

BLACK WIDOW

What Do I Do When it is Hard to Do the Right Thing?

EDGE NIGHT AT A GLANCE



Scripture

Joshua 1:9; Psalm 27:1-3, 13-14; John 16:33; 1 Corinthians 15:58, 16:13; James 1:2-4; 1 John 4:17



Catechism

1808



Resources

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

GOAL

The goal of this Edge Night is for the youth to begin to foster the virtue of fortitude, using Black Widow as an example, so that they can stay constant in their efforts to do the right thing even when it is difficult.

GATHER

The youth compete in a series of timed obstacle team games based on Black Widow's background as a spy. The purpose of this game is for the youth to have fun and get into the theme of the Edge Night.

PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- The virtue of fortitude helps us persevere when things are difficult and choose what is good even when it is hard.
- Black Widow exemplifies fortitude in that she persevered through a rough early life, had a conversion of heart and joined the Avengers, and ultimately sacrificed herself for the greater good of humanity.

- With God’s help, we can live courageously as Jesus did, sacrificing for the most important things in life, and choosing what God wants for us even when it is hard or no one else is doing it.

BREAK

The youth receive an Origin Story handout focusing on how fortitude is necessary to live out the other three virtues discussed in previous Edge Nights giving the youth practical ideas on how to grow in each virtue. The purpose of this is for the youth to understand how all the virtues work together and practically apply them to their lives.

SEND

The youth pray a rosary focusing on the Sorrowful Mysteries and Jesus Christ’s great example of fortitude. The purpose of this time of prayer is for the youth to grow in their relationship with Christ and appreciation of all He has done for them.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Using your handout from the Break activity, choose one thing to do to grow in each of the virtues this week and have the courage to actually do it.

Notes: _____

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EDGE NIGHT SET UP

SET UP

Gather all the materials for the Gather game and do any necessary setup for each of the obstacles.

Print copies of the *My Origin Story - Fortitude* handout for the Break activity. Handouts can be found on the *August 2021 Edge USB* or online at lifeteen.com under Edge Support: *August 2021*. For each of the Edge Nights in this semester that teaches a specific virtue, the youth will be given a handout that has to do with their own “origin story.” These handouts provide them with a way to reflect and process how to apply the specific virtue to their lives as middle schoolers. The goal is that they learn to apply the virtues while they are still young and form good habits that influence them for the rest of their lives, hence the title “Origin Story.”

Add to the set environment for the semester by adding cutouts or posters of Black Widow. Also create a poster with the word fortitude on it along with its definition found below, if you have Hispanic/Latino youth also use the Spanish translation.

Fortitude: Having the courage to move forward and persevere when things are difficult and choose what is good even when it is hard.

Fortaleza: Tener el coraje de seguir adelante y perseverar cuando las cosas se ponen difíciles y elegir lo que es bueno incluso cuando es difícil.

SUPPLIES

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

- G: Timer
- G: String or yarn
- G: Ink pad
- G: Post-It notes, two per youth
- G: Poster board
- B: *My Origin Story - Fortitude* handout, one per youth
- B: Pens or pencils, 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

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:

The most common command that God gives in the Bible is “Be not afraid,” or “Do not fear.” This is because God calls His people to do great things and overcome a variety of challenges, but they are not alone. He also promises to always be with them, so they do not need to fear. This week at Edge, we are going to talk about the virtue of fortitude and how it helps us persevere when things are difficult and choose what is good even when it is hard. In order to understand this virtue a little more, we are going to look at the character of Black Widow who is not afraid to do the right thing, even if it requires her to sacrifice herself.

Weekly Challenge Check In (5 min)

Ask any youth who are willing to share about their experience with the weekly challenge from the previous Edge Night: Choose one work of mercy to do this week with your family or friends.

Spy Games (15 min)

Break the youth into small groups. Each small group rotates to each of the following games based on Black Widow’s background as a spy.

Between the Laser Beams

1. String yarn around a hallway creating a web.
2. Each member of the small group has to weave their way through the yarn in order to make it from one end of the hallway to the other.
3. Start a timer and record how long it takes for the youth to make it through the obstacle. Every time a youth touches the yarn with any part of their body, add 30 seconds to their overall time.
4. Record how long it takes each group to make it through the obstacle and the small group who makes it through in the shortest time wins.

Matching Fingerprint

1. Instruct each youth in the small group to put their thumbprint on two sticky notes, using a provided ink pad. Consider asking youth to put a number on the back of each of their sticky notes to ensure they match up the correct fingerprints.
2. Each youth keeps one copy of their thumbprint and gives the other copy to their core member.
3. The core member shuffles up the sticky notes and places them at random on a wall.
4. Set a timer for one or two minutes to see how long it takes the small group to find their matching fingerprint.
5. When the time is up, count how many youth have a clear matching fingerprint and add up the matches to get their total points.
6. The small group with the most points at the end wins.

Crack the Code

1. Give the youth the following riddle in order to unlock the code.
2. Start a timer and see how long it takes them to figure out the correct code.
3. The small group that cracks the code the fastest wins.

Use the following riddle as an example or create one of your own:

682 - one number is correct and placed correctly
614 - one number is correct but placed incorrectly
206 - two numbers are correct but wrongly placed
738 - No numbers are correct
780 - one number is correct but placed incorrectly

The correct answer is 042.

PROCLAIM

“Black Widow” Proclaim Teaching (10 min)

The teaching can be found on pages 72 to 75. The following main points are covered in the teaching:

- The virtue of fortitude helps us persevere when things are difficult and choose what is good even when it is hard.
- Black Widow exemplifies fortitude in that she persevered through a rough early life, had a conversion of heart and joined the Avengers, and ultimately sacrificed herself for the greater good of humanity.
- With God’s help, we can live courageously as Jesus did, sacrificing for the most important things in life, and choosing what God wants for us even when it is hard or no one else is doing it.

BREAK

Origin Story: Fortitude (15 min)

Break the youth into their small groups, begin in prayer, and then give each of the youth a copy of the *My Origin Story - Fortitude* handout found on the *August 2021 Edge USB* and online at lifeteen.com under Edge Support: *August 2021*.

Allow the youth to work through the handout, and then use the following questions to discuss the choices they made.

- Which items on the list did you highlight?
- Why did you choose the things that you did?
- Do you anticipate facing any challenges in doing what you have set out to do? How so?
- How do you think the virtue of fortitude will help you do these things?

SEND

Ignatian Meditation on Christ's Passion (20 min)

Gather the youth back into the large group and use the following to introduce a guided meditation on Christ's Passion using the Sorrowful Mysteries of the rosary:

Our ultimate model for the virtue of fortitude is Christ, who endured incredible suffering and died to save us from sin and death. It can be easy to overlook how difficult and scary it must have been for Jesus to leave the Last Supper knowing what suffering laid ahead of Him. It is in these moments that we see the greatest example of fortitude. Jesus knew the ultimate good and that His death would lead to life for the whole world. He had the courage to move forward and persevere even when things were difficult and His suffering immense because He knew the good that would come from it and He trusted in God's will.

Instruct the youth that you will be reflecting on the Sorrowful Mysteries of the rosary. Take a few minutes to explain to the youth how to pray the rosary and the purpose of reflecting on different mysteries of the rosary while we pray. Pass out rosaries to each of the youth and consider projecting images to go with each Sorrowful Mystery as you pray. Then use the following prompts before each of the decades of the rosary.

The First Sorrowful Mystery: The Agony in the Garden

And going a little farther, He fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt." (Mark 14:35-36)

Imagine yourself there in the garden with Jesus. Is it dark? Is the sun just setting? Is it hot? Is there a breeze through the trees? Is it quiet? Imagine praying next to Jesus as He prays, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt."

Even though He knew it would cause much suffering, Jesus, filled with the virtue of fortitude, chose to be obedient to the Father's will, and chose to endure His Passion and Death for our sake.

The Second Sorrowful Mystery: The Scourging at the Pillar

"So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas; and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified." (Mark 15:15)

Imagine yourself next to Jesus after the scourging. Are you able to look at His beaten body? Are there other people around looking at Him? Are there guards close by? Is it hot and dusty? Or is it cool out? What is the look on Jesus' face? Are you able to look Him in the eye? What do you feel at this moment?

See how tired He is, and how heavy He is breathing. But still, He presses on for the love of us, for love of you.

The Third Sorrowful Mystery: The Crowning of Thorns

"And they clothed Him in a purple cloak; and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on Him." (Mark 15:17)

Imagine looking at Jesus' face. This is the face of love. The face of a man who would endure anything for us. Spend time looking upon Jesus' face, crowned with thorns, and persevering towards our redemption. What expression is on His face? Who else is there looking at Him? What do you feel as He looks back at you?

The Fourth Sorrowful Mystery: The Carrying of the Cross

"So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha." (John 19:17)

Imagine being in the crowd as Jesus walks past. What is it like on the road? What do you hear? What do you see? Can you feel the crowd pressing on around you? Are you sad or fearful? What is it like knowing that He carries the cross for you out of love? Imagine walking next to Jesus, one step at a time along the road, and just be with Him as He carries the cross.

The Fifth Sorrowful Mystery: The Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord

"And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left." (Luke 23:33)

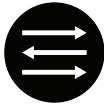
Imagine being at the foot of the cross. What is it like? Do you see Mary and the beloved disciple next to you? Is it cold out? Is it hot? Do you feel the rumble of the ground as Jesus dies? What do you hear around you?

We know that Jesus rose from the dead and His death was not the end. But the journey to glory required persevering through the suffering He endured. Spend a couple of minutes sitting at the foot of the cross, looking upon Jesus who loves you so much that He died for you.

End this time of prayer with the following simple prayer:

Jesus, we love you, and we thank you for enduring your Passion for us. Help us to grow in the virtue of fortitude, to suffer through our trials with you, and to know you are with us as our model and help. Amen.

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



Suggestions

If your youth have a hard time sitting still for extended periods of time, make this prayer more interactive inviting the youth to lead prayers, or consider doing a walking rosary.

Weekly Challenge (5 min)

Using your handout from the Break activity, choose one thing to do to grow in each of the virtues this week and have the courage to actually do it.

Notes: _____

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EDGE NIGHT PROCLAIM

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

The Strength of the Virtues

Tell a story about an experience you had in trying to reach a certain goal — whether you achieved or not and what led to your success. Write your thoughts here:

- When it comes to setting goals, the difficulties usually are not in our intention or desire to reach that goal, but rather our ability to do the work that it takes to get there. When we start after a goal it can be easy to lose motivation when things get difficult.
- This semester, we have talked about the importance of doing the right things, choosing what is good, and upholding the dignity of others. In many ways, the goals that we set focus on some aspect of working towards what is good for ourselves and others and engaging with the virtues of prudence, temperance, and justice.

Ask the youth to share about a goal they have set to achieve something good for themselves, and a goal they have set to do something good for someone else.

- It is good to make goals, and it is good to exercise all of these virtues. But these three virtues on their own are missing one element: the virtue of fortitude.
- Fortitude gives us the courage to move forward and persevere when things are difficult and choose what is good even when it is hard. (CCC 1808)



Hispanic Inculturation

As you begin to talk to your youth about fortitude and courage, be aware of the unique stories of each of their families. Many may have experienced a range of different difficulties firsthand, such as the deportation of parents or close family members, language barriers, leaving a home country and family, parents working multiple jobs, discrimination, and single-parent homes. Be mindful of the multitude of situations your Hispanic/Latino youth and their families may have gone through. Their lived experiences provide a great opportunity to encourage the Hispanic/Latino youth to reflect on the fortitude their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other family members have exhibited and to see how far the courage of their family members has taken them.

- Many times, we do not reach our goals simply because we are lacking in fortitude. We give up when it gets hard, or someone or something stands in our way and we lose the courage to follow through with what we are doing.

Give the youth a few practical examples of how this could happen. Perhaps they made a goal to get better grades, but when they faced the hard reality of studying more, they slowly gave up on the goal. Or maybe they set a goal to spend more time with their family, but then a friend made fun of them for being too into their family and they lost the courage to follow through on that decision. Write your own thoughts here:

- We all need fortitude in our lives to put the rest of the virtues into practice. Fortitude on its own cannot do much, but when coupled with the other virtues it helps us to persevere through hardships and overcome our fears so that we can live a life pursuing what is good. (CCC 1805)

Black Widow

- Black Widow is a great character example of the virtue of fortitude, perseverance, and strength.
- As a young girl, Natasha Romanoff began her training as a spy with the KGB (which was a secretive Russian security agency). Her training was grueling, and she had to endure a lot of hardships.
- Eventually, she broke away from that life and joined the Avengers —a team of superheroes that fight on Earth’s behalf against its enemies. She spent years as an Avenger, fighting to protect Earth even during the most difficult and trying times.
- It took fortitude to persevere through the difficulties of her early life and to spend years fighting against all sorts of different threats, but where we really see this virtue in Black Widow is in the final moments of her life.

- To summarize a complicated story, after a villain named Thanos wiped out half of all life in the universe, Black Widow and the remaining Avengers had to go back in time and retrieve some very powerful stones — known as Infinity Stones — in order to undo what Thanos did. She and another Avenger named Hawkeye, who were dear friends, were sent to retrieve one of the Infinity Stones known as the Soul Stone. After both Avengers realize that one of them has to die in order to retrieve the stone, they each try to be the one to sacrifice themselves so the other doesn't have to.
- In the end, Black Widow succeeds and offers her life to get the Soul Stone, which eventually leads to the Avengers being able to bring back all of the people that Thanos had wiped out.
- Without the virtue of fortitude, Black Widow would never have been able to persevere through all of the hardships she faced, nor would she have had the courage to sacrifice her life for others. She was probably scared to die, but her commitment to the good was greater than her fear.
- She didn't give up when things got hard, but she persevered in courage and remained steadfast because she knew that what she was fighting for was worth the cost.

To the End

- While Black Widow's sacrifice is a great example of fortitude, we have an even greater example in Jesus.
- When we look at the life of Jesus, we see that He endured great hardships throughout His life. He was tempted in the desert by Satan and was persecuted by the religious leaders of his time. He traveled tirelessly, oftentimes without rest or a sense of home. And, after the Last Supper, He was betrayed by one of his closest friends, abandoned by many of His disciples, mocked, scourged, and crucified. (Matthew 4:1-11, John 5:17, Luke 22:47-48, John 18-19)
- All of this Jesus endured for the salvation of the world. He is the model we follow. Jesus knows what it is like to experience hardship, and through Him, we receive the grace that we need to face hardship, fear, and adversity. Jesus is our great example and a reminder of why it is worth fighting for what is good and the impact that our actions can have on the lives of others. (CCC 520)
- We are called to imitate Jesus and to give our lives for the sake of what is good, no matter how hard it is. But how can we do this? How can we stand up for what is good like Jesus did? We likely won't be put to death for what we believe, but we will face hardships as we practice virtue and it will demand a lot from us.



Going Deeper

While we may not have to give up our lives for our faith, many Christians have done this, both in the past and in the present day. They are called martyrs, a word that derives from the Greek word for witness. Why are they called witnesses? Because their sacrifices witness the fact that the love of God is stronger than the power of death. They are great examples of fortitude, and great witnesses to us of courage, steadfastness, and perseverance. We are called to follow their example of courage and strength as we seek to live out the virtue of fortitude. (CCC 2473)

- Every day presents opportunities for us to choose the good as Jesus did. Every day we have the choice to follow what God wants for us.
- Speaking up when someone is being made fun of, doing your homework when everyone else is cheating on it, saying no to hanging out with your friends because you know they aren't doing something good, making the Sign of the Cross, and praying before you eat at lunch, going to Mass and youth group even when you don't feel like it — all of these are simple moments of choosing what is good, but they require a lot of courage and commitment to follow through with them.
- Every time we persevere when things are hard, take courage and face something we are afraid of, or choose what is good even though it costs us, we grow in fortitude.
- Slowly but surely, we can become stronger and more courageous by doing the hard things. The more we choose the good in situations like these, the more we strengthen our fortitude and resolve to do it the next time. It will be hard at first, and honestly, it may still be hard years down the road, but the choice to do the right thing will get easier as we grow in our practice of living out the virtues. (CCC 1804)

Read John 16:33.

- Jesus tells us not to be afraid but to take courage. He has already overcome the world, and He has promised to be with us always. In Him, we can find the strength to persevere in doing good.
- Whenever you are afraid or feel alone, ask Jesus to be with you and to give you courage. Whenever you feel like giving up, ask Him to be your strength. You can conquer and be strong in Him.
- Your family, friends, peers, communities, and our world need someone who is willing to stand up for what is good and true, even if it is hard. God has created you to be a hero, and heroes always have to fight, but in Jesus, we will always find victory.

Notes: _____
