hold each other accountable and then choose one to share with the group.

You could even get super creative and act it out for us.

Give each group a chance to share.

Maybe you are starting to hang out with friends who make poor decisions, a true friend would tell you the truth and challenge you.

Maybe your friend has started using really bad language around certain people – how could you hold them accountable?

You see a friend from youth group share a pic on Snapchat that isn’t who you really know that they should be: how do you hold them accountable?

Now here is what accountability is not – It isn’t getting together with others and sharing with them how you saw someone screw up.

That’s just gossip.

Accountability is going directly to the person and caring for them.

Before we go into our small groups I have a challenge for you all to take on this week.

Give each youth a wristband and sharpie.

Take a minute in your groups to ask how you can pray for one another because accountability really can start here.

Share how you might struggle this week and you can make it something like you procrastinate for schoolwork and you need a friend, during the week, to ask how it’s going.

Maybe it is more serious and you have something you struggle with that they need to pray for you during the week.

Be as specific as you want, but commit to keep everything private within that circle.

Then, write down each person in your groups’ name on your wristband and put it on your wrist as a reminder to stand together with them throughout the week.

Give the groups time to share and then end with a group prayer.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How can we pray for you and help you stand strong this week?
2. What struggles are you facing?  What temptations are you fighting?  (They can share ‘unspoken’ if they don’t’ want to get specific).

# YOUTH GROUP LESSON 13 - TRUE LOVE



Our world gives us so many confusing ideas about ‘love’.

But, there is only one true love and that’s the love we find in God.

Use this youth group lesson to teach teens that God shows us what true love should look like by the way He loves us.

Revelation 2:4-5

**Bottom Line:**God shows us what true love should look like by the way that He loves us.

**SUPPLIES**

* Bags of conversation hearts candy
* 6 bowls
* Long table
* Hearts for each student (could be a foam heart or even heart rocks… whatever you find will work!)

**OPENING GAME: HEART TO HEART**

For this game, you will need several bags of conversation hearts candy.

Divide the group into three equal teams.

Set-up a long table with three bowls across from where the teams are lined up.

Each team will have a bowl of conversations hearts (start with 10 per student, or more, if you want this game to go on for a while!)

Have each team line up in a single file behind their bowl of hearts.

**Say:**  Today, we will test your commitment to love.

Each team has a bowl of heart candy.

When I say GO, the first person in the front of each teams’ line will grab a heart from the bowl.

Place it on your forehead and put your hands behind your back.

You will run to the bowl on the table and without using your hands drop the candy from your forehead into the bowl.

Then, you will run back to your team and tag the hand of the next person in line.

The team that gets the most hearts in their bowl will win.

If you drop your heart… well, it’s broken… just kidding.

Just run back to your bowl, get another heart and try again.

Now, if you have to go back 5 times, just run back and tag the next person.

GO!

**TEACH**

How many of you would say that you have been in love?

If your group is younger, they might not be able to relate.

Share a funny story about your first love, which will help clear the uncomfortable air you just caused with the “love” question.

Some of you may not have experienced a ‘first love’.

Maybe you’ve seen TV shows, movies, or heard songs that talk about first love – can you think of any examples?

*Wait for students to respond and share a couple of examples.*

Let’s talk about this: When someone first falls in love, what kinds of things do they do? Act like? Think about?

Write down their answers to use later in the lesson.

Hopefully it will include things like: they are all you can think about, you want to talk to them all the time, what to spend time together, etc.

Our culture gives us all kinds of crazy examples of love.

You say you ‘love’ this food or you ‘love’ your phone… but when it really comes down to the word, love, what does it mean?

God shows us what true love really looks like through Jesus.

God sent his only son (John 3:16) to die for us… now, THAT IS LOVE, right?

God basically shows us what love should look like by the way that He loves us.

And what does He want in return?

Our love.

God loves us so much and He desires for us to love him back.

We can make our relationship with God about all kinds of things, but if we miss the fact that God wants us to love Him back, we miss the point.

Think of it this way… The Bible is really just a huge love story in which God, the creator of everything, just wants His people to love Him.

And over and over they chose not to.

Yet, what does God do?

Gives them another chance.

Finds another way to show them that He loves them.

It is like God is yelling through a mega phone:  Hey, I love you.

And we have on noise concealing headphones.

Have you ever really fully accepted the fact that God loves you?

He loves you so much that there is nothing that He wouldn’t’ do for you.

Not just the person in youth who you think is the perfect Christian.

Not just your pastor.

But you.

And all that we have to do is return that love.

Remember those notes that you used to write as kids:  Do you love me?  Check “yes”, “No” or “Maybe”?

Think of God sending one of those to you every single day.

And most of the time how do you answer?

Maybe you’ve never thought of it this way, but how do you answer that simple question?

With your actions and with your time.

Because whether you knew it or not… God is waiting on that answer.

The Book of Revelation is the last book in the New Testament.

One really interesting part of this book are the letters that are written to the churches.

John is told to write these letters to early churches.

Some of them get really good letters… but others get some pretty harsh letters.

One of the letters is to the church in Ephesus (the book of Ephesians which was written to this church) and they get what seems a pretty good report card.

They work hard and don’t give up. (Revelation 2:2)

They don’t put up with people who are wicked or who twist the Word of God. (Revelation 2:2b)

They have even had hard things happen and haven’t given up. (Revelation 2:3)

Sounds pretty good, right?

How many of us would hope that God would say this to us?

But let’s see what else the letter says:

**Read Revelation 2:4-5.**

What is the criticism that God has for this church?

They have forgotten their first love.

Look at the things we wrote on the board earlier about ‘first love’.

What would it look like to be in love with God for the first time?

Maybe you have experienced it: What did you do? Feel?  Act like?

Write these things down on the board.

Share about your experience when you first fell in love with God.

Also, this would be an amazing opportunity for the students to ask you questions following your sharing.

For some, they have no idea what it means to be in love with God.

I want to give all of you a chance to really fall in love with God.

For some of you, you just need a reminder like this church needed a reminder… remember what you first did when you fell in love with Jesus.

Remember how you would read your Bible, or share your faith, or pray because you needed to and not because you felt that you HAD to?

Remember how excited you were.

We live in a society where love seems to be cheap.

People seem to fall in and out of love, but here is the tough truth about any relationship:  loving relationships also take work.

You might not ‘feel’ that butterfly in your stomach or get excited to the point that you want to shout from a rooftop every single time you pray or read your Bible, but if you keep doing those things you will connect with God.

Even when you don’t feel it.

Then, there are some of you who haven’t ever heard or considered that God, the creator of the Universe, would want to have a relationship with you.

He longs to talk to you, listen to you, cry with you, get to know you.

How?

Pray and just share your thoughts with Him like you would a good friend.

Maybe even just write some texts to God.  (I’m not sure where you would send them, but make a note on your phone.)

Be honest.

Share your heart.

Because God is there to meet you and He loves you more than you can ever imagine.

He wants you to fall in love with Him because He has always and will always love you.

Whether you realize it or not, everyone is somewhere in a relationship with God.

Maybe you need to meet God.

Maybe you need to go back and reconnect with God.

Where are you?

Sometimes it is just a matter of giving yourself some time to listen and ask God to help you hear him.

Take that time as we pray.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

* How is a relationship with God similar to a relationship with a person? How is it different, or is it?
* Why do you think ‘true love’ is such a difficult thing to find today?
* How does it make you feel to know that God loves you?
* How would you describe God’s love?
* How would you describe your relationship with God?
* What is your heart going to remind you of this week?
* What are some things that will help you to keep growing in your relationship with God.

# YOUTH GROUP LESSON 14 MERCY



As a teen, do you remember playing the game, “mercy”?

You know… the game where you hold hands with someone, try to bend each other’s wrists backwards until one of you can’t stand it anymore – and then, in defeat, one of you yells, “MERCY!!!”

Sounds like fun, right?

In real life, extending mercy to someone who has hurt you can be just as painful.

But, here’s the thing… at some point, God decided to do exactly that in each of our lives.

Use this lesson to remind teens that because God shows mercy to us, we should show mercy to others.

**Bible:**Micah 6:8

**Bottom Line:** Because God shows mercy to us, we should show mercy to others.

**TEACH**

Answer this question: I will know that I am a success when I…

Now, here’s a tough question: God will consider me a success when I…

Give the students a chance to share their answers to both of these questions.

Have you ever wondered what God wants you to do… who he wants you to be?

Would it surprise you to know that in the Bible, there is actually a passage that tells us exactly what God wants us to do?

**Read Micah 6:8 (NKJV).**

*He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you*  
*But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?*

One of the words listed here is a word that you have probably heard, but the definition might be a bit more challenging.

Mercy.

Write a definition for the word ‘mercy’.

Give each group a change to read their definition.

Then, read this definition:

English Oxford Dictionary defines mercy as “Compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm.”

Think about it this way: Think of someone who has really hurt you.

Maybe they were once a friend, but they betrayed you.

Maybe someone who is spreading rumours about you.

Now, what would it look like to show mercy to them?

Mercy is a word that might be easy to say, but can be really, really difficult to live out.

So, why do you think God wants us to show mercy?

Ask another student to **read Ephesians 2:4-5 (NKJV).**

*“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)…”*

God asks us to show mercy because WE have been shown mercy.

We were the ones who hurt God.

Betrayed him.

Turned our backs on his love, and what does God do?

He shows us mercy.

And then, he challenges us to do the same for those who hurt us.

This is what God wants us to do.

Think of someone in your life who has hurt you.

Someone you have a grudge against.

Someone who deserves you to treat them terribly.

Now, how could you show them mercy?

Showing mercy doesn’t mean that what the person did wasn’t wrong or hurtful.

Showing mercy simply means that we are showing compassion and love when it doesn’t make any sense to do that.

Why? Because that is what God has done for us.

In our world, there are lots of definitions that God wants us to rewrite.

In this world, if someone hurts you, they are an enemy, right?

Well, in God’s world, that person is someone who deserves mercy.

In our world, if someone says one thing and does another, they are a hypocrite or a fake.

But in God’s world, they are a child of God and he loves them.

Share a story from your life in which someone demonstrated mercy to you and another time that you showed someone mercy.

See, we all are in need of mercy.

And it would be really amazing if we didn’t receive what we deserve!

God wants us to be His people:  the ones who love when love is not easy and, honestly, when love and compassion don’t make any sense.

Can you think of a situation in your life in which someone really deserves for you to blast them?

They have wronged you and they deserve to be called out.

Now, think of what it would look like to show them mercy.

How would they respond?

What would others think?

Because sometimes God shines the brightest when we change the definitions – when we act in a way that is exactly opposite of how the world expects.

See, what God requires of us is drastically different from what the world describes as being a success:, to be kind, to love justice and to show mercy.

Why do you think that God chooses these things?

Give the students a chance to share their thoughts.

God wants us to live in this world as He would, and honestly, when we live and walk like God would, it looks very different from what the world would define as ‘success’.

But this is what God wants for us.

This is how he will know that we truly ‘get’ what Jesus lived out in his life:  kindness, mercy, and justice.

Just think for a moment what living like this will look like in your school.

In your home.

In the world.

Pretty different and amazing, right?

So get busy changing the definitions of how you are living your life and responding to the people around you and you will be amazed at how others might be changed as well.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

* Name a situation in your life when showing mercy seemed to not make sense.
* Why is showing mercy so difficult?
* Share a time when you have been shown mercy.
* How does it feel to be shown mercy?
* How can you show mercy to others this week

# YOUTH GROUP LESSON 15 - OUTREACH



**YOUTH GROUP LESSON ON OUTREACH**

The lesson includes a fun opening game – Stinky Feet.

The lesson also includes a powerful closing activity that will really help the message stick.

**Bible**: Romans 10:12-15

**Bottom Line:**We are the feet of Jesus

Instruct youth to take off their shoes and pile them in a heap on one side of the room.

Divide the group into equal teams that will line up on the opposite side of the room from the shoe heap.

**Say:** We’re going to play a game called “Stinky Feet”.

On one side of the room we have all of your shoes piled together.

On the other side, you have been grouped into teams.

The goal of this game is to be the first team to recover all of your team member’s shoes.

Choose the order in which your team members will race.

Now, the first person in the line needs to put this blindfold on.

The first person in line from each team will run (or feel their way) to the heap of shoes.

Teams – you might need to shout out directions for them!

Then, with the blindfold on, they will grab one shoe and run back to their team.

If the shoe belongs to a member of their team – that’s awesome!

Have that person put their shoe back on.

But, if it’s not a shoe from their group, the person who brought the shoe to the team must put the blindfold back on and return the shoe to the pile.

Grab another shoe and repeat the process until they get a shoe that belongs to a member on their team.

Then, the next person in line repeats the same process.

The first team to get all of their shoes on – WINS!

**TEACH**

I am glad that everyone has their stinky shoes back on their stinky feet!

Now, I want to ask you a completely unrelated question: How did you hear first hear about Jesus?

Seriously, I would like for you to tell me how you first heard about Jesus.

As the youth share, write a short phrase summing up the way they heard about Jesus on the paper footprint.

Take 4-5 examples and ask the youth to tape their footprint somewhere around the room.

Share how you personally heard about Jesus or how you grew in your relationship with Christ.

This would also be a great opportunity to have adults or youth share about how they heard about Christ.

Stories are always much more powerful than just simply talking about hearing about Jesus.

**Say:**For some of us, we grew up hearing about Jesus.

Maybe you grew up in church and honestly cannot remember the first time you heard about Jesus, which is honestly beautiful.

But for some of us, our families didn’t go to church and maybe you’ve just begun to learn about who Jesus is.

And that also, is beautiful.

**Ask a student to read Romans 10:12-15.**

Think about it this way: It has been over 2,000 years since Jesus was teaching, performing miracles, was killed, and rose from the dead and we are sitting here… 2,000 years later still talking about it.

How?

Because someone shared the story and then another person shared about Jesus… And on and on.

As you say this, you could tape up more and more footprints.

The only way that we are sitting here learning about Jesus, and even able to know that we can have a relationship with him, is because others shared about Jesus.

Now, when I say ‘share about Jesus’ I’m not talking about walking up to strangers with a Bible and shouting, “Do you know Jesus?”.

Sharing the love of Jesus is meant to be simple.

It is meant to flow naturally from who you are.

It could be making sure you remember the name of the janitor at school and smile.

It could be sticking up for someone who you know is being bullied.

It could be telling your friends when they share their problems that you are praying for them.

And nothing is as powerful as you simply sharing how knowing Jesus has impacted your life.

Now, what are some ways that you could share the love of Christ with others?

Think of simple ways.

Give each person a piece of construction paper and a pen and explain: Take just a second to trace around your foot and cut out the footprint.

Write a simple way that you could share the love of Jesus in a very simple way.

You can even share a real example from your life: either of someone who shared the love of Jesus with you, or you shared with others.

Then, tape up your footprint around the room.

Once you are done taping your footprint, walk around the room quietly and read the ways that you could share the love of Jesus.

**Once everyone has taped up their footprints ask:**How can others know and experience the love of Jesus without us telling them and living out what it means to be loved by Christ?

Look around the room and see the many ways that we could be the feet of Jesus.

One step at a time, we can either bring Jesus to people or push them away with just how we live out our faith.

It is the simple steps that we take that can make the difference.

As you grow and share the most important things to you, hopefully, your faith naturally shines through and comes out.

As you walk through your life, you naturally want to share about the person who has changed your life.

You won’t want to keep that to yourself!

**CLOSING ACTIVITY**

**Say:**  Around the room (or at the front of the room depending on your setup) there are these (hold up the flip flop) small little flip flops: the shoe of the summer and now all year.

There are also sharpie pens.

Choose a flip flop, grab a sharpie pen and write these words:  We are the feet of Christ.

Then, throughout this week and hopefully beyond, let’s start a movement.

Take photos of you sharing the love of Christ with your little flip flop—take a pic and then post on Instagram or Snapchat with this hashtag: #feetofchrist

Close in prayer.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Which footprints really stuck to you as you walked around the room and read how others shared the love of Jesus?

Invite the students to share how they have heard about Jesus. Don’t pressure anyone to share if they do not want to, but give each person a chance to share.

When you look at the tiny flip flop, what does it remind you to do?

What are some simple ways that you plan to share the love of Jesus?

# YOUTH GROUP LESSON 16 - ON BOLDNESS



Every day we face situations that give us the opportunity to choose boldness in our faith in Christ.

Every day the students in your ministry face situations that give them the opportunity to make bold decisions in their faith.

Sometimes it’s easier to simply be silent or go along with the crowd.

In this lesson students will discover that God uses ordinary people who are bold to do amazing things!

**Bible:** Acts 4:1-15

**Bottom line:** God uses ordinary people who are bold to do amazing things!

**TEACH**

Share a time in your life when it was easier ***not*** to be bold about your faith – maybe a time when fear got in your way.

Life can feel a lot like this maze game we just played.

You are going along, following a certain path, and then you get hit.

Now, I don’t know about you, but sometimes it can be tough to be bold.

It’s tough to be confident in who you know you should be and not to bow to fear.

Today’s scripture is a story about two men who were anything but bold in the first part of their lives.

Peter was a disciple of Jesus and he actually denied even knowing Jesus three times!!

Peter was truly afraid for his life and needed to be because being friends with Jesus was dangerous.

But, let’s check in on Peter and John following the death and resurrection of Jesus.

They have some serious words for the religious leaders… and it’s important to remember these are the same religious leaders who killed Jesus.

They had every reason to be fearful.

**Read Acts 4:1-15.**

Now, let’s put this situation into modern day.

Sure, we are really lucky that knowing Jesus doesn’t put our lives in danger, but remember that around the world being a Christian can also mean you could be killed.

I’m going to ask you to get in groups of three or four people.

Come up with some examples of situations in which it is easy to let fear get the best of you and influence your decisions.

*Give the groups 5-10 minutes to come up with their own scenario.*

*If they need help, below are some suggestions:*

*Their friends are making fun of someone and although they feel they should stick up for them, they don’t.*

*Your friends are making decisions they shouldn’t, but you just go along with it.*

*Give the groups a chance to share their scenarios.*

What are some reasons that it can be easier to be silent and not be bold in your faith?

*Give the students a chance to answer.*

One thing we see in the life of Peter is that even though he wasn’t bold when he denied Jesus, not once, but THREE times, Jesus forgave him.

At that point, Peter stood before all the religious leaders and BOLDLY spoke for Jesus.

And what did the leaders think?

They were amazed because they knew Peter and John and knew they were ‘just ordinary’ men – and the same is true for us.

Is it easy?

No.

Could it cost you your reputation?

Well, I guess it depends on who’s opinion of you matters: others or Jesus’.

Your own opinion – because even if you are simply silent in situations in which you could stand up – nobody else might know….but you will know.

Be bold.

Speak up for what is right.

Don’t be ashamed to share the difference Christ has made in your life.

And get ready for people to see Christ in you.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

* Why is it difficult to be bold in your faith sometimes?
* Share a situation in which you were silent when you should have spoken up.
* Share situations the group can pray for you to bold about your faith in and commit to pray for one another.
* If you lived in a country where Christians are killed for their faith, what would you do?

# Youth Group Lesson 17 - Leadership



**Bible:** Daniel 1

**Bottom Line**: God’s idea of leadership is very different from the world’s idea of leadership.

### **OPENING GAME – Lego Battle**

**SUPPLIES**

3 Lego Sets (try to find sets that could be complicated but doable in about 15 minutes)

**HOW TO PLAY THE GAME**

Divide the group into 3 teams.

Give each team a Lego set.

Your challenge is to put this Lego set together in the shortest amount of time.

Everyone must participate and no pieces can be left out of the Lego creation.

Give the teams time to complete the structure and then have a fun Lego judging time.

**Adult leader Tips:**

Observe how teams work together as they build.

Resist the urge to step in to help the groups and remind any adult leaders to also resist intervening.

Give the groups time to struggle (if needed) and watch for leaders and also quiet leaders.

Keep watch for youth who show leadership skills and note how they get the others on their team to participate.

Watch to see which youth stay to the end to help and clean.

Display the completed sets and have a completion ‘ceremony’.

### **GAME DISCUSSION**

In your group talk about these questions:

How did we work together as a team?

What different roles did people on the team seem to take?

Who was a vocal leader?

Who followed directions?

What was the most challenging part of this task?

What would you do differently next time?

### **TEACH – Leadership**

The world is looking for leaders.

What are the qualities that you think great leaders possess?

Name some great leaders.

What made or makes them great leaders?

Write down their answers for the group to see.

Share observations that you made as your watched the teams try to put together their lego sets.

Try not to single anyone out, but be sure to note if obvious leaders emerged and help the group to reflect on how this happened?

Were there any leaders that seemed to emerge in this activity?

How did they lead you?

Activities like this are very interesting because you notice that people seem to take on different roles.

There are those who are very vocal and loud.

But there are also quiet leaders.

The ones who might not say much, but will be the last one there finishing the job.

Did you notice, because I did, the ones who stayed to help clean up after the rest of the group left?

Leadership.

Leadership is a skill that the world really does value.

Yet, the way that the world defines a leader can be very different from the way that God defines a leader.

The world says that to be a leader, you have to be first and the best.

And that sometimes to ‘get to the top’ you have to do things that might go against your conscience.

What are some other ways that you see that the world defines leadership?

Today, the world is looking for leaders.

But more importantly, God is looking for leaders.

Leaders who don’t lead like the world might expect.

We are going to read about some young leaders in the Bible.

They faced major challenges and made some major decisions.

And they had to go against the flow in some amazing ways.

**Read Daniel 1.**

Daniel and his friends were the best of the best from Israelite families and now they were in a foreign land.

They had been chosen to join this 3 year ‘training’ and to eventually be in the king’s service.

Yet, Daniel seemed to be very clear about who and whose he was.

He belonged to God.

What were some of the decisions that Daniel and his friends made?

Why do you think that it was important for them to take these stands?

Daniel was young, and yet he knew that he was different.

In a good way.

In a “God way”.

And Daniel wanted it to be obvious that it was God that set him and the others apart.

They didn’t eat what everyone else ate.

The Bible says that he didn’t want to be ‘defiled’ by what the king was eating.

Daniel had the courage to stand up and challenge the leaders.

Daniel belonged to God and he wanted that to be obvious.

And God gave Daniel understanding and knowledge.

Think about people at your school.

Who are the leaders?

And I’m not talking about the people who THINK that they are leaders, but the people that others listen to.

Are they positive leaders?

Why are they leaders?

Why do others listen to them?

These are really important questions that sometimes we don’t take the time to ask, right?

Now, imagine that Daniel were to come to your school and live out a similar challenge?

What would people think about him?

Would you have the strength to join him?

Maybe it wouldn’t be that Daniel only ate vegetables or refused the food from the ‘king’s table’, but think in modern terms, what might Daniel refuse to do?

Would he hang out with your friends?

Tell the same jokes?

Listen to your music?

Go to the same places on the weekend?

Or would he refuse to do those things because they were going to weaken him?

See, what Daniel and his friends knew was that they couldn’t be like everyone else.

They were different.

They led.

Today as we watch the news and everything seems to be about choosing a leader, these are important questions to consider.

What makes a great leader?

What makes people follow that leader?

And how can you become the kind of leader God wants?

Imagine that you decide to make the commitments like Daniel made.

You have choices that you must make about what you eat, wear, and do.

Do those things make a difference?

To Daniel they did because they said something about who he was.

It was about identity for Daniel and the choices he made were very purposeful.

He wanted everyone in Babylon to know that He belonged to God.

And God blessed Daniel and his friends.

**God is looking for “Daniels” today.**

Young leaders who are not afraid to be different, but in a good way.

Leaders who don’t just go along with the crowd.

Leaders who won’t compromise who they are to ‘fit in’.

Ask yourself this: In what ways are you tempted to just fit in?

Why not take a stand and decided to stand out?

Make a conscious decision about what you put in your body, what you do with your time, what you watch, or how you speak.

Imagine if Daniel had Twitter or Instagram: What would his feed look like?

Now ask yourself this question:  when others look at you, do they see a leader or someone trying to fit in?

It is a very tough question, but one that I want you to consider very honestly.

Who are you living to please?

God or everyone else?

What changes do you need to make starting today to be the kind of leader God wants you to be?

Because Daniel didn’t wait until he was ‘older’, but knew that God was calling him even as a young man to be different.

And God is calling you to the same.

Pray and ask God what things you need to ‘not defile’ yourself with and how you could live as Daniel lived.

Close in prayer.

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Who would you consider to be some of the greatest leaders and why?

In what ways are youth today challenged to ‘fit in’?

What are some things that you thought of today that you could give up in order to be like Daniel?

How could you be a leader at your school?  In your youth group?  With your friends?

What is holding you back from really being a leader?

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