

BREAKFAST CLUB

A LIFE NIGHT SERIES ON THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPELS



LIFE TEEN
Leading Teens Closer to Christ
www.LifeTeen.com

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A Life Night Series on the Essence of the Gospels

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SERIES INTRO

Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2015) is unlike any other generation before them, and this Life Night series is created specifically for these teens. Facing the reality that young people are becoming less religious, are less likely than ever before to claim a religious identity, and are no longer being raised with a Christian worldview, we are taking an entirely new approach to how we talk about religion and our Catholic faith with high school teens.

Before they can care about what the Church teaches, they need to know that God exists. Before we can teach them details about morality, they need to know that there is absolute truth. Before we can expect them to be excited or invested in the Mass and the sacraments, they need to know Jesus. This Life Night series is full of Catholic teachings, doctrines, devotions, and practices but focuses on an evangelistic message to help teenagers encounter Jesus Christ through the big questions they ask and through topics that are especially relevant to young people.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Sacred Scripture does not give only one perspective of Jesus. Instead, we are given four distinct Gospels of Jesus Christ through the infinite wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Each Gospel has its own tone, message, and targeted audience. When we consider each of the four Gospel's context and messaging, we can grasp and fully understand who Jesus is. He is the God-man who established His Kingdom on earth, a powerful miracle worker, and a compassionate lover of the sick and oppressed, whose very presence is found in the sacraments of the Church. The goal of "Breakfast Club" is for teens to encounter the authentic Jesus, fully human and fully divine, using the inspired Word of God to reveal His life, truth, and mission to save us.

USCCB FRAMEWORK

For parishes using the USCCB framework for high school catechesis, this series will work with the Person of Christ semester.

STRUCTURE AND METHOD

"Breakfast Club" is a four-part series and is best implemented in the order presented. If this is the first series of the semester, implement a Social or Kick-Off Life Night before beginning this series.

The Life Nights in this series flow easily from one to the next. If you want to take a deeper look at a topic presented in a Life Night, schedule an additional midweek youth group meeting.

Schedule a Social Life Night between "Breakfast Club" and the next Life Night series to add variety to the semester calendar.

ENVIRONMENT

The Environment section in the series overview offers ideas on how to create a meeting space that supports the content and main themes of the Life Nights. The environment is an important part of the evangelization and catechetical process. Teens will notice the effort and creativity and feel valued and welcome. Environment images for each Life Night can be found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com.

INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

Each Life Night begins with a Goal, Key Terms, and Scripture and Catechism references. These sections provide an overview of the content and themes of each Life Night.

RESOURCES

The Resources section provides music and video clip suggestions that creatively support the content and main themes of the Life Night. Preview the media suggestions and consider weaving a video clip or song into the Life Night. Media communicates with our hearts and minds in a unique, powerful way — especially the hearts and minds of teens.

GATHER

Every Life Night begins with a Gather. During the Gather, the teens are welcomed, assembled, and given a brief introduction to the Life Night. The Gather always includes a game or activity to encourage teens to engage in the Life Night and to build community. The games and activities suggested for the Gather can be just for fun or directly linked to the teaching points.

PROCLAIM

Most Gen Z teens have very short attention spans, so teachings for this age group should be no more than fifteen minutes and must be engaging and interactive.

The Proclaim Teaching Guide provides outlines that supply the necessary information and writing areas to help the presenter prepare their talk. There are also suggestions for interaction to make the talk more personal and relevant. These outlines are not intended to be scripts but rather launching points for creating informative teachings specific to the teens being served.

For assistance in crafting a Proclaim teaching, refer to the “Proclaim Walkthrough” videos found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com.

BREAK

After every Proclaim, the teens divide into small groups to dive into the presented content. The purpose of the Break is for the teens to process the information and begin to learn how to express their faith. A Whip Around Question begins each small group discussion. It is a lighthearted question that should be answered quickly around the circle as a fun way to get the teens comfortable talking in small groups.

Small groups provide a safe place for teens to share their faith, ask questions, and wrestle with what they are learning. As they build community with one another, they grow as disciples of Christ. We recommend dividing the teens into small groups based on their grade and gender for the duration of the series. Each small group should have six to ten teens and at least one core member who will lead the group. Male core members should lead male

small groups, and female core members should lead female small groups. This allows for deeper conversations and a greater sense of openness among the teens.

SEND

The Send concludes each Life Night with an opportunity to encounter Jesus through prayer. This is a vital part of the Life Night, so it should not be rushed or skipped. Nothing else that happens during the Life Night will matter in the long run if the teens do not personally know Jesus.

ADAPTATIONS

Throughout the Life Night, there are a variety of call-out boxes to address the different needs of teens and parishes.

Suggestions: These are helpful tips and pointers for running different activities.

Step It Up: These are ideas for different ways to amp up the activities for parishes that have greater resources, bigger budgets, and more time to invest in big ideas.

Going Deeper: These are deeper insights into the points presented in the Proclaim Teaching Guide. Have the speaker assess the needs of the teens they are addressing and decide whether or not to use the information provided.

Hispanic Inculturation: Across the United States, the Hispanic/Latino population in Catholic parishes is large and growing. According to the Pew Research Center, approximately 25 percent of Generation Z — those born after 1995 — are Hispanic, and 47 percent of Hispanic youth are Catholic. To meet this growing need, Life Teen has added various suggestions throughout the Life Nights for adaptations for youth groups that are predominantly Hispanic/Latino. These notes were developed by a group of dedicated youth ministers who serve at largely Hispanic/Latino parishes throughout the United States.

We recognize that not all Hispanic/Latino communities are the same. These suggestions assist youth ministers in adapting to the needs of their specific community by providing insight into the Hispanic/Latino culture.

HANDOUTS

All of the Life Night handouts can be found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com. The handouts are formatted to easily print on standard letter-size paper.

PARENT LETTER

The Parent Letter contains a brief overview of the Life Night and discussion questions for the family. These letters include the parents in the formation and catechesis of their teens and provide an opportunity for ongoing conversion.

The Parent Letter can be emailed or distributed as a printout to parents and guardians as a follow-up to the Life Night. Consider having core members at the doors or parking lot during pick-up to pass out the Parent Letter.

The Parent Letter is available in English and Spanish on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com. If you have a bilingual community, we recommend double-sided printing the Parent Letter in both languages to further welcome the Spanish-speaking community.

FLOCKNOTE

For parishes that also subscribe to Flocknote, Parent Letters are loaded into the interface. Simply log in to schedule these communications to be sent. More information about subscribing to Flocknote can be found online at flocknote.com.

OVERVIEW

BREAKFAST CLUB

Essence of the Gospels

GOAL

The goal of “Breakfast Club” is for teens to encounter the authentic Jesus, fully human and fully divine, using the inspired word of God to reveal His life, truth, and mission to save us.

STORY

We all remember those childhood experiences when our parents bought our favorite cereal. It was all about the over-the-top name, bright characters, games on the back of the box, the prize inside, the sugar rush that followed, and the claim that it was all part of a “balanced breakfast.” This story brings a sense of nostalgia and is a self-aware spoof on the world of children’s breakfast cereals.

ENVIRONMENT

Enlist the help of creative core members, parents, leadership teens, or parishioners to create a fun breakfast-themed environment for this series.

Create a facade of a giant cereal box laid on its side as the focal point of the main meeting space. Use 2’x4’ wooden planks to frame the box, and create the faces and sides of the box with cardboard, including the top opening flaps of the cereal box. Cover the cardboard with butcher paper or paint. Then, decorate the front of the giant cereal box with a re-creation of an actual cereal box or take inspiration from one of the fictional cereals from the series environment images. Place giant-sized cereal pieces made of toy stacking rings, ball-pit balls, or foam pieces at the opening of the giant cereal box.

Set up cereal snack stations around the room’s perimeter. Include bowls, spoons, napkins, and an assortment of cereals. Place gallons of milk in large bowls filled with ice. (Be sure to include

non-dairy options.) Scatter blankets and pillows throughout the meeting space and project Saturday morning cartoons.

Use the “Breakfast Club” environment and social images to promote the Life Nights. These can be found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com.

LIFE NIGHTS

This series contains the following Life Nights:

- **FIT FOR A KING:** The goal of the Life Night is for teens to understand Jesus Christ as the long-awaited Messiah who came to save us and establish His Kingdom on earth.
- **POWER PACKED!:** The goal of the Life Night is for teens to understand that Jesus Christ is the all-powerful Messiah, revealed not only through signs and miracles but also through humility and service.
- **HEART HEALTHY:** The goal of the Life Night is for teens to understand that Jesus Christ reveals God’s compassion and love for all, especially the outcast, the hurting, the unloved, and those seen as “less” in the eyes of the world.
- **SACRAMENTALLY DELICIOUS:** The goal of the Life Night is for teens to understand Jesus Christ’s identity and presence as God revealed through His signs and wonders and, eventually, within the sacraments.

CORE PREPARATION

The following resources support or enhance the information the teens will be learning throughout the series and provides the core members and youth minister with additional information that can aid in their personal growth:

- Bible Basics for Catholics” by John Bergsma
- “Unleashing the Power of Scripture” by Mark Hart
- “You Can Understand the Bible: A Practical and Illuminating Guide to Each Book in the Bible” by Peter Kreeft

QUICK GLANCE

FIT FOR A KING

The Kingdom of God in Matthew's Gospel

GOAL

The goal of "Fit for a King" is for teens to understand Jesus Christ as the long-awaited Messiah who came to save us and establish His Kingdom on earth.

KEY TERMS

Kingdom of God, Messiah

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 11:1-2; Matthew 1:18-23, 5:19-20, 6:33, 12:22-23, 28:19-20

CATECHISM

1, 602, 651-653, 711-713, 865

RESOURCES

- Spotify: "LS - Breakfast Club" (spotify:profile:lifeteen)

GATHER

The teens play a game in which they create new names for brand name cereals. This game is a fun way to help teens connect further with the series' theme.

PROCLAIM

The following are the key concepts of the Proclaim:

- Jesus Christ is the long-awaited Messiah God promised who has come to save us from sin and death.
- Jesus instituted the Church on earth to teach His truth and administer sacraments, seeking to baptize and initiate everyone into a universal message of mercy and love.
- We are all called to be a part of Jesus' Church and have a place and purpose in God's Kingdom on earth.

BREAK

The teens gather with their small groups and dive into Matthew 6:25-34 to reflect on God's mission for each of us.

SEND

The teens participate in a guided meditation reflecting on God's promises and how God has fulfilled promises in their own lives.

PREP

FIT FOR A KING

The Kingdom of God in Matthew's Gospel

PREP

Set up a projector, screen, and scoreboard that can be easily updated throughout the Gather game. Collect one box of each of the following breakfast cereals or create slides with one image of each per slide:

- Cheerios
- Rice Krispies
- Cap'n Crunch
- Froot Loops
- Honey Bunches of Oats
- Cocoa Dyno-Bites
- Fruity Pebbles
- Cinnamon Toast Crunch
- Frosted Flakes
- Lucky Charms

Download, print, and make copies of the “God of Promises” handout found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com.

SETUP

Make Bibles available for the teens to use during the Break and Send portions of the Life Night.

Project the “Fit for a King” environment image, which can be found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com.

Play the “LS - Breakfast Club” Spotify playlist as teens gather.

SUPPLIES

- Slides of cereal images or cereal boxes, as described in the Setup section
- Index cards, several per small group
- Scoreboard (optional)
- Bibles
- Writing utensils, one per person
- “God of Promises” handout, one per teen

OUTLINE

FIT FOR A KING

The Kingdom of God in Matthew's Gospel

GATHER

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)

Welcome the teens to the Life Night, introduce any teens or core members attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

Off-Branded (15 min)

Divide the teens into small groups of six to eight teens with at least one core member; these will be their small groups for the remainder of the series.

Distribute index cards and a pen to each group. Announce that the groups will compete in a game that "reimagines the world of cereal." Instruct the teens to work together in their small groups to develop an off-brand title for each brand name cereal presented or projected. For example: Froot Loops becomes Rainbow Circles, Tropical O's, or Crazy Cylinders.

Small groups have one minute to come up with a name, write it on an index card, and submit it to the host at the front of the room. The host reads each new name aloud, and a panel of core members vote for their favorite answer. The small group that suggested the winning title earns a point.

Repeat at a fun, rapid pace until all the cereals have new names. The small group with the most points at the end wins the game and a prize - perhaps boxes of cereal to take home!

Suggestions

Randomly award additional points in a round for particularly creative titles.

Step it Up

Each group develops a two-to-three sentence persuasive argument for why their "off-brand" name is the most fitting. Choose one group to present their pitch to the large group for each cereal.

PROCLAIM

"Fit For a King" Proclaim Teaching (15 min)

The teaching can be found on pages 22 to 26. The following key concepts are covered in the teaching:

- Jesus Christ is the long-awaited Messiah God promised us, who has come to save us from sin and death.
- Jesus instituted the Church on earth to teach His truth and administer His sacraments, seeking to baptize and initiate everyone into a universal message of mercy and love.
- We are all called to be a part of Jesus' Church, and we all have a place and purpose in God's Kingdom on earth.

BREAK

Scripture Study (20 min)

Set up the small group time by briefly reiterating what was shared in the Proclaim, using the following as an example:

As we have just learned, the Gospel of Matthew is a beautiful reflection on God's desire for us to know where we have come from and be reminded of where we are going. As you read through this passage from the Gospel of Matthew in your small groups, keep in mind that the words Jesus speaks to His apostles are the same words He speaks to you now. Their mission is also your mission. Go forth and be at peace knowing He calls everyone by name.

Lord, we ask that you open our minds so that the Word of God may be in our thoughts and purify our minds. Open our lips so that the Word of God may make our speech holy and incline us to share the Gospel with others. And open our hearts so that the Word of God might strengthen our love for you and others. All of this so that we can know, proclaim, and love you more. Amen.

Divide the teens into their “Breakfast Club” small groups. Pass out a Bible or a copy of Matthew 6:25-34 to each teen. Instruct the core members to begin in prayer and lead the teens in a time of reflection on the passage.

Read the passage aloud, then use the following questions as a guide, but be aware of the promptings of the Holy Spirit and where He is leading the discussion:

- What initially struck you about this passage? Why did it capture your attention?
- How is God calling you to grow deeper in your faith and how does this passage relate?
- Does this passage move your heart to trust in God more deeply? Why or why not?
- What promises are you waiting for the Lord to fulfill for you at this point in your life?

Suggestions

Encourage teens to read through the passage on their own before reading it out loud as a group.

SEND

God of Promises (20 min)

Gather the teens back into the main meeting space and ask them to find their own comfortable space. Give each teen a writing utensil and a copy of the “God of Promises” handout. Set up this time of reflection with some quiet meditative music and the following prompt:

God is the God of promises. Time and again, He has never failed us, and He never will. He gave our ancestors life, a home, and community. And, even when we continued to doubt and sin, God sent the long-awaited Messiah. Sometimes, it takes a while to recognize the promises He is fulfilling. In his Gospel, Matthew reminds us that Isaiah prophesied Jesus would take up our infirmities and bear our diseases, and He did when He took on our human nature. He also spoke of a prophecy proclaiming, “For out of you [Bethlehem] will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.” And out of Bethlehem, this ruler came, and

His name is Jesus. (Matthew 2:6, 8:17)

Scripture is full of God’s promises, but more profoundly, Scripture is full of promises fulfilled. Matthew’s Gospel recounts Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and the promises God gives to those who follow Him in the Beatitudes. He concludes with, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:10)

Do you believe, despite persecution, despite your brokenness and weakness, that God fulfills His promises? What promises has God made to you in your life? Do you believe that He is a God who will fulfill them?

Take some time in prayer and reflection to ponder this deep and life-long question.

Instruct the teens that they have 15 minutes to sit quietly with the questions provided in their “God of Promises” handout and then close the Life Night by praying an Our Father as a large group.

FIT FOR A KING

The Kingdom of God in Matthew's Gospel

GETTING STARTED

This teaching is provided to give you an example of how to present this topic in an age-appropriate way, making it relevant to high school teens.

KEY TERMS

Kingdom of God: The reign or rule of God.

Messiah: A Hebrew word meaning “anointed.” In the Old Testament, it was sometimes applied in a general sense to prophets or priests, but more specifically, it referred to the coming of one who would usher in a period of righteousness and conquer sin and evil. (Exodus 30:30, Daniel 9:26, CCC 436)

TEACHING GUIDE

Tell a brief story about your favorite cereal as a kid and how when your parents bought it, you “knew they loved you.” Explain why you loved it (e.g., there was a toy inside, you ate it while you watched cartoons, how great those days were before the stresses of school and work). Play up how delicious the sugary cereal was and how it was a sign of your parents’ love for you. If your parents did not let you eat sugary, unhealthy cereal, talk about your “miserable” childhood and joke about how your parents did not “love” you like your friends’ parents loved them.

FOR OUR OWN GOOD

As we get older, we begin to realize that if our parents really loved us, they would encourage us to eat healthier. Maybe they wanted to save money for our future, so they bought “off-brand” cereal. Or maybe as we grew, the sugary cereal was phased out in favor of healthier cereal. Sometimes our parents show

us how much they love us through what they withhold rather than “giving in.” Regardless of our families’ eating habits, we can all agree that what we put in our bodies matters, as they are temples of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:19)

When children do not get their way, they may conclude their parents do not care about them. Maybe, at times, we felt insignificant or forgotten as children because our parents did not answer our requests or provide for our wants the way we desired and expected them to do. Perhaps we even went so far as to believe that our parents do not really love us or put us first.

Sometimes we project those doubts, feelings, and hurts onto God. But nothing could be further from the truth. We may feel like God “does not notice” us or care about our struggles, sufferings, or temptations. We may feel that were we cast in a play depicting the creation of the world in the Garden of Eden, we could not be playing the role of Adam or Eve — we might not believe we are a main character in God’s story. We might mistakenly think we are just an “extra” in the production, like “Tree #3” or “Bush #4” in the garden of Eden.

In reality, though, we, as individuals, are primary in God’s story! He knows us, notices us, and cares about us more than we can possibly imagine. In the Gospels, we see a portrait of God in Jesus — a living, breathing, incarnate (meaning, “in the flesh”) portrait of a God who loves us so much that He would literally rather die than risk spending eternity without us. (John 3:16, Mark 10:45, John 15:13, Colossians 2:14, 1 Peter 2:24, 2 Corinthians 5:21, CCC 602)

We have a God who will stop at nothing to save us from our sins. In Genesis, right after Adam and Eve sinned, God let them in on a little secret: He already had a plan to save them! He promises them a redeemer — a Messiah. (The title “Christ” is the Greek version of the word “Messiah,” which is Hebrew for “anointed one.”) God promises that at some point, He will send a Messiah, a Savior, to save us from our sins and crush the serpent once and for all. (Genesis 3:15)

God sees and knows our sins. He knows we will mess up, but He never abandons us. Instead, He takes flesh and becomes the plan to save us.

LONG-AWAITED

Jesus Christ is the King of kings — Savior of the World — and now, by virtue of our baptism, we are all part of the royal family. When we eat His flesh and drink His Blood, we have royal blood running through our veins. Many of us take this fact for granted, but this would have been mind-blowing to the Jewish people thousands of years ago. This is what St. Matthew wants to explain to the Jewish audience he was writing to in his Gospel. (CCC 1271)

Between the time of the fall in the garden of Eden and the time that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the nation of Israel went through a lot. They were in constant strife and contention with other more powerful nations like Egypt, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. That meant Israel — a very important piece of land because of trade — was constantly being invaded, taken over, ransacked, or occupied.

The Jewish people had heroes like Abraham and Moses to lead them at different times, but they really wanted a king. So, they asked God for a king, and God agreed. They had many kings over the centuries. Some were good, most were bad, but the most powerful, feared, and adored king was David. He is the same David who defeated Goliath with a single stone from his slingshot. God really wanted to be their only King, but the people would not listen. They wanted an earthly king, and God allowed it to teach them a lesson. (1 Samuel 17)

Fast forward hundreds of years, and God's promise of a Messiah — a redeemer to save us all from our sins — is finally ready to be fulfilled. An angel announces to a virgin that she will bear God's only Son. Soon after, a man named Joseph — from the royal bloodline of King David — takes his pregnant wife and heads to his ancestral city of Bethlehem. (Anyone who has ever heard a Christmas carol knows the rest of that story.) In his Gospel to the Jewish people, St. Matthew is very clear that Jesus is the long-awaited Savior, the once-and-for-all King. God accomplished His plan, and when Jesus arrived on the scene, He fulfilled prophecies that the Jewish people had heard about and been waiting on for thousands of years! (Isaiah 11:1-2; Matthew 1:18, 2:13; CCC 711-713)

KINGDOM LIKE NO OTHER

None of the other three gospels — Mark, Luke, or John — mentions the Kingdom of God as many times or as explicitly as St. Matthew (over fifty times across forty different places). For Matthew, it was essential that the Jewish people understood that Jesus was not just another Jewish boy from a small town who went into his father's line of work. No, Jesus Christ was the one they had all been waiting for. He was the fulfillment of every prophecy and promise, and when the King came, the Kingdom came with Him! Jesus even likens the Kingdom to His Church on earth, which he puts Simon Peter in charge of protecting and guiding as our first pope. (Matthew 16:18-23, CCC 865)

When we read the Gospel of St. Matthew, we are reminded that God is a King and a Father who keeps His promises. It may not play out like we expect or on the timetable in our heads, but God always keeps His promises. Jesus is the King of kings, His crown is made of thorns, and His throne is made not of marble but of mercy. (Hebrews 4)

When we are at Mass, we enter heaven's royal throne room. When we approach the altar for communion, we bow before the King and are reminded of our royal heritage and our royal bloodline gifted to us on the cross. We eat and drink from the King's banquet table and have His Blood running through our veins. Through our baptism, God elevates us from mere creatures to His royal children. He entrusts the Kingdom to us and offers us the Church to help guide us from His kingdom on earth to His eternal Kingdom in heaven. That is what St. Matthew was trying to get the Jewish people of his time — who had long awaited the Messiah and King — to understand. He wanted them to understand the bigger picture, that this life is not all there is, and that the Kingdom awaits us all! He began his Gospel with the end in mind. (CCC 1213, 1333)

Much like how breakfast is the most important meal because it prepares us for the rest of the day, Matthew wants us to understand that the promises God made in the Old Testament are fulfilled and summed up when Jesus arrives. Through Jesus' life and ministry, we see how we are to build the Kingdom of love. And through His Church, we see how to live and stay in a relationship with God until He calls us home to our eternal Kingdom in heaven. (CCC 438, 651-653)

QUICK GLANCE

POWER PACKED!

The Power of God in Mark's Gospel

GOAL

The goal of "Power Packed!" is for teens to understand that Jesus Christ is the all-powerful Messiah, revealed not only through signs and miracles but through humility and service.

KEY TERMS

Humility, Mediator

SCRIPTURE

Mark 2:5-12, 5:30-34, 5:39-43, 9:33-35, 12:24, 13:26; 1 Timothy 2:5

CATECHISM

547-548, 618, 2559

RESOURCES

- Spotify: "LS - Breakfast Club" (spotify:profile:lifeteen)
- Ascension: "Litany of Humility" (ascensionpress.com/pages/litany-of-humility)

GATHER

The teens play a game where they debate which cereal mascot would win in a battle. This fun activity incorporates the series theme and gives the teens opportunities for creativity, persuasive discourse, and open listening.

PROCLAIM

The following are the key concepts of the Proclaim:

- Mark's Gospel depicts Jesus as a man of action and fulfilled promises, not just a preacher of theological ideas and premises.
- As the God-man, Jesus is our mediator to God who came to bear witness to God's truth and provide the Church with authority to teach and preach in His name.
- Although Jesus is the all-powerful God, He modeled humility, compassion, and service, giving us an example of how to live our lives.

BREAK

The teens gather in small groups for a time of reflection based on an assigned Scripture passage. The groups will study one of the many miracles Jesus performed in Mark's Gospel.

SEND

The teens are led through a reflection on where they need to rely on Christ's power rather than their own.

PREP

POWER PACKED!

The Power of God in Mark's Gospel

PREP

For the Gather game, prepare slides showing battle pairings of cereal mascots. Be sure to include images of each character. The following battle pairings or any other variation of pairings can be utilized:

- Toucan Sam (Froot Loops) vs. Cap'n Crunch (Cap'n Crunch Cereal)
- Sonny the Cuckoo Bird (Cocoa Puffs) vs. Tony the Tiger (Frosted Flakes)
- Fred Flinstone (Fruity Pebbles) vs. Lucky the Leprechaun (Lucky Charms)
- Trix Rabbit (Trix Cereal) vs. Snap, Crackle, and Pop (Rice Krispies)
- Count Chocula (Count Chocula Cereal) vs. Buzz Bee (Honey Nut Cheerios)

SETUP

Project the “Power Packed!” environment image, which can be found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com.

For the Break and Send, set up a small crucifix and basket in the corner of the meeting room and have Bibles available for each small group to reference. Additionally, prepare slides or handouts of the Litany of Humility.

Play the “LS - Breakfast Club” Spotify playlist as teens gather.

SUPPLIES

- Bibles, one for each small group
- Index cards, one for each teen
- Crucifix
- Basket
- Various costumes and props (optional)
- Litany of Humility projection slides

OUTLINE

POWER PACKED!

The Power of God in Mark's Gospel

GATHER

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)

Welcome the teens to the Life Night, introduce any teens or core members attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

Mascot Battle (15 min)

Gather teens into a large group and announce that they will be determining winners of hypothetical cereal mascot battles. Lead into this game using the following prompt:

Who was your favorite cereal character when you were little? Was it the wise Tony the Tiger or one of the rambunctious Snap, Crackle, and Pop? The sly Count Chocula or the happy Fred Flinstone? Have you ever considered what would happen if two of the characters faced off in an MMA ring for a showdown? Probably not! But today, we're going to do just that.

Inform the teens that they will be presented with battle pairings. On "go," teens will vote for the winner of each pairing by moving to the side of the room associated with their character choice. For example, "If you think Toucan Sam would win in a battle, run to the right side of the room, and for Cap'n Crunch, run to the left!" Ask one volunteer from each group to explain why that character would win. After the teens state their cases, allow a moment for players to switch their vote if they have been convinced. Repeat this process for each battle pairing.

Suggestions

If space is limited or the group is small, vote by raising hands. Additionally, to make this game competitive, present each battle pairing to two volunteers, assigning each volunteer a character. Volunteers argue for why their character would win. Then, the rest of the group votes for a winning argument. Points are awarded, and a winner is announced at the end of all of the pairings.

Step it Up

Play an epic soundtrack and display the battle pairings "in real life" by core members dressed as each cereal character.

PROCLAIM

"Power Packed!" Proclaim Teaching (15 min)

The teaching can be found on pages 40 to 44. The following key concepts are covered in the teaching:

- Mark's Gospel depicts Jesus as a man of action and fulfilled promises, not just a preacher of theological ideas and premises.
- As the God-man, Jesus is our mediator to God who came to bear witness to God's truth and provide the Church with authority to teach and preach in His name.
- Although Jesus is the all-powerful God, He modeled humility, compassion, and service, giving us an example of how to live our lives.

BREAK

Miracles in the Gospel of Mark (20 min)

Divide the teens into their "Breakfast Club" small groups. Assign one of the following passages from the Gospel of Mark to each small group:

- Mark 2:1-12 (Healing the paralytic)
- Mark 4:35-41 (Calming the storm)

- Mark 5:1-20 (Healing of a demoniac)
- Mark 5:21-34 (Hemorrhaging woman)
- Mark 6:30-44 (Feeding the 5,000)
- Mark 9:14-29 (Healing the blind man)

Instruct the core members to begin in prayer and lead the teens in a time of reflection based on their assigned Scripture passage. Read the passage aloud, then use the following questions as a guide, but be aware of the promptings of the Holy Spirit and where He is leading the discussion:

- Whip-Around Question: What is the most miraculous thing that has ever happened to you?
- What stands out to you about this scene from Scripture?
- How would you react if you witnessed this miracle?
- What do you think the witnesses of the miracle were thinking about Jesus?
- What does this passage teach you about Jesus and His power to work miracles in your life? Does that lesson change anything about your relationship with Him?

Suggestions

If time allows, have one volunteer from each group share their thoughts from their small group's passage with the large group.

Step It Up

For a Break involving competition and movement, teens can bring to life a scene from the Gospel of Mark using charades (miming each scene without words). Pre-assign each passage to small groups based on maturity level, or have them choose randomly from a hat. Give each group 10 minutes to come up with their charade skit. At the end of that time, each group will present their skits. The other small groups will then have the opportunity to vote by writing down on a small dry-erase board which scene they think is being acted out. Whichever small group guesses the most correctly wins a small prize. Provide costumes and props for groups to use while acting out their skits.

SEND

God of Miracles (20 min)

Gather the teens back to the large group, pass out one index card and pen to each teen, and transition them into a time of reflection on God's power in their own lives using the following:

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus demonstrated His power through many miracles — as we just spent time reflecting on during our small groups. But, as discussed in the Proclaim, Jesus spent most of His earthly life demonstrating power through humility and service to others.

Jesus calls each of us to be conduits of His great power by recognizing areas of weakness that become powerful when handed over to Him. Saint Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians that God's "power is made perfect in weakness."

Project 2 Corinthians 12:9-12. Read the passage out loud, pausing for a moment and re-reading it a second time.

Take a moment to reflect on a particular weakness of yours — perhaps, like St. Paul, it is an insult you have frequently endured, a hardship, persecution, or difficulty. Please write it down on your index card.

Give teens about two minutes to prayerfully and silently consider their answer to this prompt.

Now, take a moment to assess areas of your life that you have power over that you struggle to offer entirely to God. Perhaps it is a specific talent, a relationship you value deeply, or a goal for your life. Identify an area where you rely on your own power. Write it down on the other side of your index card.

Give teens about two minutes to prayerfully and silently consider their answer to this prompt.

When you are ready, take your index card to the cross and lay it in the basket, prayerfully offering these areas of power and weakness to the Lord, so that His power may be made perfect in not only your strengths but also your weaknesses.

Allow teens three to five minutes in prayerful silence to bring their intentions to the foot of the cross. When all the teens who wish to participate in this action have returned to their seats, close the Life Night with the following:

Now that we have had the opportunity to offer to Christ areas of pride and weakness, let us ask for humility to accept the gifts He has to give.

Close the Life Night by projecting and praying the Litany of Humility.

Step It Up

If a music minister is available, replace the litany with a time of praise and worship to close the Life Night.

POWER PACKED!

The Power of God in Mark's Gospel

GETTING STARTED

This teaching is provided to give you an example of how to present this topic in an age-appropriate way, making it relevant to high school teens. If the teens are ready to take it deeper, incorporate the Going Deeper call-out box. If there are Hispanic/Latino teens in the youth group, incorporate the applicable suggestion from the Hispanic Inculturation call-out box.

KEY TERMS

Humility: The virtuous habit of acknowledging God as the author of all good and seeing oneself honestly. This means accepting strengths (without being too prideful) and weaknesses (without self-loathing) and understanding God's rightful role.

Mediator: One who links or reconciles separate parties. Jesus' sacrificial offering made Him the unique mediator who gained access to God's saving grace for humanity.

TEACHING GUIDE

UP, UP, AND AWAY

Our culture is enamored with superheroes. We live in a time when a new superhero show or movie is seemingly released every week.

Consider projecting images of superhero movies or shows released in the past year.

Why do we love superheroes and superhero movies so much? Is it their super strength? Their amazing abilities? Cool costumes or weapons? While all those are attractive and alluring, it is likely something deeper.

Heroes do what we “normal” people cannot. Heroes sacrifice everything — even their very lives — for people in need. Heroes represent the good in all of us. They stand up to evil, fight for others, and protect the vulnerable. And it is not just heroes like Superman, who have powers that no one else has — we root for heroes like Batman or Iron Man, regular people with no superpowers (just a ton of money and brains, apparently). Regardless, we are amazed at people who can do what we cannot and sacrifice in ways we typically do not. They are inspiring and noteworthy.

While the Church does not have “superheroes” in the way we see in the movies or comics, we do have the saints. There are saints like St. Joseph of Cupertino who could levitate — which is as close to flying as we are going to get. St. Padre Pio could also levitate and bi-locate — meaning he could be in two places simultaneously. That is epic. Some saints were martyrs who took three or four attempts to kill because they were almost invincible. Some saints even have incorruptible bodies and do not decay even though they have been dead for hundreds of years. These are amazing realities witnessed by countless people yet explainable by none.

We are powerful when we know and follow God and are filled with the Holy Spirit. When we live for others and not ourselves, we are admirable and heroic, and people begin to follow us. That is the portrait of Jesus and the theme we see throughout St. Mark's Gospel.

In Mark's Gospel — more than in the other three — Jesus is the God-man, a person of incredible power and selfless service. Chapter after chapter, we are given a vision of a miracle worker, the Son of God, living among mere humans. It is not that Jesus is not “human,” but that He can do what no one else can. (CCC 465-467, 547-548)

Saint Mark wrote to the early Christians living throughout the mighty Roman empire. Christianity was illegal, and they were being heavily persecuted. The Roman army was massive and vast, feared and powerful. After the Resurrection, as Christianity spread throughout the empire, followers of Christ were hunted down, imprisoned, and executed. St. Mark was writing his Gospel for the believers living in duress and fear. They needed a reminder that God was still with them and that hope in Jesus' presence and

power was still available in their lives. The Romans responded to power (as seen in their army) and had many false gods. Mark's Gospel presents Jesus not merely as a carpenter or preacher but as a miracle worker who stands up to corrupt authority and to evil itself.

SECRET IDENTITY

Jesus is our mediator to God — meaning He stands between us to advocate for us to the Father. He is fully human, so He understands our human struggles. He is also fully God and is one with God the Father, so He has the full power of God. He is the only mediator who can perfectly bridge the gap between heaven and earth. And since Jesus came to bear witness to God's presence and truth, He also has the power to create a Church and entrust that Church with authority to teach and preach in His name. The entire Gospel of Mark reveals Jesus as a God-man on a mission. (1 Timothy 2:5, CCC 618)

Unlike Matthew or Luke, which tell Jesus' "origin story" about his birth and childhood, Mark's Gospel opens with Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. It is almost like Jesus had a secret superhero identity, living and working in relative anonymity as a carpenter in the small town of Nazareth. Because, at the baptism, the sky rips open, and a dove descends upon Him. A booming voice comes out of heaven, declaring that Jesus is God's Son. No more secret identity. He is the God-man; from then on, we see mighty works and miracles page after page. Mark's Gospel does not have long conversations or speeches. When we read it, we see that it is filled with shorter stories that are action-packed and easy to understand. The details of the stories are shared like eyewitness accounts, which makes sense since St. Mark was a close friend and scribe to St. Peter years after the Resurrection. (Mark 1:9-11)

Going Deeper

Mark's Gospel is like Peter's personal journal or diary in some ways. Notice that Mark does not say, "they sat on the grass," but rather, "they sat down in groups of fifty on the green grass." Jesus does not just fall asleep upon the boat but is "asleep, in the stern, on a cushion." Christ does not simply calm the wind; He "rebukes" it. A large group does not come to a house, "the entire town gathered." Mark gives exact details about the possessed swine, the names of Simon of Cyrene's sons, and the healing commands of Jesus spoken in Aramaic. In fact, many historians believe it was Mark's mother's home where the Last Supper and Pentecost took place. The Bible tells us that Jesus and His apostles gathered there when they were in Jerusalem. (Mark 1:33, 4:28, 4:38, 5:13, 5:41, 6:39, 7:34, 15:21)

THE POWER OF SELFLESSNESS

When we read Mark's writings, we see that God's power is shown not only through miracles and inexplicable mighty works but also through kindness, humility, and acts of service. Jesus' power is shown not only in miracles but in his meekness. Even when He goes to the cross, He offers Himself as a victim. He shows His power, ironically, by not showing His true power. Instead, He mounts the cross like a humble warrior, offering Himself in our place.

Hispanic Inculturation

Many Latin American traditions include a deep devotion to *El Divino Niño* (the Child Jesus). Families may display a statue or shrine of *El Divino Niño* in the main living area and place their written intentions near the statue. During the Advent and Christmas seasons, it is customary to dress the statue in fine linens in preparation for the coming of Christ. Emphasize how the devotion to *El Divino Niño* celebrates the humility of God becoming man with a specific emphasis on God taking the form of a seemingly powerless baby.

QUICK GLANCE

HEART HEALTHY

The Compassion of God in Luke's Gospel

GOAL

The goal of “Heart Healthy” is for teens to understand that Jesus Christ reveals God’s compassion and love for all, especially the outcast, the hurting, the unloved, and those seen as “less” in the eyes of the world.

KEY TERMS

Compassion

SCRIPTURE

Luke 5:18-26, 7:11-17, 10:37, 17:12-14, 18:38-43, 23:27-28

CATECHISM

1503-1505

RESOURCES

- Spotify: “LS - Breakfast Club” (spotify:profile:lifeteen)

GATHER

The teens play a game to retrieve clues one by one that help them reveal a phrase related to the theme of the Life Night series.

PROCLAIM

The following are the key concepts of the Proclaim:

- Jesus is a God of compassion and mercy who uplifts and reveals our true dignity and equality beyond gender, culture, or social class.
- Through Jesus Christ and His Church, we see tangible examples of God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit at work to save us.
- The central theme of St. Luke’s Gospel is freedom, liberation, and healing for all; Jesus Christ came (and still comes) to restore us physically and spiritually.

BREAK

The teens participate in a small group discussion about the people and situations that move Jesus’ heart and their own.

SEND

The teens reflect on a person in their life who needs compassion and commit to praying for them throughout the week, along with prayer with a partner.

PREP

HEART HEALTHY

The Compassion of God in Luke's Gospel

PREP

Collect the materials needed for the Gather game. Use trash bags or cardboard boxes as containers for each small group. Use pool noodle segments or plastic Easter eggs to hide each clue from the “Prize Inside” handout. Then, place the clues in the containers, and cover them with various packaging materials, such as brown paper, newspaper, packing peanuts, or bubble wrap. Ensure there is enough packaging material to make it challenging to find the clues but not so tricky that recovering the clues is impossible. For a more eco-friendly option, reuse the packing material.

Download, print, and copy the “Prize Inside” handout found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com or gather the supplies from the Step It Up call-out box in the Gather.

Create slides of Luke 5:18-25 to use in the Send portion of the Life Night.

SETUP

Create a circle using the containers for each small group in the middle of the meeting space. In the center of the circle, place a bell or buzzer on a small table. Mark starting lines on the floor with painter's tape, each positioned 15-20 feet away from a container.

Project the “Heart Healthy” environment image, found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com.

Play the “LS - Breakfast Club” Spotify playlist as teens gather.

SUPPLIES

- Large container (either a trash bag or cardboard box), one for each group
- Packing peanuts, crumpled paper, or other packing materials
- A pool noodle or plastic Easter eggs
- Painter's tape
- Printed clues from the “Prize Inside” handout, one set per small group
- Bell or buzzer

OUTLINE

HEART HEALTHY

The Compassion of God in Luke's Gospel

GATHER

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)

Welcome the teens to the Life Night, introduce any teens or core members attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

Prize Inside (15 min)

Divide the teens into their "Breakfast Club" small groups and announce that they will compete to be the first small group to decode a cereal-related message from a series of clues. Assign each group to a container in the middle of the main meeting space. Then, instruct the small groups to line up on a tape line positioned 15-20 feet away from their container (see Setup section).

On "go," small groups send one teen at a time to dig through their container for a clue contained in an Easter egg (or pool noodle segment). Repeat with different group members until all the clues are found. Teams may begin opening and deciphering clues only once they have gathered all nine. Once the small group has decoded the message, they race to ring the bell or buzzer in the center of the room. The first team to ring the bell or buzzer and correctly guess the phrase, "Silly Rabbit, Trix are for kids!" wins.

Step it Up

Create a giant cereal box for each small group with packing peanuts inside to resemble cereal. Within each box, include the following toys as clues:

- Small stuffed rabbit
- Magic trick cards
- A foam bath toy or block with the letter "R"
- A foam bath toy or block with the number "4"
- Two small dolls to represent the word "kids"

PROCLAIM

"Heart Healthy" Proclaim Teaching (15 min)

The teaching can be found on pages 58 to 63. The following key concepts are covered in the teaching:

- Jesus is a God of compassion and mercy who uplifts and reveals our true dignity and equality beyond gender, culture, or social class.
- Through Jesus Christ and His Church, we see tangible examples of God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit at work to save us.
- The central theme of St. Luke's Gospel is freedom, liberation, and healing for all; Jesus Christ came (and still comes) to restore us physically and spiritually.

BREAK

At the Heart of Compassion (20 min)

Divide the teens into their "Breakfast Club" small groups. Instruct the core members to begin in prayer and begin the time of discussion with the following prompt:

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus brings about healing, freedom, and deliverance for many types of people. He calls us to imitate His compassion. We might not realize it, but often the people and situations that move our hearts are God's invitations to extend compassion.

Use the following questions as a guide, but be aware of the promptings of the Holy Spirit and where He is leading the discussion:

- Whip-Around Question: Who is the most compassionate person you know?
- How would you describe compassion to a child?
- If someone time-traveled from the past, do you think they would characterize today's world as compassionate? Why or why not?

- What group of people or situation moves your heart with compassion (e.g., struggling mothers, the chronically ill, suffering children, those experiencing poverty, the elderly)? Why? What have you done (or can you do) to help this group?
- Have you ever desired compassion from someone? If you feel comfortable answering, what was that situation or experience like?
- What story of compassion in Scripture do you relate to the most? How might the bystanders have felt when Jesus extended compassion to the suffering?
- What can you do today to extend compassion to someone in need?

Suggestions

For teens who are not naturally inclined to answer personal questions in small groups, allow them to write down their answers first or reflect on them in silence before answering.

SEND

God of Compassion (20 min)

Gather the teens back to the large group and transition to a time of prayer. Ask the teens to find their own space on the floor and create a prayerful environment with quiet, reflective music. After a few moments of silence, begin the meditation with the Sign of the Cross and continue with the following:

As we calm our hearts, let us be open to God's presence by saying, "Come, Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit."

Pause for a moment.

Our God is one of immense love and compassion. And as we close out the Life Night, let us ask Him to pour out His healing power for those in our lives. All suffer in some form. Some do so privately, while others' sufferings are seen publicly. Regardless, let us remember those close to our hearts who most need God's mercy.

Allow the teens to reflect for a few moments.

While it is good that we think of, pray for, and serve others, many of us can sometimes pray for ourselves and show ourselves grace in times of suffering and mistakes. Let us remember and pray for the areas in our lives where we desire and seek compassion from others.

Allow the teens to reflect for a few moments. Afterward, project and read Luke 5:18-25 and lead the teens through a short reflection on the story of the paralytic man in the Gospel of Luke.

The paralytic man sought healing and compassion from Jesus. With mercy and compassion, Jesus physically healed the paralytic man's body and spiritually healed his heart. This is a beautiful story of the love that Jesus has for us. But let us look deeper, consider the situation, and recognize another lesson of profound significance.

This scene from Scripture occurs while Jesus is preaching in someone's home. The dwelling and surrounding streets are crowded and nearly impassable. The paralytic man could not walk unaided, so his friends tried carrying him through the crowds. Having no success, they did not give up. Instead, they use all their strength and ingenuity to pull back the thatched roof and lower the man inside so he could come face-to-face with the Healer, Jesus. The paralytic man's miraculous meeting with Jesus was made possible by his friends' deep compassion.

How often in our lives do we see the needs of others but do not stay long enough in those tough spaces to even ask if they are OK? Have we passed someone in the halls who dropped their books? Have we gone back to look at our phones when our friends try to open up to us? How often do we seek that same dedication the paralytic man's friends gave him — friends who would not stop at even pulling away the roof of a stranger's house to help us find healing and mercy? Right now, you will have the opportunity to pray with one another for compassion.

Instruct the teens to find a partner and have the core members ensure everyone has a partner so no one feels left out or awkward. Afterward, project the following questions:

- Who do I need to extend compassion to?
- Where do I need compassion extended into my life?

Give the teens 10 minutes to share their answers to these questions and pray with one another. If necessary, have a pair of core members demonstrate how to do this well. At the end of 10 minutes, bring the teens' attention back to the front of the room and close the Life Night by praying an Our Father as a large group.

Suggestions

Provide a scripted prayer for teens to utilize during the partner prayer time. If time is limited, teens can reflect on those two questions and be challenged to seek out a friend to pray for them during the week.

Step It Up

Consider having prayer teams available during these last 10 minutes of the Life Night so that the teens can have the opportunity to be prayed with more specifically.

PROCLAIM

HEART HEALTHY

The Compassion of God in Luke's Gospel

GETTING STARTED

This teaching is provided to give you an example of how to present this topic in an age-appropriate way, making it relevant to high school teens. If the teens are ready to take it deeper, incorporate the Going Deeper call-out box. If there are Hispanic/Latino teens in the youth group, incorporate the applicable suggestions from the Hispanic Inculturation call-out boxes.

KEY TERMS

Compassion: Sympathetic concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others, with the desire to alleviate or even to suffer in the other's place.

TEACHING GUIDE

Begin with a brief recounting of your "best friend." It can be a short memory or story from your grade school or high school years and can highlight something positive or negative. For example, recount a time that illustrates questionable judgment (like when your "friend" encouraged you to jump off a roof into a pool or something else dangerous) or a heartfelt moment that showed them to be a true friend (like standing by your side when others mocked or gossiped or bullied). The key is to illustrate what does (or does not) make a truly good friend.

GOD OF COMPASSION

The Book of Sirach tells us that when we find a faithful friend, we "find a treasure." (Sirach 6:14)

Ask the teens to close their eyes and recall some of their best moments with their best friend.

How far would we be willing to go for our best friend? Would we loan them twenty dollars? One hundred dollars? Would we help them clean their room? Would we help them with homework? Would we drive them to the airport at 4 A.M.? Would we help their family pack and move? Would we give them one of our kidneys if they needed an operation?

Now, consider this: would we serve, loan money to, or do a big favor for a stranger or someone we barely know? What would be our threshold? What are we willing to sacrifice for someone we are not close with? What about an enemy? Would we loan an enemy money, offer them a ride, or do an act of service for them? Would we donate a kidney to someone who was mean to us?

It is easier to love and sacrifice for people we love and who are good to us. So imagine the shock and confusion when Jesus tells people to love those who love them and those who hate them. (Mark 5:43-44)

Imagine the reactions — and even disgust — when Jesus invited a despised tax collector to become one of His apostles or allowed lepers, prostitutes, or other "unclean" and sinful people to eat with Him. No matter their gender, cultural background, or sickness, Jesus was compassionate to everyone and affirmed people's inherent dignity. He desired everyone to be loved, included, and restored to full health and community since many people were segregated or left out of the community because of their sins, sickness, gender, or race. (Mark 2:13-17, Luke 5:29-39)

Hispanic Inculturation

Throughout Latin America, it is common to witness processions of statues of Jesus throughout the city streets. These are usually elaborate events the entire town attends. Generally, the statues are surrounded by beautiful linens, flowers, and precious stones, placed on massive platforms, and carried by strong individuals dressed in ornate matching outfits. These processions — usually occurring during Holy Week — emphasize how Jesus truly came to walk among us and is still among us today. Furthermore, they remind us that Jesus came to walk beside us in our faith journeys and heal our physical and spiritual wounds.

Jesus is a God of compassion who wants to enter into our suffering (the word “compassion” means “to suffer with”). This is the version of Jesus we see in the Gospel of St. Luke: a God who proclaims His love and mercy for us, even if no one else does and even when we may not deserve it. (Luke 7:11-17, 17:12-14, 18:38-43; CCC 1503)

SECONDHAND ACCOUNT / FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE

Saint Luke was not one of the original twelve apostles. He was a physician by trade, probably explaining why St. Luke shares more healing stories than the other three Gospel writers. He is amazed at this wonder-working healer, giving us details about the miraculous healings and the people God chose to heal. Although Luke was not an eyewitness to Christ’s works, Luke was the product of — and an eyewitness to — the “living tradition” of the Church. That means that even though St. Luke was not a personal follower of Jesus, he knew and learned from how Jesus’ closest followers and their disciples lived. (CCC 81-82)

Luke’s own conversion was due, in part, to Christ’s command to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Luke benefited from this great charge — even writing about its profound effects in his second book, the Acts of the Apostles. And while Luke did not “walk” with Jesus during His public ministry, it becomes clear through his writings that Luke most certainly did know Him. As a traveling companion to St. Paul, St. Luke had met apostles and, very probably, the Blessed Virgin Mary herself.

His Gospel is his best effort to write “an orderly account” of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ that he can pass on. Beginning with the events leading up to the Birth of Jesus and short episodes of his young life, St. Luke gives us an incredible and inspiring glimpse into Jesus’ earthly ministry and most compassionate heart. Rather than focusing on Jesus’ kingship like in St. Matthew’s Gospel, or a brief, action-packed snapshot of the power of Jesus’ miracles like St. Mark did, St. Luke reveals the heart of the healer, showing Jesus’ mercy to all — both friends and seeming enemies. (Matthew 28:20; Luke 1:2; Acts 1:8, 17:6; CCC 1503-1505)

Luke knew his audience, too. Since he was writing to non-Jews (Gentiles), he translated Hebrew or Aramaic (languages

not as familiar to Gentiles) into Greek, the language most Gentiles spoke. While making Christ’s words and deeds accessible to this unique Gentile cross-section of readers and hearers, Luke also made a point to champion the rights and dignity of the lowly and oppressed. He specifically placed women in high regard, even though they held a relatively low social status in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Going Deeper

Consider what a special gift St. Luke is to the Church. Without the Holy Spirit breathing inspiration through Luke’s pen, we would be without the Hail Mary or the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, for you cannot have them without Luke’s accounts of the Annunciation or Visitation (and so on). We would, likewise, be without some of the most famous parables in history — the prodigal son and the good Samaritan, to name but two. Consider the invitation to the shepherds at Christ’s birth or the angelic “Gloria” we proclaim at every Mass — again, made known to us through Luke. How about Jesus’ boyhood misadventures, including when He went missing for three days? Yep, that’s Luke, too. Without Luke inclining his ear (and pen) to the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, we would also be without the conversation between Martha and Mary, the dinner party with Zacchaeus, the exchange between Christ and the two thieves upon the cross, and the Resurrection story on the road to Emmaus, to name just a few. (Luke 2:8-12, 2:14, 2:41-52, 10:25-37, 10:38-42, 15:11-32, 19:1-10, 23:32-43, 24:13-35)

A FRIEND INDEED

As a physician, Luke is amazed at Jesus’ healing power, to be sure, but we are also reminded that it is Christ — and not us — who is the healer. Jesus is the Savior, not a doctor. In that way, you and I are like paramedics — we are the ones who are supposed to bring our friends (and enemies) to Jesus so that He can heal them. Consider the famous story of the paralytic on the mat.

Project and read Luke 5:18-26.

QUICK GLANCE

SACRAMENTALLY DELICIOUS

The Presence of God in John's Gospel

GOAL

The goal of "Sacramentally Delicious" is for teens to understand Jesus Christ's identity and presence as God revealed through His signs and wonders and, eventually, within the sacraments.

KEY TERMS

Eternal life, Sacrament

SCRIPTURE

John 2:11, 3:2-3, 4:48, 6:2, 6:11-15, 6:26, 9:1, 9:5-12, 16:13-15, 17:3, 20:30

CATECHISM

774, 988, 1020, 1131, 1210

RESOURCES

- Spotify: "LS - Breakfast Club" (spotify:profile:lifeteen)

GATHER

The teens participate in a race to see who can separate the most Lucky Charms marshmallows from cereal pieces in 30 seconds. This game illustrates how teens can see sinful parts of life as something that "tastes better" but ultimately is not very good for them.

PROCLAIM

The following are the key concepts of the Proclaim:

- The central theme of the Gospel of John is the revelation of Christ's true identity and what it means to live our faith sacramentally through the Church.
- Saint John's Gospel is unique from the three synoptic Gospels because it fills in several details and stories about Jesus that were previously unknown.
- The Gospel of John explains to Christians then and now how to root our religious beliefs and practices in Jesus through the sacraments and how, by doing so, faith will lead to eternal life.

BREAK + SEND

The teens participate in Eucharistic Adoration with the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

PREP

SACRAMENTALLY DELICIOUS

The Presence of God in John's Gospel

PREP

Several weeks before the Life Night, invite your parish priest to attend and offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Additionally, arrange for a music minister to be present for this Life Night.

Purchase boxes of Lucky Charms (or another similar cereal with marshmallows) and collect bowls and spoons for the Gather game.

SETUP

Set up stations for Confession in areas outside the main meeting space. At each station, place a pair of chairs, mints, a tissue box, and a copy of the Act of Contrition.

Arrange to utilize the church or chapel or prepare a designated space for Adoration. Collect the supplies needed.

Coordinate with the music minister to lead worship.

Test all audio-visual elements of this Life Night, including a sound check with the musician.

Project the "Sacramentally Delicious" environment image found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com

Play the "LS - Breakfast Club" Spotify playlist as teens gather.

SUPPLIES

- Lucky Charms (or another similar cereal)
- Bowls and spoons
- Reconciliation stations supplies as listed in the Setup section
- Adoration supplies, including altar table and cloth, candles and lighter, corporal, monstrance, luna, and host

OUTLINE

SACRAMENTALLY DELICIOUS

The Presence of God in John's Gospel

GATHER

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)

Welcome the teens to the Life Night, introduce any teens or core members attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

Lucky Charmed (15 min)

Set up a table in front of the room with four prepared stations. Each station has a full cereal bowl of Lucky Charms (or another similar cereal) and an empty cereal bowl. Then ask for four volunteers, one from each grade, and dramatically present each one with a spoon. Inform the teen volunteers that they will have 30 seconds to separate marshmallows from cereal and place them into their empty bowl using only the spoon. The teen who mines the most marshmallows in that timeframe wins. Any teen with cereal pieces in their marshmallow bowl will be disqualified.

Suggestions

For gameplay variations, provide chopsticks or straws rather than spoons, only allow the teens to hold the spoon in their non-dominant hand, or blindfold the teens but allow them to extract the marshmallows using their hands.

PROCLAIM

“Sacramentally Delicious” Proclaim Teaching (15 min)

The teaching can be found on pages 74 to 78. The following key concepts are covered in the teaching:

- The central theme of the Gospel of John is the revelation of Christ's true identity and what it means to live our faith sacramentally through the Church.
- Saint John's Gospel is unique from the three synoptic Gospels because it fills in several details and stories about Jesus that were previously unknown.
- The Gospel of John explains to Christians then and now how to root our religious beliefs and practices in Jesus through the sacraments and how, by doing so, faith will lead to eternal life.

BREAK + SEND

God of Presence (40 min)

Near the end of the Proclaim, assign a few core members to set up for Eucharistic Adoration. Invite the music minister to lead teens in a time of worship before the Eucharist. If needed, give the worship leader the “Temple Model” handout to help lead teens in praise and worship. This handout can be found on the January 2023 Life Teen USB and online at lifeteen.com.

Encourage teens to draw closer to Jesus in the Sacrament, recognizing that the same Jesus who lived and ministered in the Gospels is present to them today in the Blessed Sacrament. Additionally, offer the Sacrament of Confession, emphasizing Christ's redeeming love to the teens. Invite the teens to go to Confession at the designated stations and have core members stationed throughout to help facilitate the flow of the stations.

Close the Life Night and time of Adoration by projecting and praying the Divine Praises as a large group.

Hispanic Inculturation

Invite the music minister to lead the teens in praise and worship in Spanish using some of the song suggestions below:

- *Nada Es Imosible*, Hermana Glenda (*Ora Con El Corazón*, Hermana Glenda, 2009)
- *Hay Otra Salida*, Hillsong en Español (*Todos Mis Mejores Amigos*, Capitol CMG 2021)
- *Ver La Victoria*, Elevation Worship (*A La Medianoche* - EP, Elevation Worship Records, 2020)
- *Ven a Cristo*, Lucía Parker (Revive (Spanish Version)," Bridge Music)
- *Ya No Soy Esclavo*, Bethel Music ("Bethel Music en Español," Bethel Music, 2019)

Step It Up

Consider projecting the following sequence of words or images to lead into this time of Adoration.

- "And the Word became flesh."
- The Nativity (Gerard van Honthorst: "Adoration of the Shepherds")
- Jesus on a boat (Rembrandt: "The Storm on the Sea of Galilee")
- Jesus carrying the cross (El Greco: "Christ Carrying the Cross")
- Jesus' crucifixion (Diego Velázquez: "Christ Crucified")
- Priest at consecration

Once all of those images have been displayed, begin the time of exposition of the Eucharist using the following:

Just as God was present to His people while He walked with us on earth, He continues to be present in the Eucharist. The same Jesus who performed miracles all those years ago now dwells in the Blessed Sacrament.

Suggestions

If priests are unavailable, consider dividing the teens into their "Breakfast Club" groups and use the following questions for a small group discussion:

- Whip-Around Question: What is your favorite sacrament?
- Describe the time when you felt God's presence the most. What was it like?
- How have the sacraments affected you? Where do you think you would be without them?
- What can you do to commit more fully to receive the sacraments?
- John's Gospel is unique from the three synoptic Gospels. Why do you think having different perspectives of Jesus is important?

Afterward, transition to the chapel or a prayer space and ask the music minister to close the Life Nights with a time of praise and worship.

SACRAMENTALLY DELICIOUS

The Presence of God in John's Gospel

GETTING STARTED

This teaching is provided to give you an example of how to present this topic in an age-appropriate way, making it relevant to high school teens. If the teens are ready to take it deeper, incorporate the Going Deeper call-out box.

KEY TERMS

Eternal Life: Living forever with God in the happiness of heaven, entered after death by the souls of those who die in the grace and friendship of God. (CCC 1020)

Sacraments: An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, to dispense divine life to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. There are seven: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance or Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. (CCC 1131, 1210)

TEACHING GUIDE

SACRAMENTAL JOURNEY

Ask the teens to think about a time when they “knew” God was present or God is real.

Perhaps it was on a retreat, summer camp, or conference. Maybe it was during Mass, adoration, or during prayer: when we knew — possibly for the first time ever — that there really is a God. (If no moment comes to mind, that is OK.) Regardless, let us consider the moment where we first asked the question: Is God real?

Share a brief testimony recounting a memorable moment where you felt and experienced the divine presence of God. Note that this does not have to be a conversion story, should be no longer

than three minutes, and should not focus heavily on overcoming sin. The idea is to help teens see Christ's presence or the Holy Spirit at work in their lives in common yet profound ways.

Some of us may have had many experiences like this, others one or two, and there may even be some who have yet to have one. Whatever our situation may be, it is OK, as we are all on our own faith journeys, and God's timing for all of us is different. We most likely have a whole lifetime of experiences ahead of us, but the key is continually seeking God's presence and praying to the Holy Spirit to reveal when and where God is at work in our lives. By doing this, we begin to realize that God is always speaking to us, trying to get our attention, and calling us to a deeper relationship with Him.

God sees all, knows all, and constantly draws us closer to Him. He does so intentionally and does not deal with coincidence. Our God loves us too much to leave our salvation and eternity to chance. He places people in our lives — parents, grandparents, priests, religious, youth ministers, core members, teachers, coaches — for a reason. He tries to get our attention in a variety of ways for the same purpose: to get us (and keep us) in right relationship with Him and His Church. He knows our sinful inclinations and tempted minds and hearts. He knows we often put more faith in the world than in Him. But our God remains relentless even when other life factors come into play. (CCC 1-3)

The devil wants us to believe God is not real, the Church is not trustworthy, Scripture is an outdated lie, and the sacraments are meaningless. It is like — if life was a bowl of Lucky Charms — the world says that Mass and the sacraments are the bland, flavorless, and boring cereal pieces and sin, pride, and selfishness are the more fun, tasty marshmallows. In reality, it is the exact opposite. The truth is that the bland, boring, tasteless part of life is allowing others' opinions to influence our lives more than God. When we solely seek affirmation and validation from our social media feeds, when we put our faith in and find our worth in the world, we become shackled to that “need.” This leads us to live boring and unfulfilling lives. (CCC 391, 2851-2852)

It is when we strive for virtue by loving and serving others and seeking God, who is higher and eternal, that life is the fullest. This is what brings us fulfillment and true happiness. These are

the moments we are the most like Jesus Christ. The moments when we love like Jesus or encounter Him — especially in the sacraments — are the “marshmallows” and goodness that make the rest of the daily “flavorless” part of life palatable and digestible. (John 10:10, CCC 774)

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

This is what St. John was trying to get across in his Gospel. He wrote his several years after Matthew’s, Mark’s, and Luke’s were already being read and circulated. St. John was not setting out to write another Gospel sharing the same stories. No, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit with a different goal: to inspire and inform the early Christians to help them see Christ at work in the early Church through the power of the Holy Spirit and the sacraments.

Going Deeper

Project an image of Leonardo da Vinci’s “The Last Supper.”

Saint John is often referred to as “the beloved disciple” because he was Jesus’ closest friend. John was the one who rested upon Christ’s chest at the Last Supper, the one entrusted with the ongoing care of Christ’s mother, Mary, from the cross, and the only apostle not to die a martyr’s death. Early traditions maintain, too, that following Pentecost, the Blessed Virgin Mary went to live with John in Ephesus, where he served as the bishop. (John 19:25, 21:20-23)

The Gospel of John invites us to a deeper level of understanding, like an iceberg with only a portion visible above the surface. Saint John invites us to enter into Jesus’ life to see the foreshadowing and foundations of the sacraments and Church. Saint John is not just recounting a story of a man born blind but foreshadowing baptism. He does not just recount the miracles of the loaves and fishes but also sets up God’s eventual plan to give us the Eucharist. Chapter after chapter, St. John invites the reader to “lean in” and take a closer look, to peer beneath the surface and take in the majesty of the sacramental “iceberg” that lies before us. (John 9, 6:1-14; CCC 1210)

John’s Gospel is written for Jewish Christians and filled with Old Testament verses. It was most likely written after the other Gospels, so he includes many details left out by the others. John “fills in” some of the “gaps” by sharing unique stories and moments not previously recorded. The wedding feast at Cana and the bread of life discourse give us a deeper insight into the Eucharist. Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well and washing the apostle’s feet connect to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The raising of Lazarus helps us better understand the Anointing of the Sick. These are a few gorgeous passages we would not have if the Spirit had not breathed through John’s pen. Without John’s Gospel contribution, our understanding of the sacraments would be limited, and it would inhibit our ability to see the graces that flow from them. (John 2:1-11, 4:1-43, 6:25-69, 11:17-44, 13:1-17)

With passages like these, St. John tries to connect the dots for the early followers, even those previously familiar with Jesus and some other Gospel writers’ stories. He is seeking to share new stories and help the early Church see that God was and has always been at work for our salvation; with God in charge, there is a plan. It is not about “luck” but, instead, providence. Saint John accomplishes this by sharing a series of “signs” and miracles that Jesus performs throughout His public ministry. These signs, when viewed correctly, paint a picture of Jesus’ identity as the Son of God and our identity as sons and daughters of God. Because of Him, our identity is revealed to us through the sacraments, and we can be fully united to Him in eternal life. (John 17:3; CCC 988, 1020)

DIVE IN

John emphasizes that Jesus was not “just another guy.” Christ was both God and man. God became man so that human beings could live with Him in heaven. God created the world in Genesis, and now Jesus is working on a new “spiritual creation” in the lives of His followers. John’s Gospel is highly symbolic, rooted in the Old Covenant, pointing toward the New. Only when we comprehend the dual nature of Christ (human and divine) can we understand the purpose of His mission and the glory of the Church He instituted on earth. (CCC 464-466)



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