Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

What Am I Called to Be?

A Guide for Leadership Teams

Episcopal Curriculum for Youth—What Am I Called to Be?
Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

All Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

© Copyright 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary
Center for the Ministry of Teaching
3737 Seminary Road
Alexandria, VA 22304

Amelia G. Dyer, Ph.D., Editor-in-Chief
Dorothy S. Linthicum, Managing Editor
George J. Kroupa III, Associate Editor

Consultants for ***What Am I Called to Be?***

The Rev. Carol Gallagher
The Rev. John Ohmer
The Rev. Joell Szachara

Youth Consultants

Ariel Gallagher
Kristin Szczuka
John Linthicum
Robin Szczuka
Molly Siems

ISBN 0-8192-6062-2

Table of Contents

Background for Leadership Teams

Introduction 1
How to Use These Materials 3
For Members of the Leadership Team 9

What Am I Called to Be?: Session Titles

Setting Priorities 14
Productive Worker 18
Seeking Other Interests 22
In Relationships 26
Caring for Others 30
Life-Long Learner 34
Servant 38
Faithful 42
Answering God's Call 46

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

What Am I Called to Be?

Young people face many decisions early in their lives that influence their future. Choices about the work they wish to do, the friends they spend time with, and the way they live their lives. Scripture has much to say about these issues and can provide opportunities for discussing how God is a part of the lives of people today.

With a world full of opportunities that can be good for some people but bad for others, everyone needs help in deciding what is right for them. Scripture passages, conversations with friends, and trying out different jobs, experiences, and roles can help young people to sort out the various aspects of their lives now and in the future. There is no better way to explore these questions than among a group of Christians who share similar values.

The purpose of this study, called *What Am I Called to Be?*, is to use scripture to explore the different kinds of choices that confront young people and to help youth to be better decision makers now and in the future, knowing that they can always ask God for guidance.

Introduction

What Am I Called to Be? is one of a series of modules developed for Older Youth who are in senior high school. The curriculum is based on the promises made in the Baptismal Covenant found in *The Book of Common Prayer.*

The vision for the curriculum also includes the development of leadership skills for Christian young people. Youth need to be leaders of their own lives by following Christ's example and making choices that are best for them.

The leadership of the group will come from a team that includes youth and adults. It is recommended that leadership teams of youth and adults meet in advance, perhaps on retreat, to choose and plan for the various areas of study.

This Guide

This guide contains nine sessions, seven of which provide maximum opportunity for choice. Two copies of the guide will be helpful in sharing responsibility for leadership. The first session, "Setting Priorities," is designed to be a tool for making decisions about how the group will proceed. It begins with a "Point of Contact"—a Personal Story about a young person whose decision between sports and music help her better understand what God is calling her to be. The planning session begins, as do all other sessions, with prayer and the scripture study to focus the experience on the presence of God in our hearts and God's will for our lives.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

The activities in **Session 1** are designed to develop the leadership skills of communication, trust, and relationship. Specific help such as Steps for Planning and the Planning Reference Guide is included to facilitate the planning effort for all members of the leadership team. Because pre-planning is not always possible, the first session can also serve as a tool for involving all participants in the choices to be made.

At this time the group will choose youth leaders and develop plans for study of the other eight sessions. In this process, adults will serve as facilitators for youth-directed planning.

Sessions 2 - 8 examine the issues of Spirituality through these individual topics:

Productive Worker
Seeking Other Interests
In Relationships
Caring for Others
Life-Long Learner
Servant
Faithful
Answering God's Call

Each session begins with prayer, scripture, and a Personal Story. The Personal Stories, written from the perspective of a young person, focus on the heart of the topic for that session. The group may select from a variety of themes and activities developed from those themes the ways in which they want to interact with the materials.

A study of issues and Scripture often leads to more than just awareness of an issue. **Session 9** is designed to help youth bring together what they have learned and make decisions about the actions they will take in response. This may be done as individuals or as a group. The final activities include plans for liturgical celebrations, social action, and just plain fun.

Other Modules in the Episcopal Curriculum for Older Youth

Diversity	**Relationships**	**Spirituality**	**Violence**
Peace & Justice	**Success & Failure**	**Difficult Decisions**	**Treasuring Our Gifts**
Who Is God?	**What Am I Called to Be?**	**What Do Others Believe?**	**What Is Evil?**

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

How to Use These Materials

1. DECISIONS ARE MADE BY LEADERSHIP TEAM

This curriculum is based on a model that requires a team of people to lead the sessions and the planning process. The assumption is that this team will consist of several teenagers who will take the key leadership roles and adults who will provide resources and support.

Each issue-based session develops three themes using a specific passage from the Bible as a focus for study. Suggestions for activities, discussion topics, and questions are provided for the three themes. Teams can decide to focus on one or two of the themes or take a broader look using all three.

The members of this team may change during the year as new issues are introduced or the needs of the group change. Leadership skills introduced throughout the module are for the whole group of youth and adults.

2. BUILDING A YOUTH-LED TEAM

The best way to function well as a team is to spend eight to ten hours together before the year begins. The team may decide to meet several times or go on retreat for this purpose. Here is a way to set up an effective team.

- Identify four to six teens who are leaders in school, church, and other settings. Choose two to four adults who are leaders but who also know how to follow.
- Spend time together getting to know each other and building community with one another. This can best be done in a retreat setting by sharing prayer time and meal times as well as planning times.
- Share faith stories in whatever way seems appropriate and comfortable.
- Review all of the materials in the chosen module and begin to make some plans about how best to use this resource. If time permits, it may also be a good time to make plans for future modules. Be aware that new leadership may emerge during the coming year.
- Decide on a plan and delegate responsibilities for planning, leading sessions, and communicating.
- Meet with the entire group, share your plans, and get their input.
- Finalize the plan and begin.
- Be prepared to revise your plan if circumstances change.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

3. CORE COMPONENTS

Each session includes the same basic information. Optional activities and sections change as needed in response to the issue and themes. These components are:

- **Session design**. Three elements are essential for every session. 1) A beginning prayer, chosen from *The Book of Common Prayer*, is offered as a way to center the group's time together. 2) The heart of the session is the three themes and activities that help the participants to gain deeper understandings of the issue. 3) The dismissal brings everyone together as the time ends and sends them out to do God's work in the world.

- **Objective.** A learning objective is found at the top of page one of every session. The objective guides the team in determining what is to occur as a result of the time spent with this material.

- **Scripture.** With a note to "Begin here," youth are asked to look at passages from the Bible that relate to the issue. Three different pieces of Scripture provide three different views of the issue. Most sessions include both Old and New Testament references.

- **Commentary.** Each passage from the Bible is briefly explained in a paragraph following the biblical quotation. Leaders who wish to know more may explore larger works such as *The Interpreter's Bible*, a Bible commentary, or a Bible dictionary.

- **Personal Stories.** Except for the initial planning session, all of the sessions include a Personal Story. Typically it is a story of an experience that youth encounter as a part of their daily lives. In telling these stories to each other the youth will be able to examine their own experiences and be more aware of the feelings of others.

- **Questions.** Suggestions for questions to be used as discussion starters are offered throughout the sessions. An icon easily identifies the questions.

- **Skill Building.** Because a specific goal of these materials is to help youth recognize their strengths and improve their leadership skills, certain skills are emphasized in each session. These will be developed through the optional activities.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

- **Optional Activities.** A goal of the *Episcopal Curriculum for Youth* is to offer a wide range of options that allow flexibility within groups and meet the needs of different types of groups. Leadership teams are invited to use their own creativity in choosing other games or activities they enjoy. The following options will be available throughout various sessions:

1. **Creative activities** to stimulate the artistic talents of teens.

2. **Games** to build trust and skills as well as explore issues.

3. **Movies, TV Shows, and Print Media** that illustrate the theme presented in today's time.

4. **Literature**, books, and short stories, that develop the theme as well as those created by the individual members of a group.

5. **Music** from *The Hymnal 1982* and from contemporary and Christian resources relevant to the topic.

6. **Field trips** to places that provide an enhancement of the theme.

7. **Service projects** that arise from the themes to carry the mission of the church beyond the walls of the classroom or the church.

8. **Posters.** A set of six posters representative of the themes within each issue are provided separately. The posters are designed to stimulate thoughts, discussion, and reflection on the various concepts.

4. SAMPLE SESSION

After the leadership team has met and the planned study of the module, the group begins to meet. A model for a session might look something like this:

1. **Planning for a session.** The leadership team has selected Theme 2 as the way they wish to approach Session 2. One or two members of the group are assigned to be leaders. They prepare for the group to participate in several of the discussions and activities for Theme 2. Any necessary speakers or other outside arrangements are made in advance.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

2. **Begin with Prayer.** Starting together with prayer is a way to help the group focus their attention. A prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer* is printed above Theme 1. Leaders may use this prayer, choose another, or compose one of their own. The prayer can be said by one person, or everyone can pray together. This may also be a time for sharing of any concerns of those present or for those absent.

3. **Scripture.** These materials are unique because they look at issues through specific passages in the Bible. The leaders read the designated Scripture and use the questions to talk about the relationship of the Scripture to the theme.

4. **Activities.** The group participates in one or more of the activities furnished in the guide. The choice will depend on the interests of the group and the time frame of the gathering.

5. **Preparing for Next Time.** A few minutes before the end of the time, announce any coming events and give leaders for the next session an opportunity to give a preview.

6. **Dismissal.** Just as the start of time together needs prayer for focus, so does the closing. The participants share any concerns to be held in prayer during the coming days and close with the "Dismissal," also printed above the beginning of Theme 1.

5. SOME GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

A key to the effectiveness of these materials is to help the group learn how to talk with one another about the issues that affect their lives and faith.

Sharing of individual stories. People are given the opportunity to share the things that are important in their own lives. This will become easier as the group members grow in trust for each other. Sometimes this may be difficult or impossible for an individual. This person needs to be allowed to pass if they wish.

Issues, themes, stories. There are many interesting topics and stories that serve as a "launching pad" for rich and deep discussion. Choose those that will engage those who participate.

Active learning. There are many opportunities for trips, visits, and other activities to bring great energy into your study. Your team can decide what works best for your group and plan times for these events

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

to take place.

Speakers and guests. There are many people in your community with fascinating stories. The team can find the right people who will have an influence on your group.

Statement to the church. Teens have valuable things to say about and to their church. This can be incorporated into the program around any issue that the members of your group feel moved to respond to.

Here are some simple guidelines that can be used to facilitate sharing and community building. It is a good idea to discuss these guidelines with your team and add or delete suggestions from your group.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

1. Make and commitment to all sessions (continuity).

2. Include everyone, even yourself, in the conversation.

3. Be real—be honest.

4. Send "I" messages—share feelings.

5. Talk about your own experiences.

6. Listen with great respect.

7. Listen, understand, but do not fix.

8. Be specific.

9. Respect confidentiality.

10. Allow the Spirit, within and beyond, to work in this group.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

6. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The setting where your session takes place is crucial to the success of your program. In short, the less it is like a classroom the more you will be able to facilitate learning, sharing, and growth. Pay attention to the environment you are providing, as this will have a great impact on the learning process. Consider three possibilities to create the desired environment.

- **The youth room.** One good alternative is a room at the church designated for young people and arranged with comfortable chairs, couches, etc. This provides a comfortable and inviting atmosphere.

- **Meeting in a home.** Holding meetings at someone's home near the church can be a great asset. This provides a casual, comfortable setting that usually enhances the process. This may cause some problems but it is well worth investigating. Also, people may be more open to making their homes available if it is done on a rotating basis. Don't rule out this possibility without carefully considering it.

- **Gathering in a restaurant.** A restaurant can provide a wonderful opportunity for a meal, fellowship, and learning. Often young people who wouldn't come to the church will feel comfortable in this setting. Of course, this will raise some financial considerations, but these are not impossible. You could also consider meeting at a restaurant on an occasional basis as a way of promoting outreach and for celebration.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

For Members of the Leadership Team

A General Philosophy of a Teaching Ministry

God made all people with great intelligence, skills, talents, feelings, opinions, and ideas regardless of their age. All people are growing in their faith journey. Two key words in working with others are value and respect. Never assume that you know more than they do or that your or their experience in life gives either one more value. Instead, enter into a learning adventure, side by side. You will discover as much as you impart. You will be impacted as much as you impact others. Keep an open mind and heart to all that is said, felt, and shared; and experience God doing greater things than you could pray or ask for.

Who are Older Youth?

Volumes have been written on the lives of teens and adolescent development. The purpose here is to give the leadership team some keys about what young people are like. Youth who are on the leadership team may agree or disagree. A lively conversation about these issues will enhance the ability of the team to work together.

Characteristics of Older Youth:

- **THEY LIKE TO HAVE FUN**

  Fun is not the opposite of learning and should not be something to avoid. On the contrary, people learn best when they are having a good time. When they are having a good time, there is often chaos. Don't be afraid of a little commotion if most of the group is on task. Encourage each other to have fun in class and see how much you can learn.

- **THEY HAVE SKILLS, TALENTS, AND ENERGY**

  Teens are not empty vessels waiting to be filled up. They are people blessed with skills, talents, and intelligence. Draw upon the rich resources of the members of your group and know that there is much to offer, to share, and to teach to others. The energy of the group can deeply enhance the learning experience.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

- **THEY ARE PEOPLE IN TRANSITION**

Youth are in a transition stage of life. The essential element is change as a person moves from dependence to independence. The closer a person gets to graduation from high school, the more this reality will set in. Youth need freedom to make choices with adult support. Never underestimate the abilities of each other or the need for adult cooperation and support.

- **THEY ARE SELF-RELIANT AND ACCOUNTABLE**

Most youth want to be self-reliant. By this point they have had enough experiences to form their own opinions and be able to make their own decisions. Of course, like everyone else, they will both succeed and fail. Encourage the group to take responsibility for the choices they select and hold them accountable to the agreements they make. Remember that everyone deserves input on decisions that affect his or her life.

- **THEY LIKE MAKING CHOICES**

Youth can and do make good decisions. Our gift to others is to help them to develop their abilities to make good decisions and to treat them as capable human beings.

• **THEY NEED TO BE HEARD**

One of the best tools you can provide for members of the group are opportunities to speak out and be heard, and to listen to others with respect. It is important to set the example not by what you say but by what you do. Your ability to listen to others and respond to their ideas and comments will be a model for developing good listening skills. Being heard for even a moment can be a powerful experience. This is true for people of any age.

• **THEY WANT TO BE VALUED AND SIGNIFICANT**

How you treat the people in your group is much more important than what is taught. If all members feel important and significant, they are more likely to learn something. It is also crucial to pay attention to how the members of the group treat each other. The atmosphere of the classroom can inspire or destroy the whole experience. Encouraging all members of the group to treat themselves and others with extraordinary respect is one of the most important lessons to teach.

• **THEY ARE LOOKING FOR A FAITH OF THEIR OWN**

Teenagers are seeking their own opinions, values, and faith. Identity comes from becoming your own person. Youth often reject much of their parents' faith. This is an important sign that new values and a

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

stronger faith are being formed. Embrace the searching process and affirm the importance of the ability to question, doubt, and think. Your response to doubts will encourage or discourage others' journeys to spiritual knowledge. You can't teach faith but you can grow together in your knowledge and love of the Lord.

- **RELATIONAL MINISTRY**

  This curriculum is based on building relationships in three ways. Be constantly aware of the importance of these three dynamics of relationships.

  1. The first, and most important, is the relationship between each person and God. This should be an ongoing focus in whatever is taught, discussed, or explored.
  2. This second is the relationship between young people and adults. The adult's role is not that of teacher but rather one of "mature friend." One-to-one relationships take on special significance in this model.
  3. The third is the peer relationship. How the members of the group treat each other enables or destroys the building of a caring community.

- **OWNERSHIP**

If youth are going to be truly involved in a program of learning, they must have a sense of ownership. The wise teen will learn how to share the program and build a sense of ownership together with the adults. This process can be improved and simplified by the formation of a team in the beginning with youth taking responsibility for leadership roles.

Who Are The Adults?

Adults who work with youth are more than teachers. To foster effective teaching and learning among youth, the Church needs adult leaders who are grounded in their own faith and identity as Christians. Effective leaders are excited about growing and learning and enjoy working with youth in a team relationship. They have high energy, genuine enthusiasm, and a passionate interest in youth.

Youth can have input into which adults are selected for the leadership team. Seek out people who care about youth, have a strong faith, and are committed to the program. Adults who want to be kids or who don't keep commitments are not effective over time. The following points should be carefully considered as leadership teams are formed.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Characteristics of Effective Adult Leaders:

- **THEY ARE ROOTED IN THEIR FAITH AND COMMITTED TO JESUS CHRIST**

Who adults are speaks loudly to teens. They don't have to be biblical scholars or perfect Christians. It also doesn't mean that they no longer have any doubts or are at the end of their own spiritual journey. Good leaders have a strong relationship with God and are comfortable with their faith.

- **THEY ARE WILLING TO BE A PART OF A TEAM**

For some adults working with teenagers as they grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord is an overwhelming task. It is essential for teens to understand the sense of responsibility that comes with this task. Wise teens know that they are only part of a teaching team and that adults are accountable to other people in the church who may or may not care about the activities of young people. Adults need to be able to let go of their need to be in charge and still have the ability to use their gifts as part of the team.

- **THEY ARE FUN AND ENJOY BEING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

Adults should be able to relax and enjoy their time with youth. Effective adults know how to have fun and to share joy with young people without giving up expectations of them. Adults must find their own balance of fun and seriousness. Affirming joy and excitement with group, however, is essential for the adults' full participation.

- **THEY ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT PEOPLE THAN FACTS**

The *Episcopal Curriculum for Youth* provides an excellent base of information to learn more about God, Scripture, and the Church. The sessions incorporate this learning with the issues that Affect young people's lives. Effective adults are aware of issues that are unique to their groups and look for ways to include these ideas in the work of the group. Adults should give priority to what youth are thinking and feeling.

- **THEY HAVE A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO THE GROUP**

Adults are committed and consistent. Steadfastness of faith and commitment to the class will make a real difference in the long run. Leaders should focus on the overall success of the program and not on any one moment, hour, or week.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

A Final Word

Remember that this is a process of growing in the knowledge and love of the Lord. There will be ups and downs, successes and failures, joys and frustrations. Often you will never know the impact you have made on another person's life. So much happens intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually in individuals' lives that they themselves are not aware of the people who have had an impact on them. Trust in each other, trust in yourself and, most of all, trust in God.

For More Ideas

Atkins, Tim and Patty. *Music Worth Talking About.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995.

Bundschuh, Rick and Von Trutzschler, E.G. *Incredible Questionnaires for Youth Ministry.* Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties, 1995.

Hancock, Jim. *Compassionate Kids: Practical ways to involve your students in mission & service.* El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 1995.

Johnston, Ray. *Developing Student Leaders*. El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 1995.

Kujawa, Sheryl A. and Sibley, Lois. *Resource Book for Ministry with Youth and Young Adults in the Episcopal Church.* New York: Episcopal Church Center, 1995.

Miller, Jennifer S. and Kirk R. *Let's Go To the Movies.* Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 1996.

Mulhern, Kathy. *Finding God in the Craziness of Life: Prayers and meditations on tough issues for today's teens.* Denver, CO: Living the Good News, 1996.

Parolini, Stephen. *You Choose the Ending Skits for Youth Ministry.* Loveland, CO: Group, 1997.

Yeager, Gina B. *Let's Go to the Movies!* Vol. 1 & 2. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 1995.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

What Am I Called to Be?

Setting Priorities

Objective

Youth will be able to plan a course of study to explore God's call in people's lives.

Personal Story

Eighty people competing for thirty-two spots. That is what continually ran through my mind during soccer tryouts my sophomore year in high school. Even though I had played junior varsity the year before, there was now a new, stricter coach who emphasized that there were "no guarantees."

Due to rainy weather, the tryouts lasted for a grueling two weeks. At last, the day came when final cuts were to be made. As the coach read out the names of the chosen few, I saw some rejoice and others walk away in tears. Luckily, I was on the list.

Just as I began to breathe a sign of relief, the coach launched into a speech telling us that we were fortunate to have made the team and that he expected a 100 percent commitment from each of us. He told us that we needed to come to practice five days a week every week. If we couldn't make that commitment, many girls would love to take our place. Suddenly, I realized that my place was not as secure as I had thought. My other love is piano, and I had a lesson once a week that would cause me to be late for practice on those days.

I frantically wracked my brain for a solution to my predicament. I was terrified that the coach might hear about my conflict and cut me right then and there. I tried to think of a way to switch my piano lessons, but I was studying at a prestigious music school, and I knew I had to set some priorities. I realized that soccer was important, but so was playing the piano. Piano required only one lesson per week, and I would simply have to miss part of soccer practice. I took a deep breath as I approached the coach.

I told him about the conflict. He did not look pleased. He said sternly that he would have to think about it and get back to me tomorrow. My fears of being kicked off the team were becoming a reality. That night I cried to my mom about how unfair it was that I could not do the two things I loved most. She reassured me that I had made the right decision and that all I could do was wait.

The following day, I approached the coach before practice. He took me aside and reiterated that I was lucky to be on the team and that if I did not perform well he would find another girl to replace me. But he told me that I could stay.

Although I came away with the best of both worlds, I was prepared for the worst. I realized that I could have been cut from the team, but I knew that piano meant more to me than soccer. It was a tough decision, but it helped me figure out who I am called to be.

SESSION 1

Scripture

Ephesians 1:8b-12

Skill Focus

Communication
Relationships

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Prayer
Almighty God our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

For Vocation in Daily Work
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 261

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:8b-12

Commentary: In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul paints a picture of Christianity that starts in the broadest sense possible and moves, step by step, to a detailed blueprint. He begins with a depiction of God's plan for the cosmos and of the individual believer's role in that plan. He then describes proper relationships for Christian churches, the community, and households, ending with an exhortation for all Christians to "put on the whole armor of God" in order to fight the spiritual forces of evil.

☐ Questions

- What did Paul mean by "in Christ we have obtained an inheritance"?
- What do you think about when you hear the word inheritance? What kind is Paul talking about?
- If God's will is "mysterious," how can you figure it out?

Point of Contact

Personal Story

The Personal Story focuses on setting priorities and finding what one person feels called to be. Reread and discuss the story.

- There are many times in life when people have to prioritize and accept the consequences that come with making decisions about the use of their time. In the Personal Story, everything worked out. What happens when you can't have it all? Do you think about all the consequences before you make decisions? When do you pray about decisions?
- The writer also tells of talking to her mother when she was waiting for the coach's decision. Are there people in your life you can go to? Who are they? Can you hear the voice of God in their responses?

☐ Activities

Making Connections

Play Making Connections, a word-association game to help you get to know one another. Sit in a circle, and start by asking the first player to say any word or phrase that is a copyright or trademark (for example, the title of a book or movie, a candy bar, a soft drink, or make of car). The next person responds with another copyrighted or a trademark word or phrase that is in some way related to the first player's suggestion. Sometimes the association is obvious, other times the group can challenge the player to explain the connection. The process continues around the circle until everyone has had a chance to participate. If the group is small, continue around the circle several times.

After playing a few rounds, discuss the way people make different connections between seemingly unrelated concepts.

- Do connections in your life always make sense?
- Could this unit of study help you understand connections better? How?
- How could others in the group help you look at connections and priorities?

What Are You Called to Be?

To kick off a discussion about the different things God calls people to be and do, play a modified version of charades. Distribute index cards and ask the group to write down what they think they might want to be or do in the future. Gather the cards and mix them up in a bag. Ask a participant to draw a card at random and act out, charades style, the occupation on the card.

- Did most people put down occupations or the type of person they wanted to be?
- What is the most important thing God calls you to be?
- Who can help you find God's call?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Make the Connection

Bring in a box of connecting building blocks. Working in small groups or in one larger group, ask participants to create something using all the pieces. Set a time limit depending on the number of blocks each group is given. Do not provide any more direction. Observe how the youth decide what to create and how they work together. Discuss the process afterwards.

- How did you know where to begin?
- Did previous experiences affect your creation?
- Did everyone participate? Did groups try to involve everyone?

☐ Steps for Planning

1. Make copies of the Planning Reference Guide on p. 18 for each person in the group. Spend some time going over the guide to help participants understand the topics and themes for this unit. In a second copy of the guide for *What Am I Called to Be?*, tear out sessions to distribute to individuals or small groups. Give them time to look over the scriptures and themes for the sessions they have been assigned.

2. Allow time for groups or individuals to discuss the topics that interest and excite them. Encourage them to make notes on the guides.
   - Which sessions do they want to study?
   - Do they want to spend more time on sessions that are of greater interest?

3. On a piece of newsprint, write down the sessions and themes the group has selected to study. Next to each entry, write the name of the participant who agrees to be the leader or coordinator for each topic. This person will prepare activities and gather materials that are needed. The coordinator does not actually lead the session, but does assume responsibility for making all preparations.

4. Look at the resource posters for *What Am I Called to Be?* Decide how each will be used.
   Poster 1: Productive Worker
   Poster 2: Seeking Other Interests
   Poster 3: In Relationships
   Poster 4: Caring for Others
   Poster 5: Life-Long Learner
   Poster 6: Servant

5. Distribute copies of the sessions to participants who have agreed to be coordinators. At this point, take a few minutes to see if anyone feels that his or her ideas are being overlooked.
   - Do you agree with the decisions made so far?
   - If there are still disagreements, can we find a way to come to agreement?

6. Make a calendar of the sessions using a grid of your own design. Identify sessions that will require advance planning. For example, if the group wants to put together an adult panel discussion, invitations should be extended well ahead of time. If the group wants to take a field trip, think ahead about transportation and if another time slot should be found. Make sure each coordinator has a copy of the calendar and post a copy in a central location.

7. Talk about ground rules for the group and common understandings.
   - What are our expectations for attendance?
   - If coordinators get sick, whom can they call?
   - Who can make changes in the calendar if necessary?
   - Should someone be in charge of calling coordinators to remind them about upcoming responsibilities?

8. If the group wants to have a snack before or during the meeting, decide who will be responsible for assigning and reminding people to bring in food. Make provisions for cleanup as well.

9. Measure how well this planning session went by asking the following questions:
   - Did everyone participate in the planning?
   - Did the group listen to each person?
   - Is everyone comfortable with the study plan?

10. Save some time at the end of the unit of study on *What Am I Called to Be?* to reflect on what you have learned and how you can put that knowledge into practice. Session 9 is designed to help you do this. Plan for a celebration at the end of your study.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

PLANNING REFERENCE GUIDE

What Am I Called to Be?

Questions

- What surprises you in this session?
- Which ideas do you like in this session?
- Which scriptures and themes would you want to focus on?

Topic	Scripture	Theme	Notes
Productive Worker	*Psalm 90:16-17* *Ecclesiastes 3:9-15* *Mark 4:21-25*	God's Blessing on Work Enjoying Work Letting Your Light Shine	
Seeking Other Interests	*Exodus 31:1-5* *Sirach 38:31-34* *Ephesians 3:14-19*	Talent & Skill Artisans of God Strength From Within	
In Relationships	*Matthew 7:12* *Galatians 3:28* *I Corinthians 7:36-38*	Friendship Male/Female Single or Married	
Caring for Others	*Luke 18:15-17* *I Timothy 5:1-2* *I Peter 4:8-11*	Honoring Children Speak Kindly Hospitable to One Another	
Life-Long Learner	*Proverbs 2:1-5* *Matthew 7:13-14* *Acts 16:14-15*	Value of Wisdom Road to Life Receptive to God	
Servant	*Matthew 20:25-28* *Acts 9:36-40* *Romans 12:9-13*	Christ the Servant Finding Ways to Help Others Signs of a True Christian	
Faithful	*II Timothy 3:14-17* *Psalm 122:1* *I Thessalonians 5:16-22*	Teaching Worship Prayer	

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

What Am I Called to Be?

Productive Worker

SESSION 2

Objective

Youth will be able to explore how God calls people to a variety of career opportunities throughout their lives.

Personal Story

Whenever I talk to an adult I don't know very well, they usually ask me about my career plans. I'm polite and say something I think they want to hear. Sometimes I tell them I plan to be a teacher or that I am thinking about law school. What I say depends on my mood and what's been happening.

If I were honest, I would tell them I don't have a clue—I am only 16! After I get back a good grade on an English paper, I decide I will definitely be a writer. Then after I work with first graders in Sunday school, I'm sure I should be a teacher. Then after an argument with my mom, I just want to go somewhere as far away as possible.

Choosing a career seems impossible right now. A writer named Frederick Buechner says that I should do something that is both good for me and helps others. When I listen to my parents talk about their jobs, I rarely hear anything that's good for them. My dad talks about working for an incompetent boss, and my mom usually complains about her commute. I don't really know exactly what either one of them does all day at work.

If a job is supposed to help others, I guess that means being a health-care provider, a social worker, or maybe a priest. Can you help others when you work for a bank or a department store? That question reminded me of a security guard at a department store who certainly helped me.

One day when I was doing some early Christmas shopping, I realized that my wallet wasn't in my purse. My wallet had my driver's license, all the money from my last paycheck, and my mom's credit card. I panicked. The more I looked for the wallet, the more frantic I became. It never occurred to me to ask for help. The guard probably approached me because I looked a wreck. She just kept talking to me, ignoring my tears. Then she helped me retrace my steps from the time I had entered the store.

It would be nice to end the story by saying we found the wallet. We didn't. However, she took me to a telephone, and we called my mom to alert her about the lost card. The guard even told me what I needed to do to replace my driver's license. She made me feel like I wasn't stupid and that things would be all right.

I think the career I end up in will probably be something I want to do, and I hope I can find a job that uses my gifts of writing and working with small children. Whether or not that career helps others will be up to me. I've already discovered that a security guard can use patience and kindness in her job to help scatterbrains like me.

Scripture

Psalm 90:16-17
Ecclesiastes 3:9-15
Mark 4:21-25

Skill Focus

Conflict
Influences

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Prayer
Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ in his earthly life shared our toil and hallowed our labor: Be present with your people where they work; make those who carry on the industries and commerce of this land responsive to your will; and give to us all a pride in what we do, and a just return for our labor; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*.

For commerce and industry
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 259

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 God's Blessing on Work

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Let your work be manifest to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.
Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
and prosper for us the work of our hands—
O prosper the work of our hands!

Psalm 90:16-17

Commentary: The beginning of *Psalm 90* recalls that God is eternal and has always been a refuge for human beings, who live only a short time. The psalmist reminds people that because life is short, they need to find God's purposes in their lives. In the lines above, the writer asks that God's work be made manifest, or evident, in their lives, and that God help the work of their hands to flourish and survive.

☐ Questions

- How is God's work evident in your life?
- Can you see evidence of God's work in anyone around you? Explain.
- Is it hard for you to think of life being short? How do you relate to the first part of *Psalm 90*?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
- How was God present in the way the security guard treated the narrator?
- How could God be more evident in your work?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 1.
- What kinds of jobs do you or your friends have? How can others see God in you or your friends by the way you do your jobs?

☐ Activities

Trust the Inner Spirit

Give everyone a lump of modeling clay and a blindfold. After all the participants have put on the blindfolds, ask them to make whatever they want with the clay. Each person must work totally "blind." Ask the group to refrain from talking so they are not aware of what others are making. The creations can be simple, functional, or abstract.

After about ten minutes, ask everyone to remove his or her blindfold and see what has been created. Talk about the creations and the difficulty participants encountered.

- Would your creation have been different if you had been aware of what others were doing?
- Are you often overwhelmed by what others think? Does this keep you from trusting your own instincts?
- Do others have stronger opinions about what you should be doing than you do yourself? How do you handle this?

Identify the clay sculptures that have functional uses and those that are artistic or totally abstract. Talk about how God calls people to use their own unique gifts in whatever occupation they are in.

- Is a functional sculpture better than an artistic one?
- Does society sometimes rate some jobs as inferior or superior to others?
- What should the real criteria be?

Cartoons

Bring in cartoons from a daily or Sunday newspaper. Ask the group to identify cartoons that depict people in work situations.

- What do the cartoons say about the way people work?
- Is work glorified or ridiculed?
- What expectations are placed on people at work?
- Is work seen as rewarding or a nuisance?

Think about a work or volunteer experience you have had. Identify something that irritated you or caused problems. Draw your own cartoon or work in small groups to create a longer cartoon. Share the cartoons with the group and talk about your experiences.

- How can humor help you deal with difficult situations?
- Describe a time humor changed a situation you were in. Is humor a gift from God?

Look for ways this week that humor can lighten a moment and change it for the better.

What Is God Calling You to Be?

Sometimes young people think they have an idea of what God is calling them to be, but others may have very different ideas. What do others think God is calling you to do? Divide into pairs and talk about what God is calling you to be. Include ideas about additional schooling, work, volunteer opportunities, and other experiences. Begin by having one person state in positive terms what God is calling him or her to be. Ask the other person to list the positive things known about this person and the gifts God has given him or her. Then trade places.

Use this list as the first step in finding God's purposes in your life. Ask others, including adult family members or friends, to identify attributes and gifts they see in you. See which items appear in more than one list. Is God using others to help you find God's purpose for your life?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

2 Enjoying Work

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by.

Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

Commentary: This passage comes immediately after one of the most well-known passages in scripture that begins: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven . . ." Good and evil are mysteriously mixed. Opposites, seen together and from a distance, represent life in its fullest sense. The writer of *Ecclesiastes* says that true wisdom comes in matching actions with the proper times. As people recognize that all times and all things are ultimately in God's hands, they are called to enjoy good things, both play and work, as gifts from God.

☐ Questions

- What do you consider toil? Is it possible to take pleasure in it? How?
- Is it hard to accept that God is in control? Why?
- Read the scripture in *Ecclesiastes 3:1-9* referred to in the Commentary. How are good and evil mixed together? How does this represent life?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did the security guard use her job to help others and to find enjoyment?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 1.

- Which people in the photographs appear to be enjoying their work?
- If someone took a picture of you at work, would you look like you enjoyed it?

☐ Activities

Finding Work You Love

Several weeks before the group meets, invite a panel of people to talk to the group about what they love about their work. Ask individuals from different occupations, including those in non-traditional jobs. For example, a banker, a construction worker, a store clerk, a fulltime homemaker, someone who is retired, or a volunteer in the community. Before the panel arrives, think of several questions the group could ask the panelists, such as:

- What do you love about your work?
- When did you decide on this line of work?
- Did other people help you find this work? Who are they?
- How do you experience the presence of God in your work?

Save time at the end of the panel discussion for participants to talk to panelists who are doing work that interests individuals in the group.

Show and Tell

The week before this session is scheduled, ask youth to bring a symbol of something that they love doing. For example, someone who loves to dance could bring a program from a recital, a soccer player could bring in a jersey or trophy, an avid reader could bring a book. After each youth has had a chance to share or describe his or her symbol, brainstorm ways each person could make that love a part of his or her life. For example, a soccer player could coach a community team or a dancer might teach others to dance.

- Is it possible to make a career of something you love to do?
- Do you know people who get paid to do what they love?

Take another look at the symbols participants brought or described. This time, brainstorm ways people could do something they love to help others. Using that list, identify one thing you could do during the next month for others that would also involve something you love to do.

Interviews

Ask participants to think about a person they know who has worked at least five years in the same profession. Contact this person and talk to him or her about careers and what he or she has learned about working. Before the interview process begins, come up with a set of questions to ask each person. For example:

- How did you decide on this career?
- How old were you when you made this decision?
- What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work? The least enjoyable?
- Do you see any aspect of your work as a part of your faith?

Share information you learn with the group. Consider writing stories about the people you interviewed and their professions. Compile the information into a booklet or in a newspaper format for young people who are exploring different careers.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

3 Letting Your Light Shine

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus] said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. For to those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."
Mark 4:21-25

Commentary: In the parable of the lamp and the parable of the measure, Jesus challenges his listeners to think about their role in the world. A lamp is brought to a house for a purpose. It would be foolish for someone to hide it under a basket or a bed. Jesus is the light of the world and expects his followers to also be lights in the world. The various gifts and talents from God are the light of Christ within each person. It would be foolish and a waste of light to hide these gifts. Jesus calls people to let their light shine before others and give glory to God.

☐ Questions

- Which of your talents and gifts show "the light of Christ"?
- Do you ever hide them? Why?
- Have you forgotten how to do something you used to do well?
- Why is it important to share your gifts and talents with others?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
- How could the narrator pass on to others the kindness she was shown from the guard?
- What kindness could you pass on that someone gave to you?

From *Wishful Thinking*

The word vocation comes from the Latin vocare, to call, and means the work a person is called to by God. . . . By and large a good rule for finding it is this: The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done. If you really get a kick out of your work, you've presumably met requirement (a), but if your work is writing cigarette ads, the chances are you've missed requirement (b). On the other hand, if your work is being a doctor in a leper colony, you have probably met requirement (b), but if most of the time you're bored and depressed by it, the chances are you have not only bypassed (a), but probably aren't helping your patients much either. . . .The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

— Frederick Buechner

☐ Activities

Stupid Human Tricks

Play a game from a late night television show based on sketches called "Stupid Pet Tricks." Go around the room asking youth to do "stupid human tricks." For example, some can pop an unwrapped piece of candy in their mouth and unwrap it using only their tongue, others might burp a well-known song, someone might be double-jointed, and maybe another can impersonate a cat. After everyone has had a chance to show off his or her trick, talk about why people sometimes want to keep their talents to themselves.

- Which other, perhaps more socially acceptable, talents do you possess?
- What are your fears about letting others know of them?
- How can you help each other use your gifts as lights in the world?

Write on a post-it note one gift or talent that you have hidden from others. Collect the notes and attach them to a large candle. Ask God to help you find a way to use that talent as a light in the world.

This Light of Mine

Before the group meets, gather a votive candle, a straw basket, a tin can, and a platform of some sort. Turn off the lights and make the room as dark as possible. Light the candle and place the basket over it. Remove the basket and put the can over the candle. (**Hint:** Be sure the basket does not touch the candle flame, and make sure some air reaches the candle by tilting the can slightly.) Talk about what happened when the candle was covered.

- What happened when the candle was under the basket? Could you still see light?
- What happened when the can was placed over the candle?
- What is like the basket in your life? Do you have gifts that have the potential of making more light than they do now?
- What is like the tin can? What gifts do you keep in the dark?

Place the light on the stand. How does that change the amount of light in the room? If you don't use a gift, will it eventually disappear? Give everyone a candle and ask him or her to light it from the candle on the platform. Watch how the room gets lighter and lighter.

- What happens when people put their gifts together?
- Can you describe an event that occurred only because people worked together?

Lights in the Community

Find a way the group can literally add light to the community. At Advent, the group could gather materials to make Advent wreaths, including greens, forms, and candles. Meet with a younger group of children and talk about the meaning of the wreaths while you are making them.

The group could also contact organizations that serve low-income families to find out if they need light bulbs. Ask the congregation to bring in standard light bulbs and then distribute them to the appropriate agencies.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

What Am I Called to Be?

Seeking Other Interests

SESSION 3

Objective

Youth will be able to identify ways that God-given gifts can enrich people's lives.

Personal Story

Since the sixth grade, I have been involved in the arts program at my school. I love to act, sing, and dance. By my freshman year in high school, I was in the chorus, the winter musical, an a cappella group, and a summer drama production in my community. Performing has always brought me a great deal of joy, not only because it gives me the opportunity to use the talents God has given me, but also because I am able to share those talents with others.

Unfortunately, as high school continued, I grew more and more discouraged with my daily routine of schoolwork and rehearsals. I felt depressed. I wanted more out of life, but I wasn't sure what exactly I was seeking. I spent the next year going through phases of frustration and disappointment. It got to the point where I was unable to enjoy singing and acting, which had given me so much pleasure in the past. I stopped studying and eating, and I slept a lot. I decided that it was easier to stay at home alone than to face the pressures and hassles of the daily grind. My friends and teachers began to worry. They tried to talk to me, but I didn't know what was wrong.

Then that summer, my friend Dana suggested that I join my school's cross-country team. She had been on it the previous fall, and she thought it would be a great way for me to break out of my moods. I rejected the idea at first. I am not a natural athlete, and I have never run more than a mile in my life. The last thing I wanted to do was embarrass myself in front of the whole school. Dana finally persuaded me to come out for preseason. I showed up the first day prepared to hate it, but the coach was very friendly and tried hard to make me feel comfortable as a new runner. I left that day with a sense of confidence that I hadn't felt in months. I finished the season, and while I was never one of the top runners on the team, I gained respect for myself as an athlete.

What I learned from my experience on the cross-country team was that I needed to make an effort to try new things, even if I'm not necessarily talented in that area. Some of the amazing gifts that God gives us are not just those skills that we are very good at. God also blesses us with the strength and opportunity to try new things, so that we might discover who we are and what we want out of life.

Today I am still quite active in the arts, but I would not enjoy my activities as much if it weren't for cross-country. Running adds a new element to my life that I would never have discovered if I hadn't had the courage to try something new.

Scripture

Exodus 31:1-5
Sirach 38:31-34
Ephesians 3:14-19

Skill Focus

Respect
Independence/Individuality

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Prayer
O God, in the course of this busy life, give us times of refreshment and peace; and grant that we may so use our leisure to rebuild our bodies and renew our minds, that our spirits may be opened to the goodness of your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

For the Good Use of Leisure
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 825

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Talent & Skill

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

The Lord spoke to Moses: See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft.

Exodus 31:1-5

Commentary: Part of God's covenant with the people of Israel was a requirement for them to build a tabernacle that would serve as a dwelling for God. The work was incredibly precise and demanding—there were specific instructions for every detail of the tent, all the furnishings, and the altar. God obviously wanted the dwelling place to have beauty as well as function. But God did not make these demands and then leave Moses with no means to carry them out. A specific artisan was provided to carry out the intricate plans.

☐ Questions

- What gifts did God give to Bezalel? What would have happened if Bezalel had not used his gifts?
- If you had lived at that time, what gifts could you have contributed to the construction of the tabernacle?
- The tabernacle was actually a tent that could be transported with the nomadic Hebrews. What other cultures have moveable places of worship?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
- Even though the narrator used his artistic gifts, he still felt empty. Has that ever happened to you? Explain.

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 2.
- If your group made a poster that reflected your interests, what activities would it include?

☐ Activities

Building the Church

Take a tour of the church building and make a list of the different kinds of talents that were necessary for its construction and use. Be sure to include the nave or main worship space, classroom areas, basement, and utility and furnace closets.

- What went into the actual building itself?
- What was necessary for making the candles, the hangings on the altar, the windows, and the wine and bread used at communion?
- What kinds of telephone and computer systems are available? Who keeps them running?

See how many different kinds of talents and skills the group can name. Classify the list according to skill levels and types of professions using these gifts.

- How much education is necessary for each skill?
- Are you interested in pursuing any of the professions that use these talents and skills?
- Are there adults in your church in the professions the group identified who would be willing to talk to participants about their work?

If the group is interested in pursuing this topic further, contact adults who would be willing to be part of a panel discussion.

Finding New Talents

Distribute paper and pencils or markers. Ask the group to draw a picture with their non-dominant hand. Pictures can be as complex or simple as the group desires. After the group is finished with their drawings, allow individuals to share their work with others. Talk about the frustrations and freedom participants experienced.

- What was the most frustrating part of this experience?
- Could you do the same things with your non-dominant hand? Describe the difficulties.
- Did you have to lower your expectations?
- If you used the non-dominant hand for a period of time, would your efforts improve?

Training, practice, and a positive attitude are necessary for most people regardless of their natural talent. These three attributes are just as important for other new skills or jobs. Reread the Personal Story. Identify a new area in sports, the arts, or academics that you would like to try. Find someone who can help you.

Group Poster

Look at Resource Poster No. 2 of different young people pursuing interests in music, sports, computers, and other areas. Ask participants to bring in similar photos of themselves to make their own poster. For example, a baseball player could bring in an action shot from a game, another could bring a photo that shows them caring for a pet, while another could bring an actual piece of art. Or, the group could look through magazines for pictures of their areas of interest or expertise. Mount the pictures in the center of a large piece of newsprint and hang it in a central location at your church. Invite others in the congregation to add their own pictures or descriptions of their talents and skills.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

2 Artisans of God

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

And these rely on their hands,
and all are skillful in their own work.
Without them no city can be inhabited,
and wherever they live, they will not go hungry.
Yet they are not sought out for the council of the people,
nor do they attain eminence in the public assembly.
They do not sit in the judge's seat,
nor do they understand the decisions of the courts;
they cannot expound discipline or judgment,
and they are not found among the rulers.
But they maintain the fabric of the world,
and their concern is for the exercise of their trade.

Sirach 38:31-34

Commentary: *Sirach's* portrayal of the division of labor emphasizes a contrast between the craftsmen and scribes. The rulers, judges, and scribes needed time to pursue their learning; that time was created by others gifted in doing the work necessary to "maintain the fabric of the world." While farmers, artisans, smiths, and potters may not be sought out for councils of learning, they are an essential part of any civilization. *Sirach* notes that "without them, no city can be inhabited." The people of the world are interdependent—both company presidents and trades people are valued for their work.

☐ Questions

- Who are the most valued workers in society today?
- Could they do their jobs without the efforts of less-skilled or -talented people?
- List all the people whose jobs and skills make your world a better place.

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did the narrator use talents and skills to help others?
- Who made this possible?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 2.

- Look at each picture and list the workers who are needed for each of these young people to pursue their interests. For example, a grounds crew must work every day to keep a golf course ready for use.

☐ Activities

At the Movies

Look at a film that describes the making of a famous movie. For example, films are available at video stores about the making of *Star Wars*, *Titanic*, and other productions. After watching the film together, talk about the kinds of talents and gifts used "behind the scenes" in the making of a movie.

- If you could be involved in the making of a movie, how would you want to participate? Writing? Production? Acting? Editing?
- If you were to produce a film called "the making of a school day," what things, events, and people would you include? Where would you begin?

Interdependence with one another seems to have been a part of God's original plan. Talk about how others play important roles in your life. List three people who are involved in the production of you. Find a way in the next week to do something for them or to thank them for being a part of your life.

Behind the Scenes

Challenge the group to create a photo collage about the making of a typical Sunday at your church. Think about all the people who do things during the week, before church begins, and after church begins.

- What goes on behind the scenes in order to have a typical day at church?
- What people do we take for granted? Were you surprised at the number of people you identified?

After you identify all the people who make worship and education possible, assign volunteers in the group to take appropriate pictures during the next week. For example, take pictures of a choir rehearsal or finance meeting, of altar guild members after church, maintenance staffs, or a Sunday school teacher. Combine the photos into one display for the congregation. Be sure to identify each person pictured.

Creating Art

Take a field trip to a place of creativity that you can be a part of. For example, visit a senior's center, YMCA, or YWCA that offers arts and crafts classes for seniors or children. Contact the coordinator to find out if your group could visit one or more of the classes. Encourage participants to talk to those in the classes about their artistic expressions and the talents they use or have discovered by taking the class. Discuss the experience later and identify the people who made the art experience possible. For example, in a pottery class someone has to prepare the clay and to fire the finished products.

- Did you discover an artistic talent or other skills during this experience?
- How can artistic expression be therapeutic for some people?
- Could art be an outlet for some of your creative instincts?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

3 Strength From Within

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filed with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19

Commentary: In this passage, Paul reminds his reader that as people of faith they are the dwelling place of God, just as the temple was the dwelling place of God in former times. Paul emphasized the indwelling of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of his followers, and wanted his readers to know that power was available to them. The life of faith is one that is grounded in a love that provides the strength to accomplish "abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine."

☐ Questions

- Where does Paul tell the Ephesians to look for power?
- Where is the first place you look for power?
- Do you begin by looking inside?
- How can you tap this power?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did the narrator tap her personal strength?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 2.

- What kind of inner strength do the people in the pictures need?
- What inner strength do you use in similar situations?

☐ Activities

Potential Within

Ask individuals in the group to describe the most beautiful worship places they have seen. If possible, bring in books that show churches and other worship areas from different cultures throughout the world. From the books and descriptions, make a list of the elements that made the places beautiful. For example, the ornate mosaics in the cathedral in St. Petersburg, Russia, are overpowering. But the simplicity of a small, rural church may be its richest asset.

Ask participants to each list at least three things from your discussion that add beauty to a worship space. Then ask them to look at the dwelling inside themselves that they have prepared for God. Compare the list you made with the place you found inside.

- What is missing in your inner dwelling place for God?
- Should some things be removed?
- Should others be added?
- Does your inner space reflect the simplicity or ornateness that attracts you to a communal worship space?

Ask God to help you make a dwelling place that will enable you to feel the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. As a group, spend some time in silence in your inner dwellings.

Personal Story

Reread the Personal Story. Compare the narrator's story to your own experiences.

- Have there been times when you have been invited by someone like Dana to try a different skill?
- Have you ever been like Dana and encouraged another person to try something new?
- What kept the narrator from trying something different?
- What keeps you from trying new things?
- Do you always try to stay in your comfort zone? What could happen if you dared to leave it?

Pair up with another person in the group and talk about your experiences. Help each other identify one new area to venture into that is outside your comfort zone. Make a list of advantages and disadvantages of trying something new. For example, you might make new friends, but you might also feel left out. After looking at the advantages and disadvantages, decide whether or not to try this new venture. See if someone else in the group would be interested in attempting it with you.

Friendship Cake

A "Friendship Cake" is made by using a starter dough that is made by another person. The gooey mixture is not very attractive, but it can, with the right steps and over time, become cake. Find a recipe and begin a friendship cake for your church. Make the starter dough, then copy the instructions for each recipient. As you prepare the dough, talk about how it is similar to preparing your inner life.

- What happens if you don't follow directions?
- What experiences in life are like the ingredients in the cake?
- Could you make the cake without sugar? What happens if you leave out the leavening?

Serve the cake at coffee hour and take names of those who want some of the starter dough.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

What Am I Called to Be?

In Relationships

SESSION 4

Objective

Youth will be able to name the different types of relationships that God calls people to be involved in.

Personal Story

Sometimes I don't really understand my friends, if that's what you want to call them. They keep interfering in a friendship I have with another person by trying to make it something it isn't. But let me back up and explain the situation.

Last year in English class, I started to talk to Joe, who sat across from me, before class. One day he had forgotten his English book, so we shared mine. I guess this was the beginning of our friendship.

After a few months of talking before and after English, we would see each other in the hall and say hi. Sometimes we shared the same lunch hour, so we would eat together on those days.

Then summer came, and we found out we were both lifeguards at the same pool. This friendship was becoming a very important part of my life. All during the summer, we did everything together. We went to movies, hung out at each other's houses, went biking, and ate ice cream together. We both really enjoyed each other's company.

When the new school year started, we only saw each other passing in the hall. However, after school, we did our homework or watched television together.

I can't remember when all the talk started with my friends. They keep claiming that Joe and I are more than friends. But that is not true. When I try to explain, they just roll their eyes and say, "Sure, you're just *friends.*"

Why can't people accept our friendship? Why isn't it okay to be friends with someone of the opposite sex? I have never thought of Joe in any way except as my very best friend. We are two people who really like to be with each other. We can't wait to share all of our joys and even some of the not so joyful times. We support each other in decisions, we respect each other's opinions, and we encourage each other's dreams.

Joe is my best friend and I don't want to lose that relationship. I wish that the expectations and judgments of others didn't make it so hard for us to be friends.

Scripture

Matthew 7:12
Galatians 3:28
I Corinthians 7:36-38

Skill Focus

Communication
Forgiveness

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Prayer
O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*.

Proper 9
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 230-231

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Friendship

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus said,] "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."
Matthew 7:12

Commentary: This passage comes from *Matthew's* account of the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God. This passage is in response to those who had conceived of a negative Golden Rule that advised inaction, such as, "Do not do to others. . ." Jesus makes a positive statement that requires people to improve the welfare and happiness of others.

☐ Questions

- What is the difference between not doing something to someone and doing something for someone?
- Which action takes more energy and time?
- Have you helped someone before you were asked to? What was that like?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- If the narrator's friends followed Jesus' words, how would they act?
- Do you sometimes make judgments about relationships that hurt those involved?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 3.

- Which of the images reflect friendship?
- How would you illustrate friendship?

☐ Activities

In Literature

Ask the group to bring in books, poetry, and other literature that deals with the topic of friendship. Talk about the characters and themes in each of the works.

- How do different authors and poets portray friendship?
- Do you recognize yourself in any of the characters?
- What is the most important aspect of friendship?

From your discussion, list all the traits or characteristics of friendship from both the literature and your own experience. See if you can agree on which traits are most important, and put a star by the top ten traits. Individually, rate your most important friendships by the characteristics that are starred. Find at least one way that you could improve a friendship that is important to you.

- What can you do to live up to Jesus' teaching to "do to others as you would have them do to you"?
- How can God help you be a better friend?

The Good and the Bad

Make a life-size outline of a person. (**Hint:** Ask a friend to lie on a piece of newsprint while you outline their body with a marker.) Post the figure at the front of the room. Bring in two colors of post-it notes. Ask the group to use one color to write everything good about friends and friendship. Put these notes inside the figure. Use the second set of notes for characteristics of bad friendships. Put these notes outside the outline of the figure. Discuss both the good and bad characteristics.

- Was it easier to think of good friendships or destructive ones?
- How can a friendship be bad?
- Can a bad friendship be healed? What has to take place for this to happen?
- Are there times you need to leave a destructive friendship? How do you know when to do this? Who can help you see the situation more clearly?

Most people have been betrayed or hurt by a friend. Sometimes we are the ones who cause the pain. Jesus taught us that forgiveness is the best way to heal broken relationships. Write the name of a person from whom you are estranged on an index card. Put the card where you will see it during the week. Each time you see it, pray that God will help you to find a way to repair the damage.

Movie Night

Watch the movie *Circle of Friends*. Before the movie begins, ask participants to look for characteristics of friendship.

- What happens to the group when one of the friends betrays another?
- Where did you see yourself or someone you know?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

2 Male/Female

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

Commentary: Paul's letter to the Galatians dealt primarily with whether Gentiles must become Jews before they can be Christians. This passage is part of Paul's statement about justification by faith—salvation through God's grace and not by good works or other deeds. In baptism, all people are equal in God's eyes, no matter where they are from, or if they are male or female.

☐ Questions

- Are men and women treated the same in all cultures? Why?
- According to Paul, how does God view men and women?
- Are men and women respected equally in your church? Explain.
- Can men and women be different and still have equality? How?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Why is it difficult to be friends with someone of the opposite sex?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 3.

- What are the differences among the males and females in the poster?
- How can these differences be respected?

☐ Activities

Personal Story

Reread the Personal Story for this session. Ask participants to think about their own experiences or those of their friends in male-female friendships. Write your own personal story based on these experiences. Discuss the stories of those who feel comfortable sharing them.

- What were the difficulties encountered?
- What are the benefits of being friends with someone of the opposite sex?
- Did you or your friends encounter the same misunderstanding from others as the narrator in the story?
- Alter the scenario of the Personal Story and discuss how new dynamics can change the situation. For example:
- Joe decides he wants to be more than friends and asks the narrator for a date.
- The group finally accepts the friendship and everyone has fun going places together. Two others in the group then decide to start dating. What happens to the group?
- One of the narrator's friends begins dating Joe and he doesn't have much time for others. They start to go places without the group.
- The narrator decides she wants to date Joe. Joe isn't interested in dating, but doesn't want to lose the friendship.

Discuss ways groups you are a part of can deal with changing relationships among group members.

Different Roles

Divide into two groups, one male and one female. Bring in props to help both groups get into their roles. Bring pom-poms, fabric for skirts, and wigs, if possible, for the boys, who are to act like cheerleaders. For the girls, who are to act like football players, bring in a football, shoulder pads, and helmets. Let each group get into character. Encourage them to walk and talk like they think cheerleaders and football players would.

After a few minutes, ask the football players to talk about things they think boys normally do. Then let the cheerleaders have a conversation they envision girls having.

- Are there common misconceptions on both sides? What are they?
- Do some of the conversations get close to reality?
- How can we bridge misunderstandings between males and females?

Take off the costumes and talk in small groups or pairs about respecting the differences between men and women and recognizing the similarities. Reread the scripture passage. Paul doesn't say that everyone has to be the same, but that we are all one in Jesus.

Put all the props used in the role play in the center of the group. Begin a prayer in silence about bridging misunderstandings between men and women. End the prayer by encouraging individuals to add their thoughts aloud.

In the Toy Store

Plan a field trip to a nearby toy store. Assign different sections of the store to individuals or small groups. Ask them to look for gender-specific toys in each section.

- At what age do gender-specific toys begin appearing? Did you find stuffed trucks with the stuffed animals?
- Are action figures designed with males or females in mind?
- Were you surprised by the way toys subtly encourage gender differences?
- Which differences are bad? Which are good?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

3 Single or Married

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his fiancée, if his passions are strong, and so it has to be, let him marry as he wishes; it is no sin. Let them marry. But if someone stands firm in his resolve, being under no necessity but having his own desire under control, and has determined in his own mind to keep her as his fiancée, he will do well. So then, he who marries his fiancée does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.

I Corinthians 7:36-38

Commentary: When Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians, he believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent. Christians, in his view, should spend the last days spreading the good news and preparing for Christ instead of being distracted by the obligations of family life. However, he also believed that marriage was good for those "whose passions are strong."

☐ Questions

- How would Paul advise a couple contemplating marriage today?
- How do Paul's ideas about passion run counter to the media's messages about passion and sex?
- Is marriage right for everyone? What does Paul say?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Is friendship a good basis for a romantic relationship?
- Can romantic feelings, especially if only one person feels them, destroy a friendship? Explain.

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 3.

- What feelings or emotions are important in a romantic relationship?
- How do you view marriage?

☐ Activities

Love in Music

If possible, bring in music about love, marriage, and dating from earlier periods, such as songs by Stephen Foster, "I Dream of Jeannie," or music written during and right after World War II. You could also find romantic songs from musicals, such as *South Pacific*, *The Fantasticks*, or *Oklahoma!* Listen to the songs and list the themes you find.

- How are they similar to your experiences?
- Have romantic relationships changed much in the last 75 or 100 years?

Now listen to some current music about romantic love. See if the themes from the earlier music are repeated in the new songs.

- What is similar or different between the depiction of romantic love in older and newer songs?
- Which do you like better?
- How does this music fit in with Paul's message to the Corinthians?

At an appropriate gathering at your church, play both kinds of music about romantic love. Listen to comments people make and note which music they prefer. Encourage people to share their personal experience of romantic relationships.

Debate

Invite several couples who have been married for various lengths of time and several single adults from your congregation to debate the advantages of being married or staying single. Divide the young people into two groups, one to meet with the couples, and the other to meet with the single adults. Give the groups about twenty minutes to come up with their response to the statement: Those who refrain from marriage will do better (see *I Corinthians 7:38*).

Each group should appoint a spokesperson to make an opening statement. One person, who is not a part of either group, should be the moderator and timekeeper. To help both groups prepare their responses, bring in Bibles and concordances. Assure the participants that they don't have to necessarily agree with the position they are supporting.

Limit the debate to a brief opening statement, and two to three rebuttals. Afterward, talk about the issues that both groups raised.

- Did you hear some new ideas from this debate?
- Can marriage be wrong for some people and right for others?
- Can people change their minds? What are the consequences?

Going to the Movies

Watch the comedy *My Best Friend's Wedding*. Look for both the positive and negative sides of marriage depicted in the movie. The character played by Julia Roberts shows up with one intention: to stop the wedding. Talk about what she learns and how she responds.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

What Am I Called to Be?

Caring for Others

SESSION 5

Objective

Youth will be able to describe how God calls people to serve Christ in all persons.

Personal Story

One day, our youth group went on a field trip to tour a cathedral in a large city. To get to the cathedral, we rode through a very poor section of town. It was obvious that the people who lived in the shabby homes were not well off.

From the windows of the bus, we could see that the houses were run down, and there was trash piled up on the porches, on the sidewalks, and in the yards. Some windows had no curtains, and cardboard or plywood covered windows with missing glass. The lawns had been taken over by weeds or were bare. Many of the people sitting on the front stoops were smoking, wearing torn t-shirts. The whole neighborhood looked like something out of the movies.

How could people live like that? How could little children be raised in such chaos? A part of me felt sorry for these families. Another part felt a great relief that I didn't have to live here.

When we got to the edge of the neighborhood, our bus pulled into the cathedral's driveway. We all felt confused. Why would they build a beautiful cathedral next to one of the poorest sections in town? We had expected the cathedral to be at the top of a hill with a majestic view of the city. We thought the structure would be magnificent, with polished stone and ornate carvings. We weren't even close. One of the largest cathedrals in the world stared at us at street level, surrounded by great poverty.

When we went inside, I noticed that the building didn't look sparkling clean or beautifully polished. Instead, it was rather dusty and dirty. Everything wasn't neatly in place. Renovations were taking place so scaffolding was everywhere. Workers in hard hats were talking, and sounds of large machinery invaded the silence. The loud and distracting scene was anything but peaceful and serene.

At the end of our tour, I finally asked our guide the question we all wanted answered: "Why was this cathedral built here?" I'll never forget the answer. He said this location was chosen because it reflected the ministry and mission of Jesus. Throughout his life, Jesus had lived and worked among the poor and the outcast. Jesus asks us to do the same, the guide added, by serving Christ in all persons, beginning with those who have the greatest needs.

When we drove away, I saw the neighborhood in a new light. I looked past the trash and noticed a small planter filled with bright geraniums. I saw a group of children laughing while they turned a jump rope. I decided to find out more about helping people in my own community who live in poverty.

Scripture

Luke 18:15-17
I Timothy 5:1-2
I Peter 4:8-11

Skill Focus

Responsibility
Ethics

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Prayer
Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve: Bless all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister in his Name to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the love of him who laid down his life for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*.

For Social Service
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 260

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Honoring Children

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

People were bringing even infants to [Jesus] that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."

Luke 18:15-17

Commentary: In this passage, Jesus rebukes his disciples for keeping children from him. Jesus makes clear again and again that the kingdom of God is for all people, regardless of their age or status in life. There is also a second message in this passage. Jesus is not asking his followers to become childish. He says that they must approach his teachings with humility and trustful simplicity.

☐ Questions

- How did Jesus treat the children differently than his disciples did?
- Do you feel that people in your church try to keep you "in your place"? What can you do about it?
- What can we learn from children about knowing Jesus better?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Put yourself on the bus trip described in the story. What would your reaction have been?
- Now put Jesus in the bus. How would he have reacted? Write a new scenario that reflects your ideas.

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 4.

- How are children and young people pictured in the poster?
- How do you treat young children? Are you more likely to be patient or dismissive?

☐ Activities

Childhood

Ask participants to reflect on their own childhood and what it means to be childlike. Use the following questions to stimulate thought:

- Where did your family eat meals when you were five years old? Did you always sit in the same place?
- What was your favorite cartoon? Why?
- Who was your best friend?
- Did you have imaginary friends?

Talk about your memory of adults from that time in your life.

- Who was the most important adult other than your parents? Why?
- What traits or characteristics do you remember about this person?

Individually, make a list of attributes of your favorite adults from childhood. Compare lists and see if there is a common denominator. Talk about ways to befriend a child. Ask each person to think about a child (not a sibling) who they see often. Use the attributes you listed to befriend a child.

Needs of Children

Bring in several newsmagazines and/or local and world sections of a newspaper. Ask the group to look for stories and pictures of children in need. Try to find examples outside the country, within the United States, and in your community. If possible, show a tape of an advertisement from a charity for poor children, such as the Christian Children's Fund. Talk about the stories and pictures you found as well as information from the ad.

- What are some of the problems children face today?
- Are problems outside the U.S. worse than those that children face in our country?
- What are some of the needs of children in your area or community?

Discuss responses the group could make to some of these problems. For example, you could "adopt" a child from an international organization or provide materials to a children's agency in your area. End the session by praying for the children in the stories or on the tape. Begin in silence, and then ask participants one by one to name a child or a need. Close with the prayer at the top of this page.

Reach Out

Collect children's books for an agency that serves children in your community, such as a homeless shelter, inner city childcare center, or one of the groups identified in the activity above. Ask other groups in the church to help you collect appropriate books. Sort the books by age and reading levels before you deliver them.

If possible, plan to visit the organization or agency while the children are there. Select several books to read to the children individually or in groups. Afterward, talk about your experience and whether you want to make a commitment to continue this activity.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

2 Speak Kindly

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters—with absolute purity.

I Timothy 5:1-2

Commentary: This passage is part of the author's general instructions for how church members are to treat other individuals. The basis of this instruction comes from the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. It specifically refers to speech and says that members of the Church are expected to address each other with respect and dignity.

☐ Questions

- How are elderly people often treated today? How would that treatment change if people listened to this passage?
- How does contemporary music, especially rap lyrics, refer to young men and women? How do those lyrics affect the way we treat each other?
- Does your language reflect your faith?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Have you or someone you know ever worked with the homeless or in other areas of poverty? What was it like?
- How can the way you talk to someone, even if that person is dirty and disheveled, show respect?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 4.

- Look at the picture of the older person talking to the teen. Imagine a dialogue you might have with an older person. What kind of language and tone of voice would you use?

☐ Activities

Contemporary Language

Ask the group to bring in their favorite CDs. During the week, tape portions of two or three sitcoms on television. Listen to several songs from the CDs and watch the tape. Ask the group to listen to the language used in the music and on the shows. Afterward, discuss the kinds of words they heard.

- Did you hear words that you normally hear every day?
- Would you use this kind of language at school? In a school composition? At home? At church?
- Would other words be as effective?
- How do music and television affect your language?

Select a song from one of the CDs. Write down all or part of the lyrics. If any of the language is objectionable, find a substitute that has a similar meaning and works lyrically. Ask someone to read the new words aloud.

- Did you lose anything by changing the words?
- Is harsh language sometimes necessary to convey an idea?

During the week, be aware of language used by your friends and others at school, in the music you listen to, and media you watch. Listen to the words you use in different situations. If you don't like what you hear, ask God to help you use language suitable for all situations.

(**Note:** You could also watch segments of movies such as *Good Will Hunting* to listen to the language. Sometimes language is used for artistic reasons. Discuss the words used in the movie and whether or not they were appropriate to the setting. Even if the language is appropriate, can it have a negative influence in the words you use?)

Kind Words

A week before this session is scheduled, ask participants to join an experiment by selecting an older family member that they see on a regular basis, such as a parent, aunt, uncle, or grandparent. During the week they are to say only pleasant things to this person. If you get angry or annoyed, simply walk away rather than engaging in an argument or disagreement. Keep a daily journal about the results of this experiment.

Reread the scripture passage and then ask participants to share their experiences. Discuss the negative and positive feelings that emerged.

- Was it harder to say nice things earlier or later in the week?
- Did you feel superficial at times?
- Did the experiment cause you turn your back on issues you should have faced? Do you need to still address those issues?
- Did you feel better about yourself by the end of the week? Why?

Talk about whether some in the group want to continue to experiment for another week or indefinitely. If the experience was positive, consider expanding it to others in your household.

Coffee Hour

Meet briefly and read the scripture passage. Then go as a group to coffee hour or another adult gathering. Ask participants, individually or in pairs, to find one older adult to talk to. Afterward, discuss your experiences.

- Was the person easy to talk to?
- What did you talk about?
- Were you surprised that you had things in common?
- Would you like to get to know this person better?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

3 Hospitable to One Another

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

I Peter 4:8-11

Commentary: This letter was written to Christians who had been alienated from their friends and families because of their newfound faith. The writer emphasizes the importance of love in their treatment of others. They are also reminded that God has given each person gifts to use in serving others. Finally, they are told that God's presence will give them strength to serve Christ in others.

☐ Questions

- It is hard to talk to someone who has suffered a loss or disappointment. Is it better to do nothing or to try to offer encouragement? What does the passage say about love and caring for each other?
- What gifts has God given you that you could use to serve others?
- Is serving others an option or a responsibility?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Compare the tour guide's message with the passage from *I Peter*. How are the two messages similar?
- How can love change the way you see things?
- How can you love someone who is very different from you?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 4.

- Which of the pictures best represents service to others?
- Could the group make its own poster of ways participants care for others at school, at home, or in the community?

☐ Activities

Parking Lot Greeter

Ask someone who works with the hospitality ministries at your church to describe different programs designed to make visitors and others feel welcome each week. For example, some churches have greeters standing at the entrance to the worship service to say hello and answer questions about childcare and other needs. Ushers often serve the same function. Many churches also schedule a coffee hour to give people time to get to know one another.

If your church doesn't have greeters, explore ways to get a program started. Consider starting a parking lot greeting program to make your church friendlier and more inviting.

- Who do you need to talk to as you begin your plans?
- How many people are needed each week?
- Who will be in charge of scheduling?
- Should you begin with a trial period?

Reread the scripture passage and ask God to direct your new venture.

Lost Friends

Ask participants to think about someone they knew in middle or junior high school with whom they have lost contact. You could have become separated because this person moved to a new school or you both found different interests. Talk about how it feels to lose a friend.

- Did the loss hurt your feelings?
- Do you regret losing friendships that were once important?
- Is it difficult to maintain friendships when you have different interests and friends?
- What can you do to keep up with friends who you may be naturally growing away from?

Write a letter to a person with whom you have lost contact. What can you say that reflects the hospitality Paul talks about? Mail the letter if you wish.

Smile!

Go to a safe place in your community such as the lobby of a busy hotel, a senior citizen's center, or a mall. Divide into pairs. One person will be an observer and the other will be the "smiler." Walk around for ten to fifteen minutes, trying to make eye contact and smiling at every person you meet. Then trade places, and continue the exercise. Come back together and discuss your experiences.

- Did most people smile back at you?
- Did some people look uncomfortable?
- Did your presence make a difference in people's attitudes?
- Did some avoid making eye contact with you?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

What Am I Called to Be?

Life-Long Learner

SESSION 6

Objective

Youth will be able to state ways that being a life-long learner means being open to new ideas and people.

Personal Story

At 5 a.m. sharp, Led Zeppelin interrupted my dream, indicating it was time to begin the day. It was the first full week of summer. Most of my friends were flipping burgers or on their way to the beach. I was about to embark on a journey to the Appalachian Mountains that turned out to be far more valuable than earning a couple hundred dollars or getting a nice tan.

After gathering with twelve other young people and three adults at my church, we said a prayer and began our journey. Equipped with tools and open minds, we drove for about seven hours to the southwestern tip of Virginia to repair homes for a week. However, I soon learned that the people there had much more to give me than I had to give them.

Our group split into two teams, and each team was assigned different houses to repair. My group dug a fifty-foot drainage ditch, replaced two windows, put gutters around eaves, and tarred several roofs. My memories, though, are less about the work and more about the people who lived in these houses.

At one house, Diane and her young daughter Kristen greeted us at the door when we arrived. Diane was glad to see us, but she seemed uncomfortable in our presence. But slowly, she began to tell us about her life in Appalachia. She explained that she and her neighbors were at the mercy of the absentee coal companies. Because the companies owned the rights to the mountain's rich veins, they could force people from their land. Diane had seen many of her friends and family lose their homes.

As she became more comfortable around us, she told us about her husband's death. One day when he did not return from gathering firewood, she and Kristen began searching the woods. They eventually stumbled upon him—he had been killed by his own chain saw while he was cutting down a tree.

Diane managed to come to terms with his death and moved on, devoting herself to her daughter. She now relies on her meager income as a part-time school secretary and the help of others.

During one break, Diane and I talked about our goals and aspirations in life. I was surprised to learn that she became more religious after her husband's death. She said that God and the goodness of others had given her the strength to endure. The more we talked, the more I realized how much we had in common. I identified with her feelings, and I found I could talk to her as if I had known her all of my life. I realized that no matter where I went, I could find a common ground with anyone I encountered.

Since that conversation, I began looking for similarities in people I meet instead of differences. I try to keep a person's wealth and status from becoming a barrier to a meaningful relationship. By being open to people who are different from me, I have realized that I have much to learn from others.

Scripture

Proverbs 2:1-5
Matthew 7:13-14
Acts 16:14-15

Skill Focus

Responsibility
Compassion

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Prayer
Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures: Grant that, as we probe the mysteries of your creation, we may come to know you more truly, and more surely fulfill our role in your eternal purpose; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.
For Knowledge of God's Creation
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 827

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Value of Wisdom

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

My child, if you accept my words
and treasure up my commandments within you,
making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
if you indeed cry out for insight,
and raise your voice for understanding;
if you seek it like silver,
and search for it as for hidden treasures—
then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 2:1-5

Commentary: The purpose of the *Book of Proverbs* is to help young people learn to cope with life. This passage deals specifically with the rewards of the search for wisdom. The search for wisdom can be elusive, like looking for hidden treasure. However, the search always ends with the discovery of "the fear of the Lord." Fear refers to a healthy respect for God's wondrous powers and a commitment to follow his commandments.

☐ Questions

- What are the metaphors used in the search for wisdom? Do they help you understand what that search is like?
- What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?
- Fear sometimes comes from an abusive relationship. How is that different from the way it is used in *Proverbs*?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 5.

- Do any of the pictures illustrate gaining wisdom as opposed to knowledge? How would you illustrate the search for wisdom?

☐ Activities

Trivial Pursuit

Play a game that tests your knowledge, such as Trivial Pursuit. Make sure everyone has a chance to play several rounds. Talk about the difference between the knowledge needed to answer the questions in the game and the wisdom described in the scripture passage. Look up knowledge and wisdom in a dictionary and write your own definitions.

Ask the group to name things they do or watch others do every day, such as drive a car, take a test, console a friend, or take care of a younger sibling. On a piece of newsprint, list the things on one side that call for knowledge and the things that require wisdom on the other side.

- Do some activities require both knowledge and wisdom? Explain.
- How do you gain knowledge?
- How do you acquire wisdom?
- Do you know someone who you feel is wise? What is that person like?

The scripture passage says that wisdom will come to those who seek it diligently. Ask God to help you to be open to finding wisdom.

Personal Story

Reread the Personal Story. Talk about the experience the narrator had in Appalachia and what he learned from Diane.

- Where did the narrator find wisdom?
- Describe a wise person. Does Diane fit that description?
- Have you ever learned something important from an unexpected source?

Think about an experience you have had with a child, an elderly person, someone who was very ill, or a person in a homeless shelter or soup kitchen. Did you think this kind of person could share any wisdom with you? Write a story about a time you learned something from an unexpected source. Share your story with the group if you feel comfortable doing so.

Learning from Others

Talk about situations and problems that teens are likely to face. For example, decisions about vocation and education, dealing with relationships, falling in love, and expectations of parents and other adults. Based on your discussion, make up a list of questions you would like to have answered.

Identify older adults in the congregation who the group feels are wise. Invite them to come to your meeting, or plan to see them sometime during the week. Ask them to tell you what it was like to be a teen. Use the questions written earlier.

If possible, videotape your interviews. Select your favorite responses from each of the interviews and make a video of the gathered wisdom of the elders of your church. Show it at an appropriate gathering of the congregation.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

2 Road to Life

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus said,] "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Matthew 7:13-14

Commentary: This passage is found in *Matthew*'s account of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is warning his followers that living by the commandments to love God with all their hearts and to love each other as they love themselves will be difficult. It is much easier to live by the ways of the world, and it will definitely be the more popular route. Following Christ may be lonely, but the joy of his presence leads to eternal life.

☐ Questions

- What lures you to the easy road?
- How does the media portray the good life? How does that compare with the teachings of Jesus?
- Have you ever stood up for an unpopular person? Did you feel like you were passing alone through a narrow gate?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How could Diane become more religious after her husband's death?
- Have you ever felt closer to God after a negative experience? Describe what happened.

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 5.

- Think about things you want to learn that are not a part of any educational curriculum. How would you depict them on a poster?

☐ Activities

All My Bags Are Packed

Brainstorm every thing you think you would need for your first apartment or dorm room. For example, a refrigerator, CD player, television, VCR, telephone, computer, and clothing. Then make a list of intangible things you will need, such as friendship, acceptance, recognition, and approval.

Bring in a large garbage sack and a stack of newspapers. Write every item on both lists on a page of newsprint, wad the page up, and put it into the bag. When you finish, make an a narrow gate described in the scripture passage by asking two participants to stand back to back, no more than twelve inches apart. Ask a volunteer to try to get the bag through the gate without crushing any of the items inside.

Open the bag back up and begin removing items that you could live without. For example, you might be able to watch a neighbor's TV, but you can't get along without a telephone and friendship. Keep removing items until you can get the bag through the gate. What is finally left?

The Good Life

Bring in different kinds of magazines, including fashion magazines and those aimed at teens and sports fans. Ask the group to look through the magazines for pictures that show the good life. Mount the pictures in a collage on a posterboard. Explain why you think the picture shows the good life.

Reread the scripture passage. Using *Matthew*'s words as a measuring stick, talk about each picture. With a bold colored marker, cross off each item that probably won't be found on the road that is hard.

- How many pictures are left?
- What is the dollar value of the remaining items?
- How do you keep possessions in perspective?
- Does following Jesus mean you are not supposed to have fun?
- Does life have to be hard?

The commentary points out that the result of following the road described by Jesus is joy. Jesus knew that possessions and worldly power rarely bring happiness. Can you identify one thing in your life that you thought would make you happy but hasn't? Why? What would happen if you laid it aside? During a time such as Lent, consider giving something up that promised happiness but has brought uneasiness.

Movies

Watch the Steve Martin movie *The Jerk* or another film that depicts unexpected wisdom from an unlikely source. In *The Jerk*, Martin plays a simpleton who makes a fortune from a simple idea. He later loses everything and goes back to his former life. Discuss the movie afterward.

- Although this is a slapstick comedy, did parts of it make you feel uncomfortable?
- Do you ever feel like Martin's character?
- Has your wisdom gone unnoticed because you're "just a teenager"?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

Acts 16:14-15

Commentary: Paul and Silas had entered Asia Minor on their missionary journey when they encountered Lydia. Because of her profession as a dealer in purple cloth, she was probably wealthy. (Purple cloth was expensive because of the scarcity of the plants needed for dye.) She was already a believer in God, but she was open and receptive to these two visitors and the message they brought. She went the extra mile by inviting Paul and Silas to stay at her home until they had to move on.

☐ Questions

- How did Lydia know that this new message came from God?
- How can you tell when a new idea should be embraced?
- Lydia not only opened her heart to the missionaries' message, but also her home. How do you treat new people who have different ideas?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did Diane's reaction to the young people make their experience more meaningful?
- Have you been in a situation that changed for the better because a person was willing to be open? Describe the situation.

b Discuss Resource Poster No. 5.

- Where do you find new ideas? How do you decide if they are valid?
- Create a poster that depicts the theme of being open to new ideas and people. Use literal or abstract figures in expressing your ideas. Hang the poster in a place where people new to the church are likely to see it.

☐ Activities

Listening Together

Attend a worship service as a group. Beforehand, talk about the different parts of the service. During the sermon, ask participants to take notes. Ask them to note which parts of the sermon applied to them. (**Hint:** The point of this exercise is not to be critical, but to listen and not tune out. In the scripture passage, Lydia allowed herself to be open to Paul's message. Her willingness to listen not only changed her life, but also the lives of her household.) Make a list of each point the group heard during the sermon.

- Did some people hear something you completely missed?
- Did you always interpret a point the same way?
- How does your frame of mind affect your ability to listen?
- Is it hard to start listening again after you've tuned out?

Make a copy of the list you made and give it to the person who gave the sermon. Try to attend two or more worship services during the course of this study with someone in the group. See if you can improve your listening skills. Talk about the sermon afterward and see if you agree on the main points.

God's Presence in the World

Bring in Bibles and several newspapers from the previous week. Read the scripture passages for that Sunday along with the collect from *The Book of Common Prayer* (or use the prayer at the beginning of this session). Ask the group to list major ideas from the passages and write them down on newsprint.

Pass out the newspapers and look for stories that illustrate the ideas from your list. Tear out the stories or headlines and mount them on another piece of newsprint. Put the two newsprint pages side by side and connect the stories with the ideas by drawing a line with a marker or using bright ribbon. Talk about God's presence in our world today. Select one or more stories that are meaningful to you and pray for the people or situations they describe.

Looking for God

God reveals himself to people in many different ways. How they see God sometimes depends on where they look for God. Interview people in the church who play distinct roles in preparing and conducting the worship service. For example, talk to a person who sings in the choir, a volunteer from the altar guild, an usher, a greeter, the acolyte coordinator, a reader, a chalice bearer, and a priest.

Either invite representatives to make up a panel during a class session, or find time before or after a worship service to talk to the people you selected. Make up a list of questions before you meet with these people, such as:

- Why did you select this way to serve God?
- Are you using your gifts in this service? What are those gifts?
- What do you get out of doing this?

Take pictures of the people you interview and make a poster about finding God through service. Put it in a place where others in the congregation can see it.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

What Am I Called to Be?

Servant

SESSION 7

Objective

Youth will be able to list ways in which serving God promotes peace and justice and respects the dignity of all people

Personal Story

There are two kinds of friends. The kind who are willing to be there for you through thick and thin, and the kind who only want to be a friend when it's easy. I try to stick by my friends through good times and bad. But I've had both kinds of friends. Some have stayed with me even when I pushed them away. Others are tough to figure out.

I have one friend named Mandy who always used to be shy and very feminine. I was the opposite—outgoing and always getting into trouble. Then something changed. Mandy's shyness went away, and for the most part she just acted ditzy.

At first I felt guilty because she annoyed me so much. Then Mandy made me mad because she suddenly started to act like she was doing me a favor by being my friend. We stopped talking for a whole year. I tried to forget she even existed.

But in tenth grade, things changed. I could tell she was in trouble and needed help badly. She was sad, angry, and acting out in school. I finally put our differences aside and went to talk to her.

Mandy told me she thought she was pregnant. She had never been close to her parents and was afraid to tell them her fears. She was frightened and angry with everyone.

I am not the kind of person who sits around wringing my hands if there is something that can be done. I borrowed the car the next afternoon and drove her to a drug store in a different part of town to buy a pregnancy test. Thank goodness it came out negative.

I knew, however, that I couldn't stop there. I took her to a clinic for adolescents that our county operates two days a week. She talked to the people there to get help and guidance.

After the crisis was over, she seemed like the old Mandy. I was glad that I could help her out when she needed someone to lean on. She might not be able to do the same for me, but it doesn't bother me anymore. That's who she is.

I believe that serving others makes a difference. Having compassion for her and treating her the way I would want to be treated is what God wants me to do. Being Mandy's friend when she really needed me helped me as much as I helped her.

Scripture

Matthew 20:25-28
Acts 9:36-40
Romans 12:9-13

Skill Focus

Fairness
Compassion

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Prayer
Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

For Social Justice
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 823

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Christ the Servant

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Matthew 20:25-28

Commentary: Jesus continually turned the normal order of life upside down. He contrasted the way political rulers treated people with the example he set. Most people believe that serving others is menial labor. But Jesus himself came as a servant, as one who put others first. Not only is it hard to put others first, but also people may ridicule you for doing so.

☐ Questions

- How does Jesus turn the normal order of society upside down in this passage?
- How well do you follow Jesus' example?
- Do you know of a person in power who consistently puts others first? Is this difficult to do?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Have you ever helped a friend who had betrayed you? Describe what happened.

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 6.

- Look at the pictures of people helping others. Is it possible to be a leader and a servant at the same time?

☐ Activities

People in the News

Bring in newsmagazines and newspapers. Ask the group to look through the publications for pictures of people who are powerful or great. Put the pictures on a posterboard or large piece of newsprint. Ask participants to describe the people they selected and why they are powerful or great.

Read the scripture passage. Use the discussion questions to talk about its meaning. Write a definition of greatness based on Jesus' words and example. Using this definition, reevaluate the people you selected earlier.

- How many people are great only in the eyes of the world? (Put an X on their pictures.)
- How many people have greatness because of their service to others? (Put a star on their pictures.)
- How many are considered great by either standard? (Draw a blue ribbon or trophy near their pictures.)

Try to name other people not on the poster who fit the third category. Why is it hard to be both a servant and hold power in the world? Did Jesus think it would be easy? End the session with the prayer on this page or another of your choosing.

Hot Potato

Play a game of hot potato. Ask participants to sit in a circle. Pass a soft ball or other object around the group as quickly as possible. As each person catches the "potato," ask him or her to name a least favorite food. The object should be passed in random order but give everyone a turn. If the group is small, play several rounds. Repeat the exercise with a new topic: Least favorite subject in school. Play a third time, and ask the group to name their least favorite chore or job.

Talk about dealing with things we don't like to do.

- Do most of the chores you dislike make life better or easier for someone else?
- What does Jesus say about doing things for others that you don't like to do?
- How does your attitude affect the way you feel about these tasks?

Jesus' followers were often confused by his actions. He was the Son of God, and yet he spent time with sinners. He was the King of Kings, but he lived a simple life among working people. What part of his message is hardest for you to understand?

Play one last round of hot potato to close the session. Ask participants to name one chore they will do for someone else this week.

At the Movies

Watch the movie *Ghandi* about the man who used peaceful methods to bring about the end of British rule in India. Ask the group to watch Ghandi's actions during the scene in which he serves tea.

- What was Ghandi trying to do in this scene?
- What did Ghandi's actions mean within his own culture?
- How does it remind you of the scripture passage?
- Compare Ghandi's life with leaders today. Where do you find differences and similarities?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

2 Finding Ways to Help Others

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up.

Acts 9:36-40

Commentary: This story takes place early in Peter's ministry. The Church was still very new, and people were still finding their place within it. Dorcas had been a well-loved member of that community. Although she was not one of the leaders, she gave what she could by making clothing for the poor and others in the community. Peter responds to the sorrow of Dorcas' friends over her death by bringing her back to life.

☐ Questions

- How did Dorcas use her gifts in service to others?
- In your church community, how do people use their gifts in service to others?
- Who in your church would you describe as "devoted to good works and acts of charity"? Is this person well loved by the community?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did the narrator help her friend?
- Could she help her without turning to others for guidance?
- Who could you go to if a friend had a problem that you couldn't solve by yourself?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 6.

- If you were designing this poster, who would you include and what would they be doing? List people your age who have found ways to help others. Are you on this list?

☐ Activities

People in Need

During the week, tape local and national newscasts. Watch them together, looking for stories about people in need of help, such as those affected by a natural disaster, war, and famine, and people in your own community who are homeless, abused, or hungry. If you are unable to make a tape, bring in several daily newspapers for the group to look through. Talk about the situations you saw on the tape or read about in the papers.

- What kinds of needs did you see?
- How have others responded to these needs?
- Which story affected the group most?
- Is there anything you could do to help the situation in that story?

Talk about ways participants could help the people in one of the stories. Ask individuals in the group to look on the Internet for agencies that are involved with this situation. Plan an outreach project for the group or church based on what you find.

Storytelling

Reread the Personal Story. Ask participants to share stories about times they or someone they know have given or received help in a time of crisis. Give everyone who wants to share a chance to tell his or her story.

After the stories have been told, identify the problems faced in each situation and list them on a piece of newsprint. Leave space underneath or beside each entry. Fill in that space with ideas about people and places to go to for help. Bring in a copy of the local telephone yellow pages to help you find agencies or other places where teens can go for help.

- Where are safe places to go for help?
- Who can you trust to help you or a friend?
- How do you know when to go for outside help?

On an index card, write the name of a person you know who needs help or a problem you are facing yourself. Put the cards in an envelope and seal it. Ask God to be with the people and problems on the cards.

Hint: Be clear about situations that young people should not face alone. If someone talks about a friend who is clinically depressed or suicidal, he or she should talk immediately to an appropriate adult.

Stand By Me

Watch the movie *Stand By Me*. Discuss the meaning of friendship as it is depicted in the movie and as you see it.

- How is friendship defined in this movie?
- How do you define it?
- What are the costs of true friendship?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

3 Signs of a True Christian

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Romans 12:9-13

Commentary: In this letter to the Romans, Paul lists the ways that Christians should act. He concludes this powerful passage with a reminder that Christians are also expected to be hospitable or neighborly. He understood human nature well. Sometimes it is easier to be impatient or zealous than it is to be kind and welcoming to our neighbors. Genuine love means caring about the people we encounter each day.

☐ Questions

- Can you do all the things listed in the passage?
- What is the most difficult item on Paul's list for you?
- Do you have to do all these things to be a Christian?
- What would our world look like if we lived up to Paul's standards?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did the narrator show genuine love?
- How can you show genuine love to your friends?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 6.

- Where can you find signs of a Christian in the poster?

☐ Activities

Rewrite

Read the scripture passage. Make a list of every attribute in Paul's message to the Romans on one side of a piece of newsprint. Discuss each item. For example, define genuine love and what it means to hate evil.

Next to each item on your list, write a specific example of how you could do these things in real life. Showing honor may mean treating an outcast at school with respect. Rejoicing in hope may mean having a positive attitude even when your sports team keeps losing. If possible, find more that one way to illustrate each of Paul's Christian traits.

Ask participants to look at the list, and find one thing they could do differently this week to be a stronger Christian. Write down your plans and keep them in a place where you can see them each day. Who did you help most by doing this?

Make It Your Own

Read or sing "Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love" in *The Hymnal 1982*, 602. Then read the scripture passage. Paul's high standards for how Christians are to behave seem to be out of reach for most people. Use the discussion questions to talk about the passage.

- Do you have to be perfect to follow Jesus?
- What example can you follow?
- What does following Jesus look like for you?
- Who are the neighbors we are supposed to be helping?

Find a way to express the ways you follow Christ. Work individually or in small groups to rewrite the hymn with specific examples from your life, dramatize something you or someone you know does, or create a poster of the signs of a Christian. Share your expressions with the rest of the group.

- Who did you identify as your neighbors?
- Can we choose our neighbors?
- How can you love neighbors who are not lovable?

Ask God to help you be kind to people you dislike and to those who are difficult.

Comfort Zones

Think about all the places around your community and in your home where you feel most comfortable. If possible, bring in a picture of this place. It could be at a nearby park or a rocking chair that gets an afternoon sunbeam.

Share your comfort zones with the rest of the group. Discuss what you need to be comfortable.

- What places in your community make you feel welcome?
- Where do you feel uncomfortable? Why?
- What places in your home or school do you find welcoming?
- How could you make your group more welcoming?

Select one of the community comfort zones and visit it as a group. Afterward, list the reasons you enjoyed the experience. Talk about the good things God has created for our enjoyment.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

What Am I Called to Be?

Faithful

SESSION 8

Objective

Youth will be able to state that people are called by God to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in prayer.

Personal Story

I moved to Pennsylvania from another state when I was seven, at the very end of second grade. I soon met a boy named Damien who lived in my neighborhood, but he didn't want to be friends with me. He rode on my school bus, and he was kind of mean. He teased me, threw things at me, and acted like a jerk. He joined in when the other boys bothered my friends and me. He wasn't a complete bully—just never friendly or kind.

Damien never really got to know me until we were in the sixth grade. At the beginning of the year, he came up to me and said that he wanted a truce. He went on to say that he wanted to be my friend.

I couldn't believe what he was saying; I thought he was kidding. He assured me that he wasn't. I wanted to believe him, but my friend Jan told me not to. I didn't know what to do since he had been so mean to me for so long.

I didn't give him an answer right away. I noticed that Damien had changed his appearance quite a bit. After watching him on the bus and at school, it seemed to me that he had changed more than his appearance.

I decided to forgive him for the way he had treated me over the years and give him a chance. It wasn't easy for me to forgive him, and some of my friends kept reminding me of his past behavior. It took me a while to finally trust him, and I was cautious around him when we first became friends.

Finally, I let go and trusted him. Damien began showing me things from a whole new point of view. I wouldn't have seen the world this way if I hadn't given him a second chance. I learned that trust and forgiveness go hand in hand.

Looking back, I'm so glad I forgave him. I now live in another place, but Damien and I are still friends, and we still keep in touch. He still gives me the support that I need, and he always has a kind word for me. Damien will always share his special gift with me—another point of view.

Being faithful to God takes a lot of trust and forgiveness, too. Worshipping, praying, and studying the Bible help me stay closer to God. When I really feel close to God and trust him, I find it easier to accept his forgiveness and to forgive people who have hurt me.

Scripture

II Timothy 3:14-17
Psalm 122:1
I Thessalonians 5:16-22

Skill Focus

Trust
Forgiveness

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Prayer
Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*.

Proper 17
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 233

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Teaching

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

II Timothy 3:14-17

Commentary: Paul tells young Timothy how Christians should practice their faith. Being faithful may be awkward at first, like learning to shave or to drive. Then it becomes second nature. People of faith have all sorts of tools at their disposal—the Bible, *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the community of the church. Learning to be a Christian takes a whole lifetime. But God equips each person with the strength to do God's will.

☐ Questions

- What is the most important thing you learned about God as a child?
- How have your beliefs changed as you have gotten older?
- Do any of your activities, such as music or sports, require a certain amount of discipline? Are you disciplined about your faith?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How do you know when to trust someone who has betrayed you in the past?

☐ Activities

Bible Study

Find out about different methods of Bible study. Talk to leaders of study groups at your church or invite someone who is involved with the Education for Ministries program to talk about different methods. Several methods are described in the box below.

- Which method of study appeals most to the group? Why?
- Which methods require a knowledgeable leader?
- Are there any that you could do on your own?

Select one method of Bible study and use it to explore one or more of the scripture passages for this session. Use the discussion questions provided or develop your own. Find out if some in the group are interested in doing more Bible study. If so, find a time to study scripture together.

Fellowship

One of the best ways to build a community is by having fun together. Plan a social time during your scheduled time together or another time during the week. If possible, meet at a different place—at someone's home, a favorite restaurant or coffee shop, or movie theater. If you meet at a home or the church, bring food, snacks, and drinks to share. Spend the time having fun and getting to know each other better.

'Tis the Season

Explore the specific season of the church year that you are presently in, such as Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, or Pentecost. Find out which feast days occur in your season, the meaning of symbols, and the reasons for changing the colors of the altar hangings. Begin by looking at the calendar in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 31-33. Another resource is *The Episcopal Church Year* Leader's Guide in the ECY curriculum series.

Identify interesting traditions from your season to share with a younger group in your church. For example, make a wreath for Advent or hot-cross buns for Lent.

Bible Study Methods

Words to Life: Read the text. Brainstorm key words and phrases. Use Bible dictionaries and commentaries to find intended meaning of key words and phrases. Think of life questions that are related. Discuss how the passage relates to the questions and the lives of the participants.

In Your Own Words: Read the text. Each person then writes a summary in his or her own words. Share and discuss summaries. Look for themes and individual concerns. Reflect quietly on new possibilities the passage opens for individuals and the group. Share reflections.

Paraphrase: Read the text. Divide a piece of paper into two columns. In column one, write the key actions in your own words. In the second column, describe how to apply the actions in your life. Discuss your reflections together.

Modern Application: Read the text and find a current situation that is similar. Reflect individually about how the situation might unfold as if it were a scene in a play. Discuss the different scenes. Find a way to use what you learned from the Bible passage.

(From *In Dialogue With Scripture*)

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

2 Worship

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the Lord!"

Psalm 122:1

Commentary: Some people think of worshipping God as an obligation—something you have to do but get little pleasure from. The author of *Psalm 122* finds great joy when invited to the temple to worship. All people are invited to bring their joy of life to church. As a community, we can find ways to make the worship a time of joy and celebration.

☐ Questions

- Do you look forward to going to worship services? Why?
- How often do you attend worship services?
- Do you participate in the group singing and reading? Could this make a difference in your attitude?
- Do you listen to the sermon or tune out? Does the speaker have anything to say to you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How do you build trust between two people?
- How do you build trust with God?
- What is the biggest barrier to having a relationship with God?

☐ Activities

Obligations

Talk about the reasons you go to church.

- Do your parents make you go? Is the decision left up to you?
- What would you do if you stayed home?
- Is your experience at church usually positive or negative?
- Can your attitude make it a good or bad experience?

Act out different situations involving church attendance in a series of role plays. Give everyone a chance to play the role of a parent or adult. Base the plays on your own experiences or what you wish you could say in these circumstances. Include situations in which a young person has responsibilities as an acolyte, choir member, or reader.

- Is it easier to go to church if you are a part of the service?
- If your church gave young people more roles to play during worship services, would you be more inclined to go?

If you have ideas about greater involvement of young people at church, present them to the worship committee or the vestry.

Report Card

As a group, attend a worship service at your church. Before you go, make up a report card for the group to assess the service. For example, your subjects could include joyfulness, enthusiasm, ease of understanding, welcoming to all people (including young children), friendliness, passing of the peace, and music. Rate individual sections and give an overall grade.

Afterward, discuss your ratings. Talk about the positive things you discovered and identify how parts of the service could be improved.

- Could your presence improve any part of the service?
- Could you volunteer to do something to make your church more joyful or friendly?
- What was your favorite part of the service?

Share your findings with those involved in worship services where appropriate. For example, if you want more joyful music, find samples of songs in *The Hymnal 1982* or other books to share with the music director. Tell people responsible for your favorite parts how their contribution helps your worship experience.

Field Trip

Attend a worship service from another tradition, such as an Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, or other Protestant church. Look for similarities and differences between your church and this service. Talk about your impressions afterward.

- What were the similarities between the church you visited and your own church?
- Did you feel welcome at this church?
- Did you feel joy and enthusiasm from the people attending this church?
- Could your church do some of the things you enjoyed at this church?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

3 Prayer

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

I Thessalonians 5:16-22

Commentary: Talking to God should be a joyful experience. Just as people enjoy talking to each other on the telephone, they can take pleasure from spending time in God's presence through prayer. God is ready to listen whether a person is in silence or in a busy moment. To pray without ceasing is to be aware of God's presence in every moment every day.

☐ Questions

- How would you define prayer?
- When do you usually pray?
- Is it hard or easy for you to talk to God? Why?
- Have you ever had a strong sense of God's presence? What was that like?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Think about a friendship that is important to you. List the reasons you like this person. What do you have to do to maintain this friendship? For example, you probably spend time communicating with each other and you probably have built up trust. What is your relationship with God like? Do you treat God as well as you treat your friend?

☐ Activities

Prayer Market

Explore different ways to pray. Begin by looking up the principal kinds of prayer in the Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 856. If possible, bring in different objects that are used in various prayer forms, such as rosary beads, prayer shawls, prayer stones, candles, and icons. You could also bring in quiet music, or tapes of the sounds of nature, such as ocean waves or a thunderstorm. Have books available that describe different kinds of prayer, including group prayer, meditation, praying with an icon, and others. Assign individuals or small groups to investigate different prayer formats.

Give each group or individual time to describe the different kinds of prayer. Select one for the group to try together. If you decide to pray with an icon, you may want to give participants time to create one that has meaning for them. Encourage the group to try other prayer forms during the week.

Teach Me to Pray

Teach a younger group in the church a new way to pray. Use the Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 856-857, as a guide. Select a prayer or a way of praying to share with the younger children.

One way to help them remember five of the seven kinds of prayer listed in the Catechism is by looking at their hands. Hold up your hand, and assign a different type of prayer to each finger. Each finger is a reminder of a different way to talk to God:

- Adoration: The thumb, used for grasping the greatness of God.
- Confession: The index finger, pointing to God's forgiveness.
- Thanksgiving: The tallest finger, reminding you to give thanks to God at all times.
- Intercession: The ring finger, or finger to the heart, showing hearts going out to others in prayer.
- Petition: The little finger, although important, comes last because it is prayer for one's self.

If you teach the hand prayer, encourage teachers to use it each week. At the end of each class, for example, the teacher could hold up a hand to let the group know it is time to pray.

Labyrinth

Find out about the labyrinth method of prayer by searching the Internet or other resources, such as *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool* by Lauren Artress. A labyrinth, a maze of paths leading to a central point, is used because it mirrors the complexities of life. Another church in your community or city may have a portable labyrinth that you could borrow, or you may be able to find an outdoor labyrinth to visit.

The labyrinth encourages introspection and meditation. If a labyrinth is not available in your area, find its design on the Internet or on the cover of the book cited above. Blow up the image as large as possible and make copies for each person in the group. "Walk" the labyrinth with your fingers after discussing the ideas you want to explore. Afterward, talk about the experience and contrast the complexity of the labyrinth with your life.

If you would like to share the experience with others in your church, create your own labyrinth. You may want to invite another group in your church to help you do this, or work with youth from other churches to make the design. If the labyrinth is portable, share it with other churches in your community.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

What Am I Called to Be?

Answering God's Call

SESSION 9

Objective
Youth will be able to name ways they can follow God's call in their lives.

Personal Story
One time I went to the mall with my friends Kim and Sandi. We had a lot of fun just hanging out and trying on clothes. At one particular store, we liked just about everything we saw. We tried on dozens of clothes, taking huge piles into the dressing rooms for each other. We each finally decided on a shirt that we liked. Kim and I took our shirts to the cashier. While we were in line, we looked over and saw Sandi put her shirt in her book bag.

We both watched her do this, and then looked at each other. Together we walked over to her and asked her what she was doing. She looked up and told us to be quiet because she planned to just take the shirt without paying for it. She then suggested that we try it.

Kim and I looked at each other. I started to think of all the trouble I could get into over some dumb shirt that cost less than $20. I told Sandi that I was going to pay for my shirt and Kim said, "Yeah, me too." Kim and I paid for our shirts, and we all left the store.

We continued to shop, walking through the mall. Sandi kept thinking that every security guard we passed knew she stole the shirt. She was nervous and no fun to be around. I could tell she didn't like the way she felt about herself. The trouble she could get into haunted her.

Finally, we returned to the store, and she quietly put the shirt back. She knew that the shirt wasn't worth the trouble. She said that she would never do something like that again.

We all realized that day that we were going to be friends for a long time. We helped each other deal with a temptation and got beyond it. We didn't act better than Sandi, we just helped her through the crisis. We practiced our faith by showing her a different way to be. Sometimes following God's call means taking a path to a career or reaching out to help someone. Other times it may mean living your faith in the little decisions you make every day

Scripture
Ephesians 1:8b-12

Skill Focus
Relationships
Choices

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

Prayer
Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

A Prayer of Self-Dedication
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832-833

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

☐ Begin Here: Remembering Scripture

With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:8b-12

Connect with the Personal Story

Read the Personal Story for this session. It is easy to think that God's call only concerns the big issues, such as career, education, and relationships. What did the narrator discover in an ordinary trip to the mall? God calls people to be faithful all of the time, not just at the major crossroads. Look back at the past week. Think about the places you went and the things you did, including the time you spent with friends, playing sports, or going to class.

- Did you feel God's presence during any of those activities?
- How can you make God a part of your everyday life?

☐ Questions

- Do you have a better understanding of the mystery of God's will for your life?
- What specific things can you do to explore God's will?
- Is discovering what God wants you to be an ongoing process? Does the process ever end?
- Is there anyone who can help you explore the mystery of God's will?
- What questions do you still need to ask yourself?

RESPONDING ACTIVITIES

☐ Individually

Working alone, find ways to respond to ideas and issues raised during your study of *What Am I Called to Be?* Share your ideas and encourage each person to select at least one. Possible responses include:

- Keep a log about your own learning experiences. Describe your responses to things that happen to you. List the skills and talents that are most important to you. Use the log as you make important decisions.
- Explore the interactive CD-ROM by James Burke called *Connections*. Look for ways God helps you make connections.
- If you tried a new activity as suggested in Session 3, Theme 1, write a Personal Story about the experience.
- Continue your experiment in using kind words (described in Session 5, Theme 2) to other people.
- Take a friend who is upset or facing a problem to your "comfort zone" (see Session 7, Theme 3).
- From Session 8, Theme 3, choose one method of prayer that you will commit to for a month or more. Reflect on how this type of prayer has helped or challenged you.

☐ Group

Find ways the group can respond to ideas and issues that came up during your study of *What Am I Called to Be?* Possible responses include:

- After visiting a toy store as described in Session 4, Theme 2, go to the Internet or library to find lists published by consumer groups of appropriate and inappropriate toys. Make your own list of toys that the group agreed had negative gender bias. Copy the lists and provide addresses to parents at your church. (**Hint:** This would be particularly helpful before Christmas.)
- Help each other use appropriate language (Session 5, Theme 2). Agree on a signal to give to each other when inappropriate language is used.
- Share your experiences of giving up something that promised happiness, but brought uneasiness (Session 6, Theme 2).
- From Session 8, Theme 1, select a Bible study method that appeals to the some or all of the participants. Schedule a time that those interested in Bible study can try out the method for a period of time. If the experience is rewarding, continue for another time period.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

☐ Celebrate!

Celebrate the completions of the group's study of *Who Am I Called to Be?* Find your own celebrations or use one of the following ideas.

Art

- If you created cartoons about work experiences, publish them in your church newsletter.
- Display the clay sculpture created for Session 2 at a church function. Let a group of children from Sunday School give awards or names for the artwork.
- Create a scrapbook with photos of people who work both behind the scenes and in more visible roles in your church. (See Sessions 2 and 5.) Display the book at appropriate gatherings.

Liturgy

- Plan a liturgy of reconciliation for broken relationships identified in Session 4. Before you begin, look at the Rite of Reconciliation beginning on p. 446 in *The Book of Common Prayer*.
- Design a service of installation for a new ministry in your church. For example, if you started a parking lot greeting program (Session 5), you could also plan a service to honor those participating and let others in the congregation know about the program.
- If you studied a season in the Church (Session 8), select a feast day or other occasion and plan an appropriate liturgy for your group.
- Plan a liturgy that includes your suggestions that came out of the report card activity in Session 8.

Community

- Using the symbols participants brought for the show and tell activity in Session 2, publish a list of volunteer jobs the participants would be willing to do for others in the parish.
- From the activity in Session 6 about finding God through service, publish a series of brief descriptions and photos of people in the church newsletter.
- Invite other groups and churches to use the labyrinth you made for Session 8.

Fun

- Invite panelists or speakers who discussed their work (Session 2) or participated in the relationship debate (Session 4) to a party to celebrate the completion of this module.
- At the celebration, perform the "stupid human tricks" that participants shared in Session 2.
- Invite a child you befriended (Session 5) to a party for children. Include other children from the parish and ask them to bring a book for the collection you started in Session 5.

FOLLOW THROUGH

Individual response: Identify different ways you can continue to look for God's call in your life. Use some of the ideas you learned while studying this module. Find a way to use these ideas in choices and decisions you make in the church, at school, at home, and in the community. Remember that you can also help others who are trying to discover who they want to be and who God is calling them to be.

- Look for help in wisdom in the Bible.
- Do you need outside help figuring out who you want to be?
- Can you identify a person in the church or community who could help you see yourself and your choices more clearly?

Group Response: Look at the list of possible responses the group has put together, including the suggestions on the opposite page. Decide which of the suggestions the group would like to do. You can break into small groups to respond in several different ways, or select one, more comprehensive project. On a chalkboard or paper, write down the activities or project the group has selected. List all the actions needed to complete your choice. Estimate the time each will take, and designate a person to be responsible for each action. Ask for a volunteer to oversee the activities who is willing to make sure each component has been completed.

- How did you determine which action to take?
- Do the activities include each person in the group?
- Are there people in the church or community who could help you complete any of the tasks?

Celebrate: Ask for volunteer to select and plan an appropriate liturgical response to your study of *Who Am I Called to Be?* Schedule a time for the group to gather for the liturgy and discuss whether you want the service to be only for the group or to include others. Ask volunteers in the group to find a way to display artwork and work on articles or layouts for the church newsletter or the scrapbook. Find a way to distribute the volunteer list, and explore ways to share your experiences with the labyrinth. Send out party invitations to panelists or children in time for them to put the event on their calendars.

- Does your celebration include all the participants in the group?
- Does your celebration include people outside of your group?

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary

MOVING AHEAD
What Am I Called to Be?
Outreach Activities for Sessions 2-8

Session	Theme	Suggested Outreach Activity
Productive Worker	2 3	• Compile career information from interviews for young people who are exploring different professions and work experiences. • Collect light bulbs and distribute them to agencies that serve low-income families.
Seeking Other Interests	1 2 3	• Make a poster showing talents and skills of youth; invite the congregation to add to it. • Display photos of people who contribute to a typical Sunday morning at your church. • Visit a crafts class for seniors or children. • Serve friendship cake at a coffee hour.
In Relationships	3	• Play music about love at an appropriate church gathering; encourage people to share personal experiences.
Caring for Others	1 3	• Befriend a child other than a sibling. • Respond to needs of children by adopting a child through an international agency or supporting a community organization for children. • Collect children's books for a community agency. • Start a parking lot greeting program at your church.
Life-Long Learner	1 3	• Make a video of the gathered wisdom of your church. • Display artwork at your church about being open to new ideas and people. • Pray for people to feel God's presence in their lives. • Display posters of people in your church who found God through service to others.
Servant	1 2	• Do one chore for someone during the week. • Plan an outreach project to help an individual or group described in the media.
Faithful	1 2 3	• Share a tradition from a liturgical season with a younger group of children. • Present ideas about greater involvement of young people at church to appropriate committees and people. • Teach a group of children in your church a new way to pray. • Design and make a labyrinth for your church and other groups.

Copyright © 2009 by Virginia Theological Seminary