

# THE HEART OF A HERO

What is Virtue?

## EDGE NIGHT AT A GLANCE

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### Scripture

Psalm 1:1-4, 19:7-11, 34:8-10; Wisdom 8:7; Philippians 4:8



### Catechism

1803-1805, 1810



### Resources

Spotify: "ES - A Great Marvel" (spotify:user:lifeteen)

## GOAL

The goal of the Edge Night is for the youth to see that we are drawn to superheroes because of their goodness and to be compelled to cultivate virtue in their own lives because they will find happiness when they seek what is good.

## GATHER

The youth will spend some time in groups creating, designing, and drawing their own superhero and sharing about their superheroes' costumes, superpowers, and personality characteristics.

## PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- Virtue is the distinctive characteristic of superheroes that cause us to be fascinated by them.
- A person is virtuous when they consistently choose what is good. And, the more they decide to do what is right, the easier virtue becomes.

- Human beings are drawn toward and created for what is good, and living a virtuous life helps us experience the fullness of life that God desires for us.

## BREAK

The youth will be asked to think through different potentially virtuous scenarios and interpret whether or not the action was virtuous. Youth start with more obvious scenarios and increase subtly in difficulty as they progress.

## SEND

The youth will do a version of *lectio divina* focused on virtue, praying with a Scripture passage from Philippians 4.

## WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Memorize the Scripture passage Philippians 4:8.

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## EDGE NIGHT SET UP

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### SET UP

Gather all of the supplies for the Gather activity and the Send prayer experience. Create a set environment for the whole semester that can be added to each week. Using cardboard boxes create a city outline or skyline at the front of the room. Add in different Marvel superhero cutouts to the skyline. Consider obtaining different posters from Marvel superhero movies and posting them around the room.

Each week as you talk about different virtues add in a poster board or butcher paper with the virtue and definition somewhere in the room.



#### Hispanic Inculturation

If you have any Hispanic/Latino youth include the Spanish translation of each virtue and definition. As Hispanic/Latino middle school youth begin to learn about the virtues, it can be difficult to translate what they learn in English to what they tell their parents in Spanish. At the start of every Edge Night in this series, you will find the definition of each virtue in both English and Spanish to give Hispanic/Latino youth the opportunity to learn how to translate what they've learned about the virtues in a way their parents will understand at home. As the semester continues, follow up to see if the youth have talked about the virtues in their homes.

For this first week use the following:

Virtue: A habitual and firm decision to do what is good, allowing a person to do what is good and give the best of themselves.

*Virtud: Una decisión habitual y firme de hacer el bien que permite a la persona hacer el bien y dar lo mejor de sí.*

## SUPPLIES

The following is a list of supplies that are needed for the Edge Night:

- G: Blank sheets of paper, one or two per team
- G: Drawing utensils (gel pens, sharpies, paint markers, etc.)
- G: Pens or pencils, one per team
- S: Notecard, one per youth

- S: Pen or pencil, one per youth
- S: Highlighter, one per youth

## ASSIGNMENTS

Use the following list to assign core members to specific tasks:

**Set Up:** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Gather:**

- Opening Prayer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Game: \_\_\_\_\_

**Proclaim:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Break:** All small group leaders

**Send:**

- Closing Prayer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Weekly Challenge: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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## EDGE NIGHT OUTLINE

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### GATHER

#### Edge Night Introduction (5 min)

Welcome the youth, introduce any youth who are there for the first time, and begin in prayer. Give a brief overview of the topic of the Edge Night, using the following as an example:

*What is it about superheroes that we find so fascinating? How is it that their characters continue to inspire generation after generation? How is it that their stories never get old? Superheroes remind us of the goodness of people and offer us examples of virtuous living. Pulling from the stories of some of the biggest superheroes, we will be talking this semester about what it means to live a life of virtue, as well as reflecting on how these superheroes exemplify both virtue and heroism. This week, we will learn what virtue is and why we should live a virtuous life.*

#### What's in a Superhero? (15 min)

This activity is done in small groups.

1. Break the youth into their small groups and give each group sheets of paper and drawing utensils.
2. Small groups work to come up with their own superhero — choosing a name, costume, superpower or abilities, and personality characteristics (e.g., compassionate, brave, stands up for the poor, seeks justice, dedicated to ridding the world of evil).
3. After each small group has created their superhero, ask the youth to return to the large group. Allow a few of the small groups to share about the superhero they created and why they choose the characteristics they did for their superhero.



### Hispanic Inculturation

Although many Hispanic/Latino youth view their family members as superheroes, it is also important to point out superheroes from Latin backgrounds. While there are currently not many superheroes from Latin backgrounds, there are a few that you can direct them to like Miss America and Miles Morales. Miss America, also known as America Chaves, had the power of strength and durability. She is a member of the Young Avengers and can kick open star-shaped holes which allows her teammates to travel through the multiverse. Miles Morales debuts in “Spider-Man into the Spider-Verse” as one of the many Spider-Mans in the superhero world.

## PROCLAIM

### “The Heart of a Hero” Proclaim Teaching (10 min)

The teaching can be found on pages 20 to 23. The following main points are covered in the teaching:

- Virtue is the distinctive characteristic of superheroes that causes us to be fascinated by them.
- A person is virtuous when they consistently choose what is good, and the more they decide to do what is right, the easier it becomes.
- Human beings are drawn toward and created for what is good, and living a virtuous life helps us experience the fullness of life that God desires for us.

## BREAK

### Virtuous or Not? (10 min)

Break the youth into their small groups, begin in prayer, and then lead them through the following activity. Read to the youth the following scenarios and ask them to discuss as a group whether they think that the actions in the scenario were virtuous or not. If the act is virtuous ask one youth to explain why. If it is not, then ask them to explain what about it was not virtuous. Use the following scenarios as an example and adjust them as you see fit for your group of youth.

- Someone pushes you in the hallway, so you punch them in the stomach to show them who’s boss. **Not**
- You choose not to sit next to one of your friends in class because you know they will be a distraction and you both won’t pay attention. **Virtuous**
- Someone at school is having a bad hair day, so you talk about it to all of your friends and laugh at them without them knowing. **Not**
- Your friends are making fun of someone who is not present, so you make an effort to stop the conversation and steer it in another direction. **Virtuous**

- You know you get distracted during Mass, so you ask your parents if you can sit closer to the back, so no one sees you. **Not**
- Your parents ask you to start doing your chores, but you are tired, so you only do some of them, and hope that your parents forget about the rest of them. **Not**
- You know your parents are going out of town, so you plan ahead of time to get a ride for Mass on Sunday instead of skipping altogether. **Virtuous**
- One of your friends is failing a class, and they ask you to help them cheat on the next test, but you say no. **Virtuous**
- You are up late playing video games, but getting tired, so you decide to have two cans of soda in order to stay awake. **Not**
- You often get bored at the dinner table with your family, but instead of trying to ask about their day or be present to them you decide beforehand that you are just going to ignore them and do something on your phone. **Not**
- You make an effort to pray every morning when you wake up, and every evening when you go to bed, even if you sometimes forget. **Virtuous**



### Step It Up

Give the youth the following requirement for a good action according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* “In order for an action to be good, the object, intention, and circumstances of the action must be good” (CCC 1750). For each scenario ask them to try to figure out what the object, intention, and circumstance is.

### Small Group Discussion (10 min)

After the youth have had time to discuss each scenario, use the following questions to foster a discussion within the small group:

- *Whip Around Question:* If you had the chance to defeat any villain from a movie, comic book, or video game, who would it be?
- Who is your favorite superhero, and what is one good characteristic they embody?
- What is a virtue or trait that you admire in other people?
- Was it easy or hard for you to identify virtuous actions in our activity? Do you think that it is hard or easy to make those decisions in real life? Why?
- Why should we strive to live virtuous lives as Christians?

## **Eighth-Grade Adaptation**

Use the following questions for a more challenging discussion for eighth-grade youth:

- Do you think that people in society celebrate good or bad behavior? Why?
- What is an example you have seen of society glorifying a behavior that is not virtuous?
- Do you think that living a virtuous life makes people happier? Why or why not?
- If someone were to look at your life from the outside, would they see you making efforts to live a virtuous life? Why or why not?
- What is one thing you want to do this week to grow in virtue and in imitation of Jesus?

## **SEND**

### **Lectio Divina with Philippians 4:8 (20 min)**

Gather the youth back to the large group. Hand out notecards, pens, and highlighters to each youth. Project or display the Scripture verse from Philippians 4:8 so all the youth can see. Ask the youth to copy down the Scripture verse onto their notecard. Once all the youth have copied down the verse, use the following to lead the youth through a time of modified lectio divina, praying with the Scripture verse.

Begin with the Sign of the Cross and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire the youth as they pray.

Read the Scripture verse one time, slowly asking the youth to read along with you and simply listen to what is being said.

Read the Scripture verse again slowly and, this time, ask the youth to underline any words or phrases that stand out to them.

Read the Scripture verse a third time slowly and ask the youth to confirm the words that stood out to them this time by highlighting those words.

Ask the youth to turn the notecard over and write down one word or phrase that stood out to them in particular and then reflect/write down the answer to the following questions, “Why did that word or phrase stand out to me?” and “What could God be trying to tell me through these words?”

If the youth are comfortable, ask them to turn to the person sitting next to them and take a few minutes to share what stood out to them, as well as what they think God is trying to tell them through that part of the Scripture passage. Consider having a few youth share with the large group.

Close the Edge Night by praying a Hail Mary as a large group. Following the prayer, give the youth their weekly challenge.

### **Weekly Challenge (5 min)**

Memorize the Scripture passage Philippians 4:8.



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## EDGE NIGHT PROCLAIM

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### 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 middle school youth. If the youth are ready to take it deeper, incorporate a few of the *Going Deeper* call-out boxes, picking the ones the youth would relate to the most. If there are Hispanic/Latino youth in the youth group, incorporate the applicable suggestions from the *Hispanic Inculturation* call-out boxes.

### TEACHING GUIDE

#### Fascinated

*Begin by asking the youth who their favorite superhero is and why. Have a few of them share their answers with the large group, then share your answer. Write your thoughts here:*

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- Many of the most successful movies of all time are movies about superheroes. Looking at the top 30 highest-grossing movies of all time, ten of them are movies about superheroes. Of all the thousands of movies that have been created, and found success, the ones that continually draw the largest crowds and make the most money are ones about superheroes.
- The fact that some of the top-grossing movies in our society are about superheroes reveals a certain cultural obsession with these types of characters. Their influence has extended to everything from movies, to toys, to games, to cereal boxes, and even to whole theme parks. Superheroes are everywhere, and the vast majority of us know at least a little bit about one or more of these superhero characters.
- It can be easy to understand this fascination with superheroes on a base level, after all, superheroes have really cool powers — they can fly, climb, control things with their minds, run fast, are really strong, and possess awesome weapons and tools. But, it is these different elements, along with their particular character storylines, that create entertaining action-packed movies.
- We are fascinated by superheroes, but it's not just because of their superpowers. Oftentimes, the villains that superheroes face off against have superpowers and cool abilities as well, but we are drawn to root for the heroes. Why? What is it that draws us to the heroes rather than the villains?

*Have some of the youth share why they think we are fascinated by superheroes. Write your own thoughts here:*

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- While the villains can be interesting characters, the majority of people are still drawn to the heroes. One of the main reasons for this is likely because the heroes protect what is good, and deep down inside we want to see good triumph over evil.

*Ask the youth if they would rather be a superhero or a supervillain. Have them shout out their answers.*

- Do you want to be a hero or a villain? It is easy to joke about being a villain because some of them are pretty interesting and do have really cool powers, but when it comes to real life most of us don't want to be the bad person. We want to do good; we want to have a positive impact on others; we want to make the world a better and more just place.



### **Hispanic Inculturation**

Youth in Hispanic/Latino households generally grow up listening to amazing stories from their parents, grandparents, aunts, or uncles showing the beauty of their family history and their family line. Hispanic/Latino youth see their families as their foundation and protectors, and family stories can become like those of superheroes. It is these family members who are the reason why Hispanic/Latino youth are where they are, and their families teach them to value morals and how they present themselves to others. Allow the youth the time to reminisce about the importance of their family members who have helped, supported, and guided them in their personal/spiritual lives.

- The superheroes are the ones who stand for what is right and defend those in need. While some of the characters may have complicated stories, we see them fight for what is good and, in some cases, even sacrifice themselves for the good of others. These are appealing qualities that draw us into their stories and inspire us. Heroes protect what is good, and we all want to be known as someone who does the same.

### **Good Habits**

- The good qualities that we see in superheroes are also qualities that the Church has always promoted as the way to grow in holiness. These qualities are called virtues.
- A person who lives out these virtues consistently chooses what is good, and the more they decide to do what is right, the easier it becomes. (CCC 1803)
- The opposite of a virtue is a vice. A vice is a strong tendency to do something that is sinful and to build up a habit of sinful action or behavior. (CCC 1865-1866)

- A virtuous person knows, chooses, fights for, and defends what is good. A person who gives into vice does the opposite. Superheroes often exemplify virtue, whereas supervillains exemplify vice.
- We call someone virtuous when they consistently choose what is good. In its simplest sense, virtue can be defined as a habit of doing good. On the other hand, vice is a habit of doing bad.

*Share a story about a good habit you have and how it became easier and easier to do the more you did it. Write your thoughts here:*

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- Habits are formed by consistently choosing to do or not to do something. If you want to start waking up when your alarm goes off, you do so by actually waking up when your alarm goes off. The first time can be really difficult, and it can continue to be hard for a while. But the more you do it, the easier it becomes to choose to do it. It may still be hard to get up, but it is easier to make the choice to do it.
- The same thing is true when it comes to doing good. There are certain habits that we can grow in that make the choice to do good easier and lead us to be people of virtue.

### **Created for the Good**

*Read Wisdom 8:7*

- There are four virtues that we will be discussing during this semester — prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. They are called The Cardinal Virtues and they are foundational for living a life full of making good decisions. They are called cardinal virtues because they are really important, and all other virtues build around these four. (CCC 1905)
- You may wonder why you should care about virtue or living a virtuous life. Superheroes make it seem really cool in their action-packed movies, but in real life, it is sometimes so much easier to not choose what is good. Choosing what is good can lead us to lose friends or be even judged by our classmates. It can seem a lot more fun and adventurous to disobey our parents or do anything that feels good even if it has bad consequences.
- When we are tempted to throw virtue to the wind and leave it as something for the movies, we have to remember that we are created by God who is good, for God who is good. The more we do what is good, the happier we will be because that is what we were created for.
- God knows us, He loves us, and He wants what is best for us. And ultimately what is best for us is to follow Him in doing what is good and avoiding what is sinful.
- He gives us the virtues for this very reason. They help to guard what is best in us and help us to live in accordance with it. They are guideposts pointing out the way to a happy and fulfilling life.

- As the Book of Wisdom says, there is nothing more profitable or useful for human beings than the virtues. They don't restrict our freedom or make us boring, rather they make us truly free. They elevate our lives and help us to live towards a higher calling. They help us to really be like the superheroes we adore. We may not have superpowers, but we can fight for what is best in this world and live for something greater than ourselves.



### **Going Deeper**

There is a recurring theme throughout the Bible, commonly referred to as the “Two Ways” (e.g., Deuteronomy 30:11-20, Psalm 1). It contrasts the way of the wise with the way of the foolish, or the way of the righteous with the way of the wicked. In essence, it is about the way of virtue and the way of vice. It shows us that the way of the virtuous leads to a fulfilling life and happiness, while the way of those who choose vice leads to hardship and ultimately death.

- As human beings, we are drawn to the good because God is good. We are created by God to know Him and to love Him, and the virtues help us to do this. They help us to live in a Christ-like way, to become like God, and they keep us rooted in our relationship with Him.
- While you may not be entirely convinced right now, choosing to be virtuous — to do good and stand up for what is good — will truly help us to find happiness, fulfillment, and purpose for our lives. Lasting happiness, that is not fleeting or shallow, comes only from our relationship with God and growing in holiness, following the path that He has given to us.

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