Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

Relationships

A Guide for Leadership Teams

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Relationships

Relationships with friends, family, and the opposite sex are the center of our lives. Everyone interacts with other people every day in both positive and negative ways. Friendships can be life-giving, and broken ones disastrous. How we deal with others and how they respond to us often affects our self-worth.

The purpose of studying relationships is to help us understand ourselves and others as we interact in many different relationships. Jesus said "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." *(John 15:12)* Following this commandment, however, is a difficult task for ordinary people.

Introduction

Relationships 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, "Planning Together," is designed to help begin the process. It starts with a "Point of Contact"—a Personal Story about a high school student working with others. What are God's expectations of us in our behavior toward others? The planning session begins, as do all other sessions, with prayer and the study of Scripture to focus the experience on the presence of God in our lives.

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

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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 *Relationships* through these individual topics:

Know Yourself
Getting to Know Others
Costs of Relationships
True Friendship
Romantic Love
Getting Along with Family
Respecting Others

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?**

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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.

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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.

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- **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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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- **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

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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.

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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.

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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

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RELATIONSHIPS

Planning Together

Objective

Youth will be able to prepare a plan to explore relationships. During the planning they will be aware of the relationships within the group and how they work together.

Personal Story

One of the things I always dread in high school is when the teacher asks us to work in groups of two or three on a long-term project. I am a very conscientious student and always end up doing the lion's share of the work. Everyone always looks good because of my hard work. This leaves me angry and feeling used by my friends.

I remember getting one such assignment in my Current Issues class during my junior year. I decided that this time things would be different. I would be sure to assign everyone equal work and call them all regularly to be sure they were doing what they promised to do. If in the end they didn't do what they were supposed to do, I would present my part of the project and let the others fend for themselves. It might mean a different sort of grade then what I am accustomed to getting, but I would just have to accept that.

Did my plan work? No, it fell hopelessly flat. Everyone in my group ended up angry at me for being so controlling. One person even went to the teacher to complain. The final product was lousy. Even my piece of it wasn't very good, given my attitude toward the whole of it. I received the first C of my high school career and was absolutely demoralized.

What could I have done differently? Was I was right in taking on the role of leader in the group? I have real leadership and organizational skills as well as the motivation to do a good job. As I look back, I think my mistake was that I bullied each group member into doing work for the project—work for which they did not necessarily have an the ability. I was also so busy trying to get them to do their work that I didn't give my part of the project the attention I should have.

Now, every time I find myself working on a group project now, I remember that experience. I still end up organizing things and doing the follow-up work. However, I am careful to encourage and not put my colleagues down. This isn't always easy, but it is much more effective. In retrospect, I think the C I earned for that project taught me more than most of the A's I got.

SESSION 1

Scripture
I John 4:7-12, 16b-21

Skill Focus
Communication
Trus

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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.*

Dismissal

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

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. . . . God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

I John 4:7-12, 16b-21

Commentary: The author speaks here of the love of God, a love of such perfection that God sent his Son to live among us and be an example of this perfect love. Because God loves us and loved us before we knew God, we are called to love one another.

We learn about the love of God and show our love for God through the way we treat others. We cannot separate a love for God from a love for our brothers and sisters. For "those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."

☐ Questions

- How did God show his love for all people?
- Is fear a part of any of your relationships? What does *I John* say about love and fear?
- Do you think it is harder to love someone you are with every day than someone you hardly see?
- Can you really love someone you never see? How?

☐ Point of Contact

Personal Story

Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Have you ever tried to lead a group of people? What happened?
- Is it harder to tell people what to do or get everyone to agree what to do? What takes more time?
- How do you get everyone in the group to do the job he or she agreed to do?
- Do you prefer working with people or alone?

☐ Activities

The Color of Love

Before the meeting, obtain a large piece of butcher paper, colored tissue paper, markers, scissors, glue sticks, a tape or CD player, and music that relates to the unit topic and Scripture passage. Write "What color is love?" on the paper.

Start the music just before the scheduled meeting time. As people enter the room, ask them to look at the question and glue their "answer" on the butcher paper. The markers are available if they want to write about love. **Hint:** *This activity should take only five to ten minutes while the group gathers. It will help people feel involved from the moment they enter. Refer to the collage during the group's discussion of the Scripture passage.*

Interview a Partner

The purpose of this game is to get to know the members of the group. Pair off, then take turns interviewing each other. After five to ten minutes, return to the group and tell the group what you learned about your partner. Encourage participants to pair up with someone they don't know well. If you know everyone, find out something about your partner that others don't know.

Smile!

Sit around a table or in a circle. Begin by saying the name of someone in the circle and the words: "If you love me, you'll smile." The person who is spoken to tries hard not to smile. Only those words can be used, but make faces, change your voice—anything to make the person smile. The person who smiles then repeats the process with another name until everyone has had a turn.

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☐ Steps for Planning

1. Make a copy for each participant of the Planning Reference Guide on the next page that lists the Scripture passages and themes for each session. Divide Sessions 2 through 8 among the group as evenly as possible. Tear out copies of each session of the Guide to pass out. (It is helpful to have a second copy of the Guide for this purpose.) Ask each person or sub-group to spend five minutes looking over Scripture, themes, and activities for the assigned session(s).

2. Select a discussion facilitator to record responses from each person or sub-group. On newsprint, write down the recommended sessions, Scripture and themes, and the ideas and activities that the group found interesting.

3. Examine all six posters and determine when and where to use them.
   Poster 1: Relationships
   Poster 2: Child of God
   Poster 3: Being Together
   Poster 4: Romance
   Poster 5: Family
   Poster 6: Talking It Over

4. Delegate responsibility for the planning, implementation, and leadership of each session. Distribute copies of the sessions to participants who have agreed to take responsibility for specific themes and activities. The facilitator should add these names to the newsprint. This may be a good time to stop the process and ask the following questions:
   - How does everyone feel about the decisions so far?
   - Can everyone live with them? If not, how can we change?

5. On another piece of newsprint, develop a time frame (number of weeks) showing where and in what order the sessions fit. Field trips, events, movies, speakers, or special projects should be discussed and scheduled at this time. Ask for a volunteer to type up this information and distribute it to the entire group or post it.

6. Discuss accountability for the group and the selected leaders.
   - What happens if someone fails to follow through on their area of responsibility? Should someone be a designated reminder?
   - What if a session leader gets sick?
   - Are there certain deadlines that need to be met?
   - If changes need to be made after this meeting, who has the authority to make those changes?

7. If refreshments are part of your routine, ask people to volunteer to bring snacks. List the names of those willing to bring snacks on a separate sheet of paper. Either post the list or make copies of it for each participant.

8. Ask the following questions to determine the success of the planning session:
   - Did everyone feel a part of the planning?
   - Did the group listen to each person?
   - Does everyone feel comfortable about the decisions made?

9. At the end of the group's study of relationships, the participants can use Session 9 to explore ways of using what they have learned. Save time for the group to make individual and joint responses and to celebrate end of the Relationship Unit.

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Planning Reference Guide

Relationships

☐ **Questions:**

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

Topic	Scripture	Theme	Notes
Know Yourself	*Luke 2:41-43, 46-47, 49-51a* *I Corinthians 12:4-11* *John 4:7, 9-10, 25-26, 39*	Child of God Finding My Gifts Embraced by Jesus	
Getting to Know Others	*Act 10:34-36, 44-48* *Luke 6:32-38* *Luke 18:18-24*	God's Encompassing Love No Strings Attached Walls Between Us	
Costs of Relationships	*Matthew 26:36-40* *Job 2:11-13* *Proverbs 19:4-7*	Disappointments Sharing the Burden False Friends	
True Friendship	*Sirach 6:14-17* *Ruth 1:16-18* *John 15:12-13*	Trusting a Friend Loyalty Putting It on the Line	
Romantic Love	*Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 16a* *II Samuel 13:2, 6-7, 10b-12, 14-15* *James 4:1-3, 11-12*	Real Love Manipulative Love Ending a Relationship	
Getting Along With Family	*Genesis 27:21-23, 30-33* *Luke 10:38-42* *John 1:35-42*	Parental Approval Fairness Sharing Experiences	
Respecting Others	*Genesis 4:2b-7* *Acts 15:1-2, 6-9* *Matthew 9:10-13*	Unappreciated Gifts Listening to Each Other Seeing With Jesus's Eyes	

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RELATIONSHIPS

Know Yourself

Objective

Youth will be able to identify their own unique qualities. They will name ways they care for and love themselves.

Personal Story

I went to the same school for ten years. I knew everyone there, and they knew me. I never had to be the "new kid." All of that changed when I went to high school. I was suddenly in a strange environment where none of the faces were familiar. I was soon faced with the difficult problem of figuring out who to make friends with. My immediate reaction was to find people like me. But who or what was I?

A lot of people that I know have never asked themselves that question. Instead, they end up trying to be like other people. By dressing like their friends or listening to the same music as the people they want to be like, they are not true to themselves.

When I was faced with trying to figure out who I am, I realized how hard that is. Basically, I could not explain to anyone, even my closest friends, who, exactly, I am. I realized, though, that I have special, unique qualities and talents. My interests in the arts and knitting, for example, make me different from others.

Figuring out who you are is a very difficult, if not impossible, task. It is important, however, to know that you are different from others. Some think that it is bad to be "different," but I know it is not. We should be proud of our uniqueness and show it.

When I was making new friends at my high school, I didn't find anyone who was like me. I am glad that I didn't. There is no one else like me. There are people who share things in common with me, but they are not exactly like me. Some of my friends are different from me and different from each other. They all look different, they all act different, and they all have their own interests. Some play a musical instrument, while others are athletic. Some share my interests in the arts, but think knitting is boring.

We are all special in our own way. Even if you are the only one to figure that out, it is worth the exploration.

SESSION 2

Scripture

Luke 2:41-43, 46-47, 49-51a
I Corinthians 12:4-11
John 4:7, 9-10, 25-26, 39

Skill Focus

Independence/Individuality
Forgiveness

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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 you, 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.

1 Child of God

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now every year [Jesus's] parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. . . . After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. . . . He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.

Luke 2:41-43, 46-47, 49-51a

Commentary: In his Passover experience in the Jerusalem temple, Jesus appears to be working out his own identity. This episode marks a significant turning point in Jesus's life. Prior to this time, his identity was stated by other people: angels, shepherds, relatives, and his parents.

Now *Luke* reveals a glimmer of self-awareness emerging from within Jesus himself. Sitting in the temple where Jewish religious leaders meet, Jesus learns about himself by listening to teachers and asking questions, the typical teaching method of first century Judaism. Jesus's eagerness to learn and his responses to questions amaze the temple teachers. When Jesus confronts his anxious parents, he begins to claim a unique identity that continues to unfold.

☐ Questions

- How do you feel when your parents don't understand you? How do you react? What did Jesus do?
- Do you have faith that God understands you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How do you feel about people that are different?

☐ Activities

Who Am I?

Give each person three index cards. Ask them to write something true about themselves on each card, such as I hate peanut butter, or I have two sisters. Mix up the cards. Take turns picking out three cards from the pile and matching them with the three people who wrote them. If someone puts a card in front of you that is not yours, find the right person when it is your turn.

- How did this game make you feel?
- Who are the people who know you best?
- Who knows you best?
- God knows you better than anyone else. Who does that make you feel?

Taking Care of Myself

The Bible repeats the message that God loves you over and over. Spend some time talking about loving yourself and to show it. Examples: eating healthy food, exercising, or going to bed by 11 PM every night. Write down ideas on newsprint.

Pair off and tell your partner one thing you are going to do in order to take better care of yourself. Set a time, such as every Sunday night, to check in with each other to keep on track.

- Did you find it difficult to find one way to take better care of yourself? If yes, why?
- Does it help you to know God loves you just the way you are?

Looking Outward

Find a way to show one or more people in your church or community that they are loved because they are children of God. Make stickers or signs for others that say "God loves you just the way you are." Provide light weight wood or poster board that is already cut to size, paint, and markers appropriate for making a sturdy sign. Plant the sign in someone's lawn, or put the stickers on a doorway or mailbox. Make extra signs so the group can take them home and put them where they can see them every day as a reminder that God loves them in both good and bad times.

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2 Finding My Gifts

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

I Corinthians 12:4-11

Commentary: In Corinth, a thriving Greek city, the apostle Paul started a church that grew to be vibrant and diverse. Some time later, the Corinthian church wrote to him about deep divisions in the congregation caused in part by the different spiritual gifts. Paul was concerned that the variety of spiritual gifts not cause a split in Corinth, but be used for building up the community of faith.

In *I Corinthians 12:4-11*, Paul writes that the variety of spiritual gifts from God strengthens the unity of the Church. Paul supports diversity, but not at the cost of unity. When spiritual gifts come from God, they build up the Church instead of dividing it into factions or hurting people.

☐ Questions

- What one thing do you like to do and do well? How is this a "gift"?
- According to Paul, who helps us use our gifts?
- Does Paul indicate that some gifts are more valued than others?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How do you express your unique gifts at school? At home? At church?

☐ Activities

Taking Inventory

In a book called *7 Kinds of Smart*, Thomas Armstrong identifies seven different ways a person can have intelligence, including word smart, numbers smart, visual smart, body smart, music smart, people smart, and self smart. List these seven "intelligences" on a chalkboard or paper with space to write below. Ask the group to brainstorm specific ways to be "smart" in each category. For example, in word smart, you might include enjoyment of books and word games, writing, and listening to sermons. List four entries per category. After the lists are complete, give everyone a piece of paper and pencil, and ask them to write down entries that correspond to their special gifts and interests. When everyone has had time to inventory his or her gifts, share ways that each person could offer those gifts to family, friends, the church, and the community.

- Are there gifts that you would like to develop as a result of taking this inventory? Why?
- Who could help you develop your gifts?
- Were you surprised that your gifts and interests are so varied or specific?

"Un-Talent" Show

Plan an evening in which each person in the group would contribute something to make the gathering fun and entertaining. The group may want to invite friends, a youth group, or another class in the church. Individuals or groups can sing a song, play instruments, read a poem you like or one that you have written, act out a favorite story, dance, or teach everyone a new skill on a computer. **Hint:** *If someone does not want to perform, they can set up, clean up, or bring in refreshments.*

To make the show more interesting, the group could decide to offer their "least" gift. For example, a person who has never baked cookies might offer to make some; someone who doesn't think they have "word smarts," could write a poem.

How Others See Me

Tape a blank piece of paper on the back of each person in the group. As people walk around, write one or two good gifts the person has on the paper. If possible, give everyone the same kind of pen—be sure the ink won't bleed onto clothing. When finished, take the paper off and read what was written. Talk about the comments.

- Were you surprised people knew you so well or so little?
- Were there things about yourself that weren't noted because you don't show them?
- What would God have written?

Encourage the participants to take the paper home and look at it when they are having a bad day or feeling down.

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3 Embraced by Jesus

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” . . . The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, `Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” . . . The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.” . . . Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.”

John 4:7, 9-10, 25-26, 39

Commentary: Relationships between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus’s day were poisoned by deep-seated racial and religious prejudice. Samaritans were Jews who lived in northern Israel. They rejected both worship in the Jerusalem temple and the prophets. The Samaritan woman is astonished that a Jewish man asks her for a drink. In their conversation Jesus offers her the “living” water of the Holy Spirit and reveals his knowledge of her life of broken commitments and relationships. The conversation inspires the Samaritan woman to believe that she has met the Messiah. Amazed, she tells her friends and many of them come to believe in Jesus. Through her acceptance and belief, she becomes a messenger for Christ.

☐ Questions

- Why did Jesus see the Samaritan woman as valuable?
- Are you surprised that Jesus loves you even though he knows even your deepest thoughts?
- Do you really want someone to know *everything* about you?
- Where do we look for Jesus? Do you sometimes fail to see Jesus when he is near?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Do you let others know that you value their unique gifts and interests?
- Do you value the uniqueness of your friends?

☐ Activities

Love Songs

Look at the words of the hymn “My song is love unknown” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 458). Talk about the meaning of the lyrics.

- How does Jesus love us?
- How does Jesus's love for us make us lovely?
- Describe some of the ways Jesus is a true friend.
- Why did people respond negatively to Jesus's suffering on the cross?
- Why would we say that the tomb was our rightful home?

Look through the Hymnal and find other hymns that talk about love. **Hint:** *A good place to start is at the back of every Hymnal where there is a list of all the hymns and their first lines.*

The Shadow Game

Read the entire Scripture passage from which the excerpt above was taken in *John 4:4-42*. Discuss the Samaritan woman's testimony that “He told me everything I have ever done.” (*John 4:39b*)

- How does Jesus know everything about us?
- Is that a good thing? Why? Why not?
- How did that convince the Samaritan woman that he was the Messiah?
- How might you change your behavior if you knew you were talking to the Messiah.
- The Samaritan woman's life was far from perfect. Did this change how Jesus treated her? How does that make you feel?

Play the Shadow Game to experience someone knowing your every move. Pair up and stand face to face. Designate one as leader. The other one mimics that person's every move. After a few minutes, switch roles. Discuss the experience as a group.

- Describe how it felt to be mimicked. How did it feel to follow?
- Did you ever have a friend or sibling try to do everything like you? Did you like it? Why?
- What is different about the way Jesus is close to us?

Movie Night

Watch a movie about the theme of being known and loved by someone, or one about not being known, such as *Pump Up the Volume* or *Superman*. Spend some time discussing the movie afterwards.

- Who really knew the character in the movie and how?
- What kind of relationship did the character have with the people who really knew him?
- What kind of relationship did the character have with people who did not know him?
- What prevented him from being known?

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RELATIONSHIPS

Getting to Know Others

Objective

Youth will be able to discuss ways of discovering the unique qualities of others and ways to overcome barriers to new relationships.

Personal Story

I had known Margaret since fifth grade. She was a tomboy; I was into girl things. She played soccer; I sang in the Girls' Glee Club. We were as different as night and day. Her parents made her wear dresses to school and “proper” shoes. Once at school, however, she would head down to the locker room and put on her sneakers and shorts under the dress. To me, she looked absolutely ridiculous.

I had a whole group of special friends I spent time with. They were not all exactly like me, but they were not “jocks” either. I guess you could say their interests leaned towards the arts. Obviously, Margaret and I did not run in the same circles.

When we got into high school, something happened. I can’t exactly describe how our relationship changed. I signed up for German II instead of German I where most of the girls in my group ended up. Margaret was also in German II. She and I were the only freshmen in the class, so we looked to each other for support. I suppose that without the distractions of my group, I was able to see Margaret. I mean that I could really see her to be the amusing and supportive person she was and continues to be.

She didn’t seem to mind that I had a limited ability in sports. I had always thought that athletic people secretly made fun of me and my awkwardness on the tennis court or the playing field. Instead of trying to get me to do things she liked, she would come to my concerts and cheer me on. She was the friend who helped me learn my lines for the school musical. I started turning up at her soccer games. At some point during our years in high school, she had to leave the soccer team for health reasons. After that, I would go with her to the games to cheer on the team, her friends who had in turn become my friends.

When I got to know Margaret better, I discovered that even though she loved all things athletic, she had been studying piano for years and was really good. She helped me discover my hidden physical strengths as we hiked together and went swimming.

I learned that having the same talents and interests isn’t necessary to make a friendship work. As a matter of fact, it is fun to do things you wouldn’t ordinarily do. Most importantly, I learned from my friendship with Margaret that you can never put anyone in one category—we all have a wide variety of talents and interests.

SESSION 3

Scripture

Acts 10:34-36, 44-48
Luke 6:32-38
Luke 18:18-24

Skill Focus

Influences
Compassion

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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 God's Encompassing Love

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. . . . While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Acts 10:34-36, 44-48

Commentary: In *Acts* the number of people who hear and believe the gospel steadily grows as the apostles struggle with the issue of including Gentiles, non-Jews. When Peter visits Cornelius, a Roman soldier, he makes a startling discovery: God has no favorites. Peter does not lean on Scripture to support his insight but relies on personal experience to claim that Jesus came to save all people, not a select few. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit affirms that Peter understands what God is doing—God welcomes all people.

☐ Questions

- Why were the "circumcised believers" surprised?
- Do churches ever exclude any type of person?
- Why was it so difficult for those who believed that Jesus is "Lord of all" to accept the Gentiles?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Why did the narrator avoid Margaret at one time?
- What traits or characteristics keep you from getting to know some people better?

☐ Activities

How Important Are Clothes?

In our society people are often judged by the clothes they wear. Bring in articles of clothing you or your parents do not wear anymore. **Hint:** *Look in the back of the closet for a coat you can't wear anymore or old baby clothes.* You might also visit a thrift shop and pick up a few items of vintage clothing. Pass them out as people to come in. Discuss the importance of clothes.

- How important are clothes to you?
- What item of clothing do you yearn for? Why do you want it?
- What is your favorite piece of clothing? How often do you wear it? Why do you like it so much?
- What role does clothing play in choosing a friend? Why?

Ask each person to think of a story about the person who used to wear the piece of clothing you are holding. What kind of person wore it? What did he or she like to do? How did that stain get on the knee? End the story by listing some of the unique gifts this person had and why he or she was loved. Another option is to create a round-robin story about a family, in which each person contributes a brief "chapter" from the article of clothing. If the story turns out well, polish it, and present it to another group in the church.

Messages from Advertisements

Bring in a pile of fashion and sports magazines. Look through the magazines to see what people are wearing. Discuss what you find.

- What kinds of expectations are raised by the advertisements and articles in the magazines?
- Do you try to live up to the expectations? Why or why not?
- Are you expected to dress a certain way for school? For family outings? For church?
- Who makes the rules for the way you dress for different activities? Are they are good rules? Why or why not?

Overcoming Barriers to Friendship

Brainstorm activities the group could do with people who are different from them. For example, you could spend the day at a local group home for people with physical or mental impairments doing chores with the people who live there. Pair up with a resident and get to know that person as you work side by side. The group could also spend the afternoon at an assisted living facility playing games, reading, or just visiting with the elderly or sick. Find time to talk about your experiences.

- Identify the barriers you encountered to friendship. Were you able to overcome them? How?
- What did you learn about yourself?

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2 No Strings Attached

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus said,] "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

Luke 6:32-38

Commentary: The hard sayings of Jesus in *Luke 6:32-38* are from his "Sermon on the Plain" where the major issue is loving one's enemies. Jesus's hearers had plenty of reasons for avenging Roman oppressors, tax collectors, and other people who took advantage of them. He calls his followers not to react to an enemy's behavior by retaliating.

Jesus challenged the people to treat their persecutors with an unconventional kind of love. Christians are called to love selflessly and to forgive, but not by discarding the sense of fairness that accepts any type of behavior.

☐ Questions

- Why is it easy to love people who love you?
- Why is it difficult to love those who are hateful to us?
- How do we usually deal with people who do not like us?
- How does the media tell us to deal with these people?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Have you ever become friends with someone you once disliked? What happened?

☐ Activities

Anonymous Giving

Make a list of all the names of people or groups in your church or community to whom you would like to give an anonymous gift. What could you do for these people? For example, you could bake cookies for the rector's wife, rake the leaves for an elderly or injured parishioner when he or she is away, write a series of articles for the church newsletter thanking people in the parish who work behind the scenes, or clean up trash in a community park.

After you decide what to do, find volunteers to oversee the project, make phone calls, provide transportation, and get any necessary materials. After completing the project, discuss the experience.

- What was it like to do something and not get any credit or thanks for it?
- Were you tempted to tell people?
- Did you miss the public recognition? Do the feelings you have inside give you enough satisfaction?

Loving the Unlovable

Reread the Scripture passage. The message from this passage describes the way Jesus lived his life.

- Should we really be expected to do all of those things?
- What do we do when people take advantage of us?

The world we live in is often in direct opposition to Jesus's teachings in *Luke*. Take each phrase, and turn it around to reflect the reality of the world. For example, if you love those who don't love you, what good will it do you? Ask a volunteer to record the new phrases. When you are finished, ask the recorder to read back the "new" passage.

- Which passage, the group's or *Luke*'s, best describes how you live your life?
- What is one thing you could do to live more as Christ would have you live?

Agree that you will each find a way to do something for someone you know doesn't like you, such as complimenting a new haircut or pair of shoes. Tell the group later what happened.

Video

Get together one night to watch a movie that deals with the issue of revenge, such as *Mission Impossible* or *Beauty and the Beast*. Discuss the movie.

- What good comes from revenge?
- How would the story have been different if the character had responded with love instead of revenge?
- In real life, who is usually hurt most by revenge?

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3 Walls Between Us

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

A certain ruler asked [Jesus], "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: `You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother.'" He replied, "I have kept all these since my youth." When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." But when he heard this, he became sad, for he was very rich. Jesus look at him and said, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"

Luke 18:18-24

Commentary: The ruler is a person who has tried to keep every commandment. When Jesus presents him with the unexpected challenge to sell everything, distribute his money to the poor, and follow him, the ruler faces an unsettling choice. Perhaps he was too accustomed to the life he lived. Jesus's response, "How hard it is for those who have wealth" is probably a sad commentary rather than a harsh condemnation of the rich. Jesus's hearers expected that the rich would be prime candidates for eternal life. But Jesus turns their perceptions inside out.

☐ Questions

- Why did the ruler become sad at Jesus's suggestion that he sell all that he owned and give away the money?
- Why did Jesus ask him to do it?

☐ Activities

Breaking Down Walls

Prepare ahead of time a model of the Berlin Wall on butcher paper, complete with bricks that can be ripped off the paper as each barrier to friendship is overcome.

Read the Personal Story. List the barriers that exist between the author of the story and her friend. Think of other barriers that keep people apart. Write one barrier on each of the "bricks" on the wall, leaving space to write down ways that the barrier could be overcome. Think of ways to overcome each barrier, and write them on the same "brick." As each barrier is overcome, rip the brick down. At the end of the session, scatter the "bricks" on the floor. Ask the group to stand on the bricks, and in silence make a covenant with God to tear down a brick in their lives that separates them from others. Close with prayer.

Camel's Eye

The verse in *Luke* following the passage cited (*Luke 18:25*) says, "Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." Jesus often used common objects in his stories that the people of his day were familiar with. That is why he talks of seeds, vines, wineskins, and camels. Ask each participant to write a new verse expressing the same idea, but using a modern analogy. For example, "It is easier to win the lottery, than for a rich person to enter heaven." Share your new verses and discuss the meaning of this verse.

- Did Jesus have something against rich people?
- What things in your life keep you from having a full relationship with Jesus? (For example, friends, family, love of possessions, laziness, television.)
- If you were in the place of the ruler, what would Jesus ask you to give up? Why?
- Do you want a closer relationship with Jesus?

Time Distribution

Ask each participant to make a log of how he or she spends time on a typical day. You can suggest general categories, such as eating, sleeping, listening to music, homework, television, talking on the phone, or playing sports. Look at the lists and compare the way the group spends time.

- How much time do you spending talking to God or reading the Bible?
- What does the way you spend your time tell about your priorities?
- What would Jesus ask you to change?
- What would you like to change?

In the next week, think of one thing you would like to do for someone else. Find a way to make time by watching less television, cutting short a telephone conversation, or some other activity on your calendar.

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RELATIONSHIPS

Costs of Relationships

SESSION 4

Objective

Youth will be able to list expectations of others in relationships and examine the elements of a relationship they are wiling to contribute.

Personal Story

When I was about sixteen I met Geoffrey. Geoffrey was the accompanist for my high school chorus. For some reason, I became his designated page turner. He was very popular, not because he was especially good-looking, but because he was extraordinarily talented and kind to just about everyone.

We became good friends, and over time even dated a little. I remember going to his Junior Prom and dancing with him at school dances. I even imagined myself in love with him every other month or so.

As we grew closer we reached a very complicated and difficult barrier. I was a very devout Christian. I attended church regularly and was even thinking about ministry full-time. Geoffrey was culturally Jewish, but a confirmed Atheist. When we discovered how absolutely different we were in religious matters, we just tried not to talk about it. That didn't work, so then we tried discussing it.

I have memories of sitting on the floor in the hall talking on the phone for hours on end. (My parents were always asking us to get off the phone.) We argued. We debated. We tried to understand each other's point of view.

I went to see my priest about it. I was concerned that Geoffrey was not going to be in heaven, given his faithlessness. His answer was that I shouldn't stand in judgment of Geoffrey—that only God could judge him and know what was truly in his heart.

In the end it just became too big a division. We could not date, that was for certain. We remained friends to some extent, but there was still a great gulf between us. It really hurt when he started seeing other girls. He even started to date another Christian girl, one I knew to be very serious about her faith. I guess they found it less of a barrier.

I often wonder about that and worry that I was especially unyielding. But some things are, I think, just too difficult. We simply did not see the world in the same way at all. This made our friendship superficial at best. It is sad, but I don't think I could have done anything differently.

Scripture

Matthew 26:36-40
Job 2:11-13
Proverbs 19:4-7

Skill Focus

Fairness
Responsibility

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Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.*

From Morning Prayer II
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 101

Dismissal

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

1 Disappointments

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?"

Matthew 26:36-40

Commentary: On the Mount of Olives during the night of his betrayal Jesus does not face the prospect of his own death with calmness. His prayer to God betrays an inner turmoil, and he admits that he does not want to be tested. For support in the darkest hour he had yet faced, Jesus is counting on his three closest friends, Peter, James, and John, to stay with him while he struggles in prayer. The loyalty of his followers had been commendable, and they had good intentions of keeping their promise to Jesus. Nevertheless, they slip into slumber leaving Jesus abandoned and disappointed. It is a serious failure of friendship.

☐ Questions

- How do you think Jesus felt when he found his friends sleeping?
- Have you ever disappointed a friend? Has a friend ever disappointed you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What might have happened later if the two people in the story had stayed together? Could they have met each other's expectations?

☐ Activities

Drama

Reread the Scripture passage. To get a better feel for the events leading up to and following the scene at Gethsemane, read *Matthew 26:17-75*. The events described in this passage occurred on what we now call Maundy Thursday in Holy Week. Throughout this day, Jesus's closest friends not only disappointed him, but also deserted him.

Select one or more scenes from this passage to dramatize. Ask for volunteers to play the main parts; others in the group can be disciples, part of the crowd, or observers. Bring in robes or large pieces of fabric for costumes to make the play more real. Discuss the passage before you begin to help the performers get in character.

As an alternative, you could move the play into the present using the theme of being disappointed by your friends. For example, a person could be torn between a friend who needed help and a friend who wants to do something fun.

Consider a more formal presentation of your play during Holy Week.

Feeling Blue

Sadness is often associated with the color blue. Take a few moments to think about how you felt when a friend let you down. Then think about your feelings when you realized you disappointed someone. Pass out paper, markers, crayons, colored tissue paper, and glue. Ask the participants to think of the colors they associate with feelings of sadness and disappointment and illustrate them on paper.

- What other feelings are associated with disappointment? What colors do you think of?
- Are the colors you felt when someone disappointed you the same as the colors when you let someone down?

Ask the participants to hold their creations as the group gathers in a circle. In silence or aloud pray about disappointments represented on the papers. Close by reading the closing anthem for Maundy Thursday on p. 274-275 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Video

Together watch a film about relationships and expectations of friends, such as *Circle of Friends.* Discuss expectations and disappointments found in friendship.

- Were the characters' expectations of one another reasonable?
- Could they meet each others' expectations?

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2 Sharing the Burden

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

Job 2:11-13

Commentary: Many scholars believe the book of *Job* is rooted in Israel's ancient wisdom tradition that responded to a crisis of faith: even when righteous people live according to God's law, blessings do not always follow. Job's tale of suffering advances the truth that sometimes bad things happen to good people. The book also addresses limited human reason and the concept that God cannot be defined or put on trial. In the story God allows Satan to test Job's faith by taking away his health, his family, and his possessions. The well-meaning friends in the passage represent groups in ancient Israel's religious establishment who cannot provide satisfactory answers to Job's fate. Job embraces tragedy, but in his outrage he challenges God's standards. After impassioned debate with God, he admits that he does not fully understand God's ways. At the end, Job worships God.

☐ Questions

- How did Job's friends respond to his situation?
- How do you want your friends to act when you are sad or have problems?
- Was the silence of Job's friends more comforting than words?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What happens when the separation between friends cannot be reconciled as it was for Geoffrey and the narrator?
- What can you do when words fail you?

☐ Activities

Sharing the Pain

During the week, look for a story in the newspaper, preferably the local section, about suffering. Ask a volunteer to read the story to the group, and discuss what happened. Ask questions that would help participants put themselves in that situation. For example, have you known someone who has lost a child? After the discussion, think about the people in the story in silence. While the group is quiet, ask them to try to put themselves in the place of one of the people in the story. End the quiet time with a prayer. Ask the participants to share their experiences of entering into someone else's suffering.

If appropriate, the group might find a way to respond to the story. For example, someone might call the Red Cross in the case of a natural disaster. The group could collect canned goods for a family who lost their home to fire. They could write individual letters or a group expression of sympathy to a family of someone who has died. The response should grow from the feelings of the participants.

Intergenerational Bible Study

Invite a group of older parishioners to join you for Bible study. As the groups gather, serve a light snack and encourage the two groups to get to know one another. Read the Scripture passage together; use information in the Commentary to fill in information about Job. During the discussion, make sure members of each group have a chance to respond.

- Have you ever felt overwhelmed by your problems? What did you do?
- How have friends helped you through the bad times?
- How do you help friends who are faced with multiple problems and sickness?
- What is the best thing you can do for someone who is very ill?

Find out if people in either group know of someone who needs help. Talk about ways the groups can respond, such as prayer, writing notes, running errands, or buying groceries.

Music

Bring in contemporary music about sharing each other's burden to use during prayer or quiet times. For example, "You've God a Friend" by James Taylor, "Friends" by Elton John, the theme from the television show *Friends*, or "We Shall Be Free" by Garth Brooks. Use the music during one of the other activities, while the group gathers, or during a meditation.

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3 False Friends

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Wealth brings many friends,
but the poor are left friendless.
A false witness will not go unpunished,
and a liar will not escape.
Many seek the favor of the generous,
and everyone is a friend to a giver of gifts.
If the poor are hated even by their kin,
how much more are they shunned by their friends!
When they call after them, they are not there.

Proverbs 19:4-7

Commentary: *Proverbs*, a collection of sayings filled with wit and humor, form a textbook about life that presents young people with choices rather than commandments. The book's purpose is to help youth become people who are not afraid to question, who can appreciate human limits, and who aware of the awesome presence and power of God. The writers of *Proverbs* are well aware of how wealth can be used to gain influence and warn that the irresponsible use of money can lead to poverty and abandonment by family and friends. They advise using wealth generously and practically, and counsel against channeling money into bribes that obstruct justice by influencing witnesses to lie.

☐ Questions

- Is it easier to be friends with someone who is wealthy than someone who is poor?
- Has a friend ever lied to you? Did they "go unpunished"?
- Have you ever had something that others wanted? How did they treat you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Can you be true friends with someone who doesn't share your basic values? What happens to that kind of relationship over time?

☐ Activities

Playing a Role

After discussing the Scripture passage, divide into groups of two or three participants. Ask the groups to talk about situations they have been involved in or observed in which a false friend has something to offer. For example, someone might want to be friends with you because you have a car or money, work at a music store, or get free tickets to football games. Plan a role play about one or more of the situations discussed and decide who will play the characters. Then present the play to the larger group. After every group has had a chance to present the plays, discuss what happened.

- Is a person who is friends because of a car or or other possession being false or generous? How can you tell the difference?
- What do other friends think about this relationship?
- How can you tell if someone is your true friend?

Write It Off

Ask the participants to think about a situation in which they were a false friend. For example, not speaking up when a friend was ridiculed, lying to a friend who asked you to go somewhere, ignoring a person in public but calling them in private, or breaking off a relationship without regarding the other's feelings. To help relive these situations, ask everyone to sit in silence and separate from the group by turning a chair or looking out a window. Pass out paper and pencils and ask them to write a letter to the person they wronged asking for forgiveness. Stress that they don't have to mail the letter and should be as honest as possible.

When everyone has written the letter, come back together. Look at the service for Reconciliation, Form II beginning on p. 449 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Focus on the words of comfort and forgiveness. If possible, put the letters into a fire resistant container and burn them as you say the closing prayer. Remind participants that God's memory of acts forgiven are like the ashes in the container.

False Friends in the Media and Literature

Think of false friends from books, movies, and television shows. Describe the situations and why they were false friends. Shakespeare, for example, wrote many plays with characters who were false friends, such as Iago in *Othello* or the siblings in *King Lear*. See how many examples the group can find.

- What made the characters false friends?
- What could they have done differently?
- What would you have done in the same situation?

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RELATIONSHIPS

Costs of Relationships

Objective

Youth will be able to list expectations of others in relationships and examine the elements of a relationship they are wiling to contribute.

Personal Story

When I was about sixteen I met Geoffrey. Geoffrey was the accompanist for my high school chorus. For some reason, I became his designated page turner. He was very popular, not because he was especially good-looking, but because he was extraordinarily talented and kind to just about everyone.

We became good friends, and over time even dated a little. I remember going to his Junior Prom and dancing with him at school dances. I even imagined myself in love with him every other month or so.

As we grew closer we reached a very complicated and difficult barrier. I was a very devout Christian. I attended church regularly and was even thinking about ministry full-time. Geoffrey was culturally Jewish, but a confirmed Atheist. When we discovered how absolutely different we were in religious matters, we just tried not to talk about it. That didn't work, so then we tried discussing it.

I have memories of sitting on the floor in the hall talking on the phone for hours on end. (My parents were always asking us to get off the phone.) We argued. We debated. We tried to understand each other's point of view.

I went to see my priest about it. I was concerned that Geoffrey was not going to be in heaven, given his faithlessness. His answer was that I shouldn't stand in judgment of Geoffrey—that only God could judge him and know what was truly in his heart.

In the end it just became too big a division. We could not date, that was for certain. We remained friends to some extent, but there was still a great gulf between us. It really hurt when he started seeing other girls. He even started to date another Christian girl, one I knew to be very serious about her faith. I guess they found it less of a barrier.

I often wonder about that and worry that I was especially unyielding. But some things are, I think, just too difficult. We simply did not see the world in the same way at all. This made our friendship superficial at best. It is sad, but I don't think I could have done anything differently.

SESSION 4

Scripture

Matthew 26:36-40
Job 2:11-13
Proverbs 19:4-7

Skill Focus

Fairness
Responsibility

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Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.*

From Morning Prayer II
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 101

Dismissal

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

1 Disappointments

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?"

Matthew 26:36-40

Commentary: On the Mount of Olives during the night of his betrayal Jesus does not face the prospect of his own death with calmness. His prayer to God betrays an inner turmoil, and he admits that he does not want to be tested. For support in the darkest hour he had yet faced, Jesus is counting on his three closest friends, Peter, James, and John, to stay with him while he struggles in prayer. The loyalty of his followers had been commendable, and they had good intentions of keeping their promise to Jesus. Nevertheless, they slip into slumber leaving Jesus abandoned and disappointed. It is a serious failure of friendship.

☐ Questions

- How do you think Jesus felt when he found his friends sleeping?
- Have you ever disappointed a friend? Has a friend ever disappointed you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What might have happened later if the two people in the story had stayed together? Could they have met each other's expectations?

☐ Activities

Drama

Reread the Scripture passage. To get a better feel for the events leading up to and following the scene at Gethsemane, read *Matthew 26:17-75*. The events described in this passage occurred on what we now call Maundy Thursday in Holy Week. Throughout this day, Jesus's closest friends not only disappointed him, but also deserted him.

Select one or more scenes from this passage to dramatize. Ask for volunteers to play the main parts; others in the group can be disciples, part of the crowd, or observers. Bring in robes or large pieces of fabric for costumes to make the play more real. Discuss the passage before you begin to help the performers get in character.

As an alternative, you could move the play into the present using the theme of being disappointed by your friends. For example, a person could be torn between a friend who needed help and a friend who wants to do something fun.

Consider a more formal presentation of your play during Holy Week.

Feeling Blue

Sadness is often associated with the color blue. Take a few moments to think about how you felt when a friend let you down. Then think about your feelings when you realized you disappointed someone. Pass out paper, markers, crayons, colored tissue paper, and glue. Ask the participants to think of the colors they associate with feelings of sadness and disappointment and illustrate them on paper.

- What other feelings are associated with disappointment? What colors do you think of?
- Are the colors you felt when someone disappointed you the same as the colors when you let someone down?

Ask the participants to hold their creations as the group gathers in a circle. In silence or aloud pray about disappointments represented on the papers. Close by reading the closing anthem for Maundy Thursday on p. 274-275 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Video

Together watch a film about relationships and expectations of friends, such as *Circle of Friends.* Discuss expectations and disappointments found in friendship.

- Were the characters' expectations of one another reasonable?
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2 Sharing the Burden

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

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Commentary: Many scholars believe the book of *Job* is rooted in Israel's ancient wisdom tradition that responded to a crisis of faith: even when righteous people live according to God's law, blessings do not always follow. Job's tale of suffering advances the truth that sometimes bad things happen to good people. The book also addresses limited human reason and the concept that God cannot be defined or put on trial. In the story God allows Satan to test Job's faith by taking away his health, his family, and his possessions. The well-meaning friends in the passage represent groups in ancient Israel's religious establishment who cannot provide satisfactory answers to Job's fate. Job embraces tragedy, but in his outrage he challenges God's standards. After impassioned debate with God, he admits that he does not fully understand God's ways. At the end, Job worships God.

☐ Questions

- How did Job's friends respond to his situation?
- How do you want your friends to act when you are sad or have problems?
- Was the silence of Job's friends more comforting than words?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What happens when the separation between friends cannot be reconciled as it was for Geoffrey and the narrator?
- What can you do when words fail you?

☐ Activities

Sharing the Pain

During the week, look for a story in the newspaper, preferably the local section, about suffering. Ask a volunteer to read the story to the group, and discuss what happened. Ask questions that would help participants put themselves in that situation. For example, have you known someone who has lost a child? After the discussion, think about the people in the story in silence. While the group is quiet, ask them to try to put themselves in the place of one of the people in the story. End the quiet time with a prayer. Ask the participants to share their experiences of entering into someone else's suffering.

If appropriate, the group might find a way to respond to the story. For example, someone might call the Red Cross in the case of a natural disaster. The group could collect canned goods for a family who lost their home to fire. They could write individual letters or a group expression of sympathy to a family of someone who has died. The response should grow from the feelings of the participants.

Intergenerational Bible Study

Invite a group of older parishioners to join you for Bible study. As the groups gather, serve a light snack and encourage the two groups to get to know one another. Read the Scripture passage together; use information in the Commentary to fill in information about Job. During the discussion, make sure members of each group have a chance to respond.

- Have you ever felt overwhelmed by your problems? What did you do?
- How have friends helped you through the bad times?
- How do you help friends who are faced with multiple problems and sickness?
- What is the best thing you can do for someone who is very ill?

Find out if people in either group know of someone who needs help. Talk about ways the groups can respond, such as prayer, writing notes, running errands, or buying groceries.

Music

Bring in contemporary music about sharing each other's burden to use during prayer or quiet times. For example, "You've God a Friend" by James Taylor, "Friends" by Elton John, the theme from the television show *Friends*, or "We Shall Be Free" by Garth Brooks. Use the music during one of the other activities, while the group gathers, or during a meditation.

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3 False Friends

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Wealth brings many friends,
but the poor are left friendless.
A false witness will not go unpunished,
and a liar will not escape.
Many seek the favor of the generous,
and everyone is a friend to a giver of gifts.
If the poor are hated even by their kin,
how much more are they shunned by their friends!
When they call after them, they are not there.

Proverbs 19:4-7

Commentary: *Proverbs*, a collection of sayings filled with wit and humor, form a textbook about life that presents young people with choices rather than commandments. The book's purpose is to help youth become people who are not afraid to question, who can appreciate human limits, and who aware of the awesome presence and power of God. The writers of *Proverbs* are well aware of how wealth can be used to gain influence and warn that the irresponsible use of money can lead to poverty and abandonment by family and friends. They advise using wealth generously and practically, and counsel against channeling money into bribes that obstruct justice by influencing witnesses to lie.

☐ Questions

- Is it easier to be friends with someone who is wealthy than someone who is poor?
- Has a friend ever lied to you? Did they "go unpunished"?
- Have you ever had something that others wanted? How did they treat you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Can you be true friends with someone who doesn't share your basic values? What happens to that kind of relationship over time?

☐ Activities

Playing a Role

After discussing the Scripture passage, divide into groups of two or three participants. Ask the groups to talk about situations they have been involved in or observed in which a false friend has something to offer. For example, someone might want to be friends with you because you have a car or money, work at a music store, or get free tickets to football games. Plan a role play about one or more of the situations discussed and decide who will play the characters. Then present the play to the larger group. After every group has had a chance to present the plays, discuss what happened.

- Is a person who is friends because of a car or or other possession being false or generous? How can you tell the difference?
- What do other friends think about this relationship?
- How can you tell if someone is your true friend?

Write It Off

Ask the participants to think about a situation in which they were a false friend. For example, not speaking up when a friend was ridiculed, lying to a friend who asked you to go somewhere, ignoring a person in public but calling them in private, or breaking off a relationship without regarding the other's feelings. To help relive these situations, ask everyone to sit in silence and separate from the group by turning a chair or looking out a window. Pass out paper and pencils and ask them to write a letter to the person they wronged asking for forgiveness. Stress that they don't have to mail the letter and should be as honest as possible.

When everyone has written the letter, come back together. Look at the service for Reconciliation, Form II beginning on p. 449 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Focus on the words of comfort and forgiveness. If possible, put the letters into a fire resistant container and burn them as you say the closing prayer. Remind participants that God's memory of acts forgiven are like the ashes in the container.

False Friends in the Media and Literature

Think of false friends from books, movies, and television shows. Describe the situations and why they were false friends. Shakespeare, for example, wrote many plays with characters who were false friends, such as Iago in *Othello* or the siblings in *King Lear*. See how many examples the group can find.

- What made the characters false friends?
- What could they have done differently?
- What would you have done in the same situation?

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RELATIONSHIPS

True Friendship

SESSION 5

Objective

Youth will be able to identify characteristics of a true friend. They will discuss their own ability to accept that kind of friend and to be that kind of friend.

Personal Story

Jimmy and I were best friends. We went everywhere together. On the surface, however, we were totally different. In high school, I was more interested in academic work and extracurricular activities like sports and student government. Jimmy eventually quit school so that he could work full time and get some vocational training.

I don't know how we became friends. It just seemed that it was easy for us to talk to each other. We enjoyed each other's company. Jimmy had a car which meant that we could explore the world. Sometimes he would turn the music up too loud, and I would beg him to turn it down. If he drove too fast, I begged him to slow down. Sometimes I wanted to shake him.

Each of us knew that the other would always be there for support. When I was upset, I could call Jimmy, and he could always call me. When Jimmy's father died, I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to do. We rode around in the car in silence. I think that it helped him for me to just be with him. Sometimes we would argue, but we'd quickly get past whatever it was that started it.

Once Jimmy had a girlfriend who came between us. He wanted to spend more time with her. I felt jealous and resentful, but I tried not to show it. I remember watching him drive by with her in the seat next to him. We remained friends, but we were not as close as before.

Eventually Jimmy's romantic relationship ended in disaster. I was there to support him and to listen to his tale of woe. For a while we were closer than ever.

I will never forget the day that Jimmy skipped school so that he could drive me to a college interview. Honestly, I am not sure that I would have done the same thing for him. I would have been too afraid of getting in trouble. It was great kindness that led him to do such a thing. While it is short of laying down one's life for a friend, it showed how much our friendship meant to him.

Eventually, we went our separate ways. We had been on separate paths that took us to very different places. Sometimes that happens in life, but I will always be grateful for his friendship.

Scripture

Sirach 6:14-17
Ruth 1:16-18
John 15:12-13

Skill Focus

Respect
Conflict

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Prayer

O God, who on this day taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Day of Pentecost
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 227

Dismissal

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

1 Trusting a Friend

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter: whoever finds one has found a treasure. Faithful friends are beyond price; no amount can balance their worth. Faithful friends are life-saving medicine; and those who fear the Lord will find them. Those who fear the Lord direct their friendship aright, for as they are, so are their neighbors also.

Sirach 6:14-17

Commentary: The *Book of Sirach* also called *Ecclesiasticus* is found in the Apocrypha, a collection of writings that are not included with the Old and New Testaments in some versions of the Bible. In these verses the author describes a true friend, who is a gift from the Lord. With true friends arguments are private matters. A true friend speaks the truth and stands by his or her friend as support. Such a friend is a gift from God.

☐ Questions

- Why is a true friend like a treasure?
- How are faithful friends like life-saving medicine?
- Would your friends tell you the truth or just what you want to hear?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did the two friends in the story build trust?

☐ Activities

True Friends

Ask the group to think about the relationships they have with their best friends. List the characteristics of a true friend. Draw on a piece of butcher paper a life-size outline of a person. Fill in the features to illustrate the list of characteristics already noted. For example, the "friend" might have big ears in order to be a good listener. The person might have outstretched hands to show they are generous, or wear a cross as a symbol of faithfulness. Talk about the qualities represented in the picture.

- When have you demonstrated one of these qualities to a friend?
- When has a friend shown one of these to you?

Select one of the qualities and find a way to be a true friend during the coming week.

Pointing Out Faults

Think of someone famous who everyone knows about. On a sheet of paper divided into two sections, write in the first section the characteristics of the person you admire (such as good looking, athletic, musical). Would these necessarily make them a friend you could trust? In the second section, write something about the person you would like to change (such as hair style, clothing, the way they treat other people, habits).

- Was it easier to think of positive or negative things?
- If your friend had a habit you didn't like, would you tell them?
- If your friend's boy or girl friend was cheating on them or saying untrue things, would you tell your friend? Why? Why not?
- If what they did was life threatening, like driving too fast, drinking, or taking drugs, would you try to stop them?
- Is being totally honest with a friend good or bad?
- Can confronting a person result in the destruction of a relationship?

Ask the group to think about one relationship they have that is in jeopardy because two people refuse to be honest with each other. Pray in silence for these relationships.

When Two Are One

Play a variation of the three-legged race. Let the group set up an obstacle course. Divide into pairs and use rope or string long enough to tie two people's legs together. Blindfold one member of each pair, then tell them that neither can talk. Each pair should run the obstacle course twice, changing the blindfold after the first run. After everyone has had a turn, talk about the experience.

- How did it feel to be blindfolded? Did you trust your partner to take care of you?
- What strategies did you devise to successfully maneuver together?
- If you had known one person would wear a blindfold, would you have built an easier obstacle course?

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2 Loyalty

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

But Ruth said,
"Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
Where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.
Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.
May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!"
When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

Ruth 1:16-18

Commentary: The *Book of Ruth* is a short story in the Hebrew Scriptures that tells of one person's devotion and loyalty to another. Ruth's widowed mother-in-law, Naomi, decides to return to her homeland in Israel after the death of her husband and sons. She and her two daughters-in-law begin the journey together. Along the way, Naomi encourages them to return to their own homelands. One heeds her advice while the other, Ruth, decides to continue to Bethlehem with Naomi. Ruth's response to Naomi in verses 16-17 show the depth of her devotion and loyalty. She is completely committed to her relationship with Naomi with no strings or conditions attached.

☐ Questions

- In the Scripture passage, Ruth and Naomi were facing a difficult life. How did Ruth respond?
- What kind of relationship do you think Ruth and Naomi had up to this point in their story?
- How much would you be willing to give up for a friend?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
- Did both friends show their love in the same way?
- Could they have still been friends even though they went in different directions? How?

☐ Activities

Promises to Keep

Ask the group to name every oath or vow they have taken or know about. For example, oaths taken by Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other organizations; oaths of office of elected officials, marriage vows (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 427), military oaths, and oaths in literature, such as the one taken by Huckleberry Finn. Talk about oaths and why they are used in our society.

- What is the purpose of an oath?
- What are the key elements in an oath or vow?

Look at the Baptismal Covenant (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 304-305) and compare it to the oaths listed by the group. List the major parts of the covenant, such as a declaration of belief, a description of God, and what a person will do to maintain a relationship with God. Using the same components in the covenant and oaths, write a loyalty oath to God or your best friend. Encourage the group to keep the oaths to remind them of their pledge of loyalty when the relationship is troubled.

The Story of Ruth

Read together the first part of the story of Ruth and Naomi in *Ruth 1:1-18*. Ask the group, working in pairs or individually, to write their version of how the story ends. Point out obstacles to Ruth's loyalty, such as the difference in cultures and the prejudice she would probably encounter. In addition, the two would be living without husbands in a society where women had little power. Finally, there would be the normal tension between mother and daughter-in-law.

After everyone has had time to create their ending to this story, ask the pairs or individuals to share their stories. Then compare the group's stories with the real ending. **Hint:** *Ask someone ahead of time to read the rest of Ruth (it's only four chapters long) and be prepared to summarize the story.*

- How did your stories differ from the real story in *Ruth*?
- Was Ruth repaid for her loyalty?
- If you had been Ruth, would you have returned home?

Video

Watch a movie that illustrates the theme of false friendship, such as *Ghost*, *Stand By Me*, or *Beaches.*

- Why were some of the characters false friends?
- What could they have done differently?
- Does the movie remind you of experiences that you have had?

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3 Putting It on the Line

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus said,] "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

John 15:12-13

Commentary: The verses in *John* are from one of Jesus's final talks with his disciples. In this lesson, he tells his followers how the Christian community is to live together in love. The model for Christian love is the example lived by Jesus through his obedience to God even through death on the cross. Because we follow Christ and his example, we are expected to live with each other in a spirit of love in the Christian community. To be Christ means to live in fellowship with the Church of God.

☐ Questions

- Have you really thought about Jesus's love for you?
- Is there anyone you know that you would die for?
- How can we love each other as deeply as Jesus loves us?

☐ Activities

Truth or Dare

Play the game Truth or Dare. Sit in a circle, and designate one person to ask the question, and another person to answer. The first person asks, "Truth or dare?" The other must select one without knowing the question to be asked or the deed to be performed. If the respondent selects "truth," he or she must answer a question honestly. If they answer, "dare," they must do whatever the questioner says. **Hint:** *Set limits on the kinds of questions and dares to be performed. Neither should be degrading in any way. Example of appropriate dares are walking like a chicken or kissing someone on the cheek.* Continue the game around the circle until everyone has had a chance to be the questioner and respondent.

- Do your friends ever ask you to be truthful or do something that makes you uncomfortable? What have you done in those circumstances?
- Would a true friend ever ask you to do something harmful?

Personal Story

Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What kinds of sacrifices have you made for a friend?
- What do you expect your best friends to sacrifice for you? Are you willing to do the same?
- What are you not willing to do for a friend?

Ask the group to think about a long-term relationship they have had with a friend.

- What words would they use to describe the feelings they had for that friend?
- What range of emotions have you shared in the friendship?

Tell about that friendship by writing your own personal story, composing a song, writing a poem, or drawing a picture. Share the stories and creative responses with one another. Publish the written works of those who are comfortable sharing their work with a wider audience in a church newsletter. Cite the Scripture passage as a point of reference.

On the Line

Identify several scenarios in which there could be differences about how friends should respond. For example, a friend asks you to tell her parents she was with you when she was with her boyfriend. Or, your friend, who will lose his driving privileges if he has an accident, asks you to say you were driving when he dents the bumper in an accident. Tape masking tape down the center of the floor. Describe each scenario and ask the group to "take sides." After they select their position, ask them to defend it.

- Why did you select that side of the line?
- Are there times that protecting a friend can actually hurt him or her?
- Are there times you could be justified "covering" for a friend? When?

Hint: *The group can help you with the scenarios by describing actual situations they have experienced or know about.*

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RELATIONSHIPS

Romantic Love

Objective

Youth will be able to define a romantic relationship. They will compare the aspects of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Personal Story

For a long time, romantic relationships in high school never seemed to work out for me. Most of the time I had crushes on girls, but was afraid to do anything about it. Instead, I would imagine what it would be like to have a relationship with them. My fantasy life was pretty full! In my fantasy life, my girlfriends were always doing exactly what I wanted.

Occasionally, I would try to get up enough courage to ask someone out, but I almost always lost my nerve at the last minute. I was jealous of those students at school, on television, and in the movies who always seemed to be dating. I envied the students who walked down the halls arm in arm with their hands in the other's back pocket.

There was one girl in particular who caught my attention. Her name was Sandy. She was beautiful. I stared at her from afar. I tried to develop a friendship with her, and we talked on the phone regularly. As time went on, I could see that she only saw me as a friend. Again I was left to my imagination.

While I was trying to capture Sandy, another girl had developed a crush on me. She would invite me over and call me on the phone. For Valentine's Day, she made me a cake. For my birthday, she bought me a gift. She professed her love for me more than once, but I simply did not feel that way about her. I couldn't feel that way. Our friends tried to push us together, and I felt guilty that I could not respond. When I told her that I had a crush on someone else, she was hurt, but continued to try to win my affections. We were two sad and dejected people.

Eventually, I did find girls whom I enjoyed dating. I began to see how great it can be when two people care for each other and want to spend time together. It's a bit more complicated than my fantasy world. They don't always say what I expect them to say or act the way I want them to. It's hard to know what to say and what to do when new situations come up. It takes a lot of energy, but somehow the energy comes. It's all very exciting and scary.

SESSION 6

Scripture

Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 16a
II Samuel 13:2, 6-7, 10b-12, 14-15
James 4:1-3, 11-12

Skill Focus

Influences
Relationships

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Prayer

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all your children are united one to another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by your grace, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where, O Father, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign in perfect unity, now and for ever. *Amen.*

From the Marriage Prayers
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 430

Dismissal

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

1 Real Love

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

My beloved speaks and says to me:
"Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away." . . .
My beloved is mine and I am his . . .

Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 16a

Commentary: The *Song of Solomon* is a collection of songs between two lovers which has been interpreted through the centuries allegorically on many different levels. The verses in the passage describe the lover's response to his or her beloved's voice. The lover wants to be in the presence of the other because of the love they hold for each other. As the world is fresh with new life, so is the lover's relationship renewed because of the deep and abiding love they have for each other. Another level of understanding is that this view of love is also how God loves us.

☐ Questions

- What kind of person do you picture as the narrator of the Scripture passage?
- Why is love often compared to springtime?

☐ Activities

I Remember. . .

Invite young couples who have been married a brief time, older couples who have been married more than twenty-five years, or representatives of both groups to talk about romance in their relationships. Ask each couple to describe how they met and how they knew they were ready for marriage. If they are comfortable doing so, ask them to relate the most romantic moment in their marriage. After each couple has had time to talk about romance and marriage, ask them your own questions. For example:

- How do you know if a certain person is for you?
- Does the romantic part of the relationship wear off after time?
- How do you keep romance alive?

To thank the couples who participate on the panel, send them a Valentine's Day card.

Personals

Read the Scripture passage and *I Corinthians 13*. Using these passages and their own experiences, ask the group to list as many words or phrases as possible that describe a good relationship.

Bring in personal ads from the newspaper. Divide them among the group and ask them to list the qualities or characteristics people use to describe themselves or the kind of person they are looking for. Compare the two lists.

- What seems to be the most important things people in the ads say they are looking for in romantic relationships?
- Are the qualities that attract us to another person the same ones that contribute to a long-term relationship?

Write a personal ad listing the qualities you think are important for the other person to have and those you think you have to offer. **Hint:** *Tell people ahead of time that this ad will not be compared or discussed so they can be as honest as possible.*

Music

Bring in songs from your favorite artists that deal with romantic love. Listen to the songs and discuss the lyrics.

- Are the lyrics realistic?
- Does anything seem to be missing?
- Are the experiences described in the songs similar to ones you have had? How are they similar or different?
- What do the lyrics suggest is most important in a relationship?

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2 Manipulative Love

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. . . . So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand." . . . So Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." She answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile!". . . But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her. Then Amnon was seized with a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing was even greater than the lust he had felt for her. Amnon said to her, "Get out!"

II Samuel 13:2, 6-7, 10b-12, 14-15

Commentary: This Scripture reading tells the story of the rape of King David's daughter, Tamar, by her half-brother Amnon. During this time in history, local customs allowed for marriage between half-siblings. Amnon's romantic feelings for Tamar, therefore, would not have been considered immoral. However, Amnon's deceit to lure Tamar to his room and his use of force to subdue her were terribly wrong. He not only rapes her, but also heaps further abuse on Tamar by blaming her for his actions. Tamar's own feelings are self destructive even though she has done nothing to deserve this abuse.

☐ Questions

- How did Amnon use others to get what he wanted?
- Have you known someone who manipulated another person to get what they wanted?
- How do you know if someone is using you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Did any of the people in the story try to manipulate others?
- Does anyone really "win" in a manipulative situation?

Hint: *The Scripture passage for this theme describes a rape scene that may difficult for your group to study, especially if someone has had an abusive sexual encounter. Be prepared to seek help from an adult you trust if necessary.*

☐ Activities

Tamar's Story

Read the entire story of Amnon's seduction of Tamar in *II Samuel 13:1-22*. Stage a panel discussion among the characters involved in the story: Amnon, Absalom, King David, Tamar, Jonadab. Assign parts to volunteers, and give them a chance to get into character. Give each panel member a chance to tell the story from his or her own point of view. Let the remainder of the group ask questions after the individual presentations are made.

- Did the culture of the court make it more difficult for Tamar to refuse Amnon?
- Do women today get caught in situations with a person who holds power over them? What can they do?
- What did you think of David's response?

To find out how the story ends, read *II Samuel 13:23-39*. Do you think the story might have had a different ending if David had punished Amnon? Using the same panel, act out a new ending to the story with the characters taking responsibility for their actions.

Just Say No

Tell the group that they have just been hired to produce a public service commercial about ways to say "no" that will be respected and heard. The ad should also be designed to help the person in a power position hear the word "no." Break into small groups or work together to create scenarios that other high school teens will relate to. After discussing different possibilities, select one or two to act out. Write dialogue, and assign someone to be the director and help the actors understand the scene. Others in the group can design the setting, or write a lead-in or follow-up monologue.

Present your ad to a group in your community, church, or school. Discuss with them the importance of knowing how to say no.

Video

Watch together a movie about manipulative love, such as *Dangerous Liaisons* or *Indecent Proposal*. **Hint:** *Both films are rated R and may be inappropriate for your group. Substitute another film, or use select scenes.* Discuss the motivation and attraction of manipulative love.

- How can you avoid falling into this kind of love?
- If you find yourself in a manipulative situation, how can you get out of it?
- How can God and the church help us recognize manipulative people and situations?

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3 Ending a Relationship

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. . . . Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?

James 4:1-3, 11-12

Commentary: In this passage the writer of *James* is contrasting godliness and worldliness. In the first part, the writer lists things that divide people: conflicts, disputes, wanting something someone else has, or wanting the wrong things. Later the writer offers one solution for maintaining relationships: refraining from saying bad things about each other. If people "do not speak evil against one another," there is lessened pain and sorrow even in relationships that end.

☐ Questions

- Where do conflicts between people come from?
- Do you ever find yourself wanting opposite things? Why does this happen?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What is the best way to tell a person that you are not romantically interested in him or her? What do you do if the person doesn't get the message?
- What can you do if someone rejects you? Where can you get help?

☐ Activities

Picture Perfect

Bring in a pile of magazines, and ask the group to tear out several pictures of couples. Hold up each picture and let the group make up a story about the couple and what their relationship might be like. Encourage them to have fun with their stories, providing details about how the couple met and what they are doing now.

Tear the pictures in half after talking about several of the couples. Now ask the group to continue the story and describe how the relationship might have ended.

On a chalkboard or large piece of paper, make two columns. In one column, list all the positive things that can come out of a breakup, such as getting to know other people or trying out new things. In the other column, list the negative things that can result, such as loneliness or not having one person to share everything with. Look at both lists, and talk about how to deal with the feelings we have when relationships end.

- How do you find the positive side of breaking up? How do you find new directions?
- How do you deal with the negative side? Who can help?

Ups and Downs

On a piece of butcher paper draw a large, jagged bolt of lightning. Tell the group that just like a bolt of lightning, there are ups and downs to a break up of a relationship. The emotional impact can leave you despondent and exhausted, or giddy and excited.

Pass out pens and ask each participant to write down on the lightning bold one bad feeling (on the parts pointing down) and one good feeling (on the parts going up) a person has when a relationship ends. Talk about the words or phrases written on the lightning bolt.

- If you are the person initiating the breakup, are your feelings always good? Why?
- Can romantic relationships become friendships? How?
- If both people in a relationship that has ended continue to respect each other, can they still be friends?
- Do some of the conflicts between people arise from "cravings that are at war within you"? What are some of these cravings?

Ask each person to take an up or down emotion from the bolt that they did not put down and write a short verse about it. Compile the verses into a group poem about the positive and negative sides of breaking up.

Video

Watch the movie *Sleepless in Seattle*, or a clip with the scene when the woman tells her finance that she doesn't love him.

- How does he respond?
- How does she feel about him?
- If you keep from speaking evil against each other, as *James* suggests, how does the relationship end?
- How do you let someone go that you still really love?

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RELATIONSHIPS

Getting Along With Family

SESSION 7

Objective

Youth will be able to explore family relationships and identify ways to appreciate and/or improve these relationships.

Personal Story

Jim excelled in wrestling. His 6'4" frame was solid and muscular. He was handsome, talented, popular, and greatly admired by his classmates. For the past three years he had helped his high school team win several trophies that were displayed in a special case in the school foyer.

Throughout his high school career, Jim's parents were proud of their son's accomplishments in wrestling. Along with his sister Carla, who was four years younger, they attended meets during the week, traveling to cities throughout the state to cheer him on.

In addition, Jim's parents contributed time, energy, and money to the school's sports association. They baked cookies, washed cars, and worked on other projects to raise money for uniforms, equipment, transportation, and travel costs. While they enjoyed being with the other families at meets and fundraisers, Carla dreaded both.

Carla was big for her age, and she felt awkward around the siblings of the wrestling team. The sweaty smell and noise during the matches gave her headaches and upset her stomach. She never slept well when she was away from home. She found wrestling weekends boring.

Carla really enjoyed playing softball, but there was no time to practice, go to a batting cage, or participate on a team. All of the family time centered on Jim. As time went on, Carla became moody and resentful.

During his senior year, Jim began applying to colleges that offered wrestling scholarships. The family could not finance his college education any other way. In January the weather turned bitter, and Jim came down with a bad cold. In a few days it had moved to his chest. A chronic cough led to pneumonia and a week in the hospital.

By the time Jim could return to wrestling, he was very weak and had no endurance. In spite of his best efforts, he couldn't gain weight or strengthen his muscles. That spring not a single college offered him a scholarship. His dreams were dashed; it was like a death in the family.

That fall Jim entered the local community college. He could go to classes at night and on weekends while holding down a job. One spring day he saw a notice on the bulletin board for volunteers. His eyes lit up when he saw it, and he dialed the number listed. (*Continued on p. 44)*

Scripture

Genesis 27:21-23, 30-33
Luke 10:38-42
John 1:35-42

Skill Focus

Forgiveness
Fairness

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Prayer

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For the Human Family
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 815

Dismissal

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

1 Parental Approval

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." So Jacob went up to his father Isaac, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. . . . As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau came in from his hunting. He also prepared savory food, and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father sit up and eat of his son's game, so that you may bless me." His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your firstborn son, Esau." Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him?—yes, and blessed he shall be!"

Genesis 27:21-23, 30-33

Commentary: Before dying, Isaac prepares to bless his eldest son. He and Rebekah have two sons and each of them has their own favorite. Scripture tells us that Isaac favored Esau because he liked to hunt game while Rebekah loved Jacob. When it was time for Isaac to give his blessing to one of them, he decides on Esau. The father's blessing was important because a dying man's words were considered to be powerful and would include the right of inheritance. Once spoken, a blessing could not be changed and was legal. Rebekah assists Jacob in deceiving Isaac so that Jacob receives the blessing instead of his brother. Esau is rightfully distraught when he learns of this from his father.

☐ Questions

- How did Jacob deceive both Isaac and Esau?
- Can a family survive in an atmosphere of deceit and distrust?
- What happened in this family? (Read about it in *Genesis 27-28:5* and *27-33:17*.)

☐ Activities

Family Initials

Write down the first, middle, and last initials of each person in your family. Then think of adjectives beginning with those letters which describe that person's personality, qualities, abilities, and characteristics. These words can reflect positive or negative qualities. For example, A for adventurous or angry, and T for terrible temper or talented. When everyone is finished, discuss the words selected.

- Do some of the words have a positive or negative connotation?
- Were you surprised at some of the positive traits you discovered?
- How many of the words also apply to you? Are there more similarities than you realized?
- What qualities would you like to develop?

Personal Story

Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What was the motivation behind Jim's parents' support of his wrestling?
- Do you identify with any of the characters in this story?
- Can parents balance the time they spend with each child?
- Suggest some ways that Carla could have dealt with her anger and resentment.
- How is Jim trying to repair his broken relationship with Carla?
- Do you think the family dynamics will change? How can they be improved?

Family Tree

Make a family tree that includes all the people in your family that you know, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Develop a color code to indicate what has happened in the relationships. For example, red arrows point to a "favorite"; dotted lines indicate broken relationships; yellow lines indicate favorable childhood relationships; and blue lines indicate favorable adult relationships. Discuss the different kinds of relationships that exist among family members and patterns of behavior.

At your next family gathering, talk to relatives about relationships they have with other family members.

- In their minds, who was the "favorite"?
- Is favoritism present in several generations?
- Did they learn to love and live with each other despite differences and hurt feelings?

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2 Fairness

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now as they went on their way, [Jesus] entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:38-42

Commentary: In the passage Jesus visits the home of two sisters, Martha and Mary. Martha busies herself with fixing a meal and other preparations for their guests. Mary, who seems to be oblivious to her sister's work, sits at the feet of Jesus and takes in his teachings. Martha finally gets angry because she is doing all the work and believes this is grossly unfair. When she finally asks Jesus to tell Mary to help her, he rebukes Martha and says that Mary is doing the right thing. Jesus reminds us that God is the center of our lives rather than what seems right or fair in human terms.

☐ Questions

- Do you identify more with Martha or Mary?
- In your family, who is the "Martha" and the "Mary"?
- Which role is more difficult?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did Carla react to an unfair situation? What would have been a better reaction?

☐ Activities

It's Not Fair!

What are some real-life situations that don't seem fair? For example, wealth and poverty, single-parent families, educational opportunities, athletic abilities, racism, and prejudice. Ask the group to identify unfair situations in their schools, homes, and communities.

- When you are involved in a situation which seems unfair, how do you react?
- How does it feel to be favored? To be overlooked?

Select one or more situations of unfairness in the community or at school. Write a letter to the editor of the school or local newspaper to call attention to an issue of fairness. Suggest how the situation could be improved.

Choosing Teams

Hint: *This activity works best with larger groups. It is not recommended for groups with members who tend to be "outsiders."*

Ask for volunteers to be team captains. Taking turns, captains will select people to be members of their teams. At this point do not reveal what the teams will do. After teams have been selected, assign different tasks to each one, such as composing a song, drawing a picture of a machine, writing a poem, acting out a nursery rhyme, staying quiet for ten minutes, playing a card game, or describing the most recent movie you saw.

When the tasks are completed, share your assignment with the entire group, and talk about the experience.

- How did it feel to be selected first? Last?
- Was it difficult being a captain?
- Was it fair to have to choose teams without knowing the task?
- Was it difficult completing a task that people in the group might not have skills for?

Identify situations at home, school, or church in which people are put into groups that result in an uneven distribution of talents, skills, or jobs.

- How would you change these situations?
- What can groups do to work more effectively?

Trading Places

Try to imagine living in a family different from your own. For example, those with siblings would be an only child, or the youngest would now be the oldest, or there would be two parents at home instead of one. Write a story about life in this "new" family.

Share the stories with the group. Those who actually live in the imagined situations can reveal what it is really like to be an only child, the youngest child, or have two parents living at home.

- Are views about family size and placement unrealistic?
- Are there difficulties your siblings or friends face that you had not considered before?
- What are the advantages of your family situation?

Continued from p. 42

Three days later, he rode his bike to the county's athletic fields for his first day as a coach. He approached the girls who stood near the pitcher's mound. "Ladies," he said with a grin, "My name is Jim, and I'm your new coach. Let's get started. Carla, how about showing your stuff on first base!"

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3 Sharing Experiences

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

The next day John [the Baptist] again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

John 1:35-42

Commentary: One important story for each of the four gospels is how Jesus called the disciples to follow him. Each author records the events from his own point of view. In John's account, Andrew and one other unnamed disciple spend some time with Jesus and from their conversation are convinced that he is the long-awaited Messiah. After giving his allegiance to Jesus, Andrew runs to share the good news with his brother, Peter. This sharing of the joy of the kingdom of God between siblings is an important basis to the spread of the gospel. Peter, renamed the Rock by Jesus, is the cornerstone on which the Christian community is built.

☐ Questions

- What is the first thing Andrew did when he discovered Jesus?
- Who are the first people you go to when something good happens to you?
- How does your family respond to good news? How would you like them to respond?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did Jim respond to Carla at the end of the story?
- Would have done the same thing if the spotlight was still on wrestling?
- Could Jim have known about Carla's unhappiness all along?

☐ Activities

Different Angles

Pass out markers and a piece of paper folded in half to every person in the group. Individuals should be scattered around the room with their backs to each other so that they cannot see what others are doing. Starting at the top center of the paper (at the fold line) draw the neck and body of a person, including arms and legs. When finished, put it face down on the table so that the drawing can't be seen. Change places with another person. Without looking at the other side of the paper, draw the head of a person, complete with facial features and hair. When finished, open the paper to reveal the completed drawing. Display and discuss the results.

- What happens when you share experiences?
- Is it better to do something perfectly by yourself or to enjoy doing something with others?
- Are some of the drawings better because two people added their own ideas?

Family Meeting

Ask the group to describe a model for family meetings to make decisions or resolve conflicts. List the components that will help family members work together, such as agreeing to listen to one another's ideas, discussing possible solutions, and arriving at solutions that are acceptable to everyone.

Do a role play to examine a sample family problem. For example, the oldest child has a part-time job every weekday from 7 to 9:30 PM and all day on Saturdays. The youngest, who is 13, always gets stuck doing dinner dishes. She thinks she has too many responsibilities, while the eldest has none. Assign parts and see how your “family” solves this problem.

- How do you solve problems in your family?
- Do you have family meetings?
- Do you think your family might work better if you talked together about problems and solutions?

Video

Watch a movie about how families interact, such as *Inventing the Abbots*, *Little Women*, or *Rose Hill*. You could also tape clips from popular television sitcoms that show families dealing with fairness, resolving conflict, and forgiveness.

- Were situations among family members always fair?
- How were problems handled?
- Do parents or authority figures exercise power in decision making, or is it shared with all family members?
- How do these fictional families compare to yours?

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RELATIONSHIPS

Respecting Others

Objective

Youth will be able to name characteristics they do not like in other people. They will discover ways to respect and interact with people who exhibit these traits.

Personal Story

Sue had it all. She had been a cheerleader since the ninth grade, and was now captain of the varsity squad. Her attractive appearance and outgoing personality insured a busy social life. During summer vacations, her family traveled extensively in Europe. Between her junior and senior years Sue was an exchange student in Switzerland, and she planned to visit her adopted family after graduation. Money was never a problem in her family.

Tim was quiet and relatively unknown among his classmates. His father followed the family tradition of raising sheep and cattle on their small farm. Most of Tim's time was absorbed by tending sheep, milking cows, mending fences, and cleaning stalls. He didn't have time for extracurricular activities.

In January, the seniors began a magazine sale to fund the class trip to Washington, DC. Each student was expected to sell at least five subscriptions in three weeks. As an incentive, the person who sold the most magazines would win $500—the individual cost of the senior trip. Without this money, Tim couldn't afford to make the trip.

Because Tim's family did not want to take advantage of their neighbors' kindness, he was not allowed to approach them to sell magazines. His only recourse was to spend precious minutes on the phone each day calling local businesses and doctors' offices hoping they would buy magazines for reception areas and waiting rooms. The chores had to wait until the calls were made, making it necessary for Tim to work late each night. But he was very successful and sold fifty-seven subscriptions.

Sue had a better plan. Her parents, both professionals, took the order forms to work and asked colleagues to help support Sue's class.

The class gathered at the end of the sale for an assembly where the sale totals would be announced and the winner of the $500 prize named. Tim waited in excitement; none of his friends had sold more than the five required. The sales representative finally ended his spiel. “Without further delay,” he said, “let me announce the student who sold the most magazines. With a grand total of sixty-eight subscriptions, the winner of the prize is Sue.”

Sue beamed as she accepted the check and the applause of her classmates. Tim sat in silence, stunned with disappointment.

SESSION 8

Scripture

Genesis 4:2b-7
Acts 15:1-2, 6-9
Matthew 9:10-13

Skill Focus

Respect
Ethics

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Prayer

O God, you have bound us together in a common life. Help us in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

In Times of Conflict
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 824

Dismissal

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

1 Unappreciated Gifts

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Genesis 4:2b-7

Commentary: In the *Book of Genesis*, after Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden of Eden, they have two sons. Their eldest son, Cain, grows up to be a farmer; and their youngest son, Abel, grows up to be a shepherd. Each son brings a sacrificial offering from their labors to the Lord. For reasons that are not explained to us, the Lord rejects Cain's offering while accepting Abel's offering. The story never fully explains why Cain is rejected by God. The aftermath of this rejection is that Cain kills his brother Abel because of jealousy and anger.

☐ Questions

- How did Cain feel when his offering was rejected?
- Who was Cain angry with? Who eventually faced Cain's anger?
- When you are angry with someone, who faces your anger?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Was Tim angry or hurt? Do you think he confronted Sue?
- Who probably received the brunt of Tim's anger?

☐ Activities

Turned Away

Ask the group to describe a time when you gave someone a gift that wasn't fully appreciated. Think back to a time you gave a special gift to a family member who didn't recognize the time and effort you spent making it. Or a birthday party when you brought a friend the "perfect" gift, but the recipient didn't like it. Or a time when your offer to help someone was rejected or ridiculed.

- How do you feel when your gift is compared to someone else's gift in size, appearance, or cost?
- How do you react when you receive a gift that you don't like?
- In the Scripture passage, how did Cain feel when God had "no regard" for his offering?

Write down, in one or two sentences, the feelings you had when someone rejected a gift. Hold the paper as you gather for a silent prayer, focusing on hurt feelings, compassion for others, and forgiveness. At the close of the prayer, wad up the papers and throw them in a wastebasket as you leave the room. Agree to leave the hurt feelings there instead of holding them inside.

Unseen Gifts

Make a list of people in the parish whose gifts, talents, or services sometimes go unnoticed. These could include secretaries, janitors, Sunday school teachers, nursery workers, gardeners, altar guild members, or the hospitality committee. Decide as a group how to recognize some of these people. For example, some members could bake cookies while others write thank you notes expressing appreciation for their loyalty and service. You could interview these people about what they do and write a series of short stories for the parish newsletter.

Identify a task or project done "behind the scenes" that individuals or the group could complete. For example, wash the cars parked in the handicapped spaces or launder the acolyte robes during the week.

- How does it feel to do something for someone without receiving thanks?
- Are you aware of all the things people do for you without receiving thanks?

Video

Watch *Mr. Holland's Opus* and discuss the issue of unappreciated gifts.

- Did Mr. Holland appreciate his own talent?
- How could his deaf son appreciate his father's music?
- How could the administration have supported the music program even though money was tight?

Compare events and experiences in the movie to those in your families, schools, church, and communities.

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2 Listening to Each Other

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. . . . The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us."

Acts 15:1-2, 6-9

Commentary: The *Acts of the Apostles* records the formation and spread of the gospel in the early Christian community after the death of Jesus Christ. An early dispute with potential for creating a division in the community was over the issue of whether Gentile converts—those who were not Jews by birth—were to follow the laws of Judaism. The Scripture passage records the events and decision reached on this issue. Leaders from the Antioch church which had a large Gentile population traveled to Jerusalem to discuss this matter. Most of the Christians in Jerusalem had Jewish backgrounds. The leaders on both sides met together and shared their views on the issue. After carefully listening to the Gentile Christians, those with Jewish backgrounds changed their position. Peter declared that both Gentiles and Jewish Christians have been saved by the Holy Spirit and faith in Jesus.

☐ Questions

- What was the real controversy about in this passage?
- Why did Jewish believers have trouble accepting Gentile converts?
- What side do you think Paul and Barnabas took? Why?
- How did the two sides resolve their differences?

☐ Activities

Jerusalem Council

Read the extended passage in *Acts 15:1-21* about the Jerusalem Council. Talk about the main issues that the Council debated. In this passage, Christians are told not to eat meat that had been offered to idols. Paul did not absolutely forbid food offered to idols, and he rejected other restrictions in Jewish law concerning food.

Stage a debate based on issues facing the early Church or on issues we face today. In the first scenario, use the topics raised in the *Acts* passage as if you were participating in the Jerusalem Council. Or pretend that representatives from various churches in the United States or your diocese gathered for a modern council. What would be the three most important issues brought before the council for debate? Give each side time to prepare their arguments.

Option: Stage the debate at an adult forum to help your parish better understand issues at the next diocesan convention or the General Convention. Research the main issues under consideration and opposing arguments. The Church continues to deal with disagreements with open dialogue.

Pizza Order

On separate slips of paper, write various pizza toppings, such as hamburger, ham, sausage, olives, pepperoni, onions, mushrooms, green pepper, pineapple, and anchovies. Each person will select one paper and then convince the group members to order a pizza with that specific ingredient on it. Only three toppings can be included on the pizza. This is a test of each person's persuasive techniques, conflict management, and cooperation.

- What was more important: getting your topping selected or finding three the group liked?
- When things didn't go your way, did you give up?
- Did you reach consensus or did you put decisions to a vote?
- How did you feel when others didn't listen to you?

Current Events

Bring in recent issues of magazines or newspapers. Identify several local or national issues which are divisive. Work as individuals or small groups to isolate issues that seem to evoke the most emotion.

Discuss the issue identified after each person or group describes it. Come to a consensus about how the group feels the issue could be resolved.

- What was it like to discuss opposing viewpoints?
- When there were disagreements did either side convince the other to change an initial opinion?

If appropriate, report the group's consensus about an issue by writing a letter to the editor or contacting an elected official.

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3 Seeing with Jesus' Eyes

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

And as [Jesus] sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Matthew 9:10-13

Commentary: Jesus's love is illustrated in this story about a dinner party for tax collectors and sinners. The religious leaders of Jesus's day would have nothing to do with this type of person who was considered a social outcast. The tax collectors worked with the hated Roman oppressors against their own people. Yet Jesus eats with these people and offers them God's love and redemption. He quotes the Hebrew Scriptures defining the true meaning of mercy. A true follower of God is concerned with steadfast love and knowledge of God instead of following the rules of an established religious community.

☐ Questions

- Who did Jesus often choose to be with during his ministry on Earth?
- Did he love the Pharisees less than those he was with?
- Do you see people as Jesus does or do you measure them with worldly standards—wealth, popularity, and looks?

☐ Activities

Keeping the Covenant

Ask the group to look for pictures from newspapers and magazines that show people interacting with others in various situations. Imagine what is happening between people and what they might be saying.

Review the Baptismal Covenant on p. 304-305 in *The Book of Common Prayer*. On newsprint or a chalkboard, write "Seek and serve Christ in all persons." On another sheet, write "Strive for justice and peace/respect dignity of all people." At the bottom of each sheet, write "I will with God's help." Using the pictures and personal experiences, write the group's suggestions as to how people can live out the promises of the Baptismal Covenant at home, school, church, in the community, and with their friends. For example, have a brief conversation with a person who is an outsider at school, or stand up for a principle even though others might make fun. Ask each person to select one entry on the paper that they will try to do in the following week.

Close this activity by reading the prayer at the beginning of this session (In Times of Conflict, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 824).

Outcasts

Identify people in today's society who are considered to be outcasts, such as people with AIDS, the homeless, convicted criminals, the unemployed, people on welfare, non-athletes, physically handicapped, those with learning disabilities.

Using the Scripture passage as a guide, do a role play set in modern times.

- What would Jesus look like?
- Whose house would he be visiting?
- Would he be in the suburbs, in rural areas, or in an inner city?
- Who would the Pharisees be?
- Who would the disciples be?
- Would Jesus and his friends be listening to music?

Consider presenting the role play for another group. Wear costumes, and make the setting as realistic as possible.

Music Fest

Bring in samples of a variety of musical styles, including rock, classical, rap, country, and bluegrass. After you play a brief selection from each type of music, stop and talk about what you think about the music and the type of people you think listen to it. Everyone should try to make at least one positive remark about each type of music, even those they don't necessarily like.

- Did any of the music surprise you? Would you like to hear more?
- Were you surprised that members of your group liked different kinds of music?
- In light of the Scripture passage, what kind of music do you think Jesus would listen to?

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RELATIONSHIPS

Moving On

Objective

Youth will be able to name important relationships in their lives and list ways to nurture these relationships. They will write a single statement that includes their understanding of relationships and the role of relationships in their lives now and in the future.

Personal Story

Adam's father was an alcoholic. His social drinking became a problem when Adam was only 4 years old. Pressures at work caused him to stop at local bars on the way home, just to unwind. Gradually his need for relief led to experimentation with marijuana, then heroin. Shortly after Adam's ninth birthday, his dad died of a crack overdose.

School was difficult for this young, fatherless child. Most kids had two parents, and lived in large houses in nice neighborhoods. Adam's mother worked long hours to support herself, Adam, and his older sister. Their rental house was out in the country, isolated from playgrounds or neighborhood children. Adam struggled socially, academically, and personally. He became angry, aggressive, and irritable. His impulsive and unpredictable behavior led to frequent temper outbursts at school.

Five years after his dad's death, Adam was expelled from public school. His placement in a Christian academy lasted only two months. As a last resort, his mother enrolled Adam in a small private school in the next town. Academic and discipline codes were very strict. The sheriff made it clear that if this didn't work, the next stop was the juvenile home.

An English teacher, Mr. Davies, felt drawn to the unhappy teen. Mr. Davies had grown up in a dysfunctional family with parents who often quarreled. When Adam entered his classroom, Mr. Davies saw himself in Adam's glaring eyes and slumped shoulders.

Four months later, the topic of study was Dante's *Inferno*. Its words and phrases contained powerful imagery and symbolism. Most students were fascinated by Dante's ideas. Their assignment was to select one emotion, and describe it in a poetic style they thought was appropriate.

The next week, Mr. Davies began the long task of grading his students' papers. Shuffling through one set, his eyes fell on one particular sheet of lined, loose-leaf paper that had obviously been torn from a notebook. In contrast to the other papers printed from a computer, this poem was written in sloppy, cursive writing.

A personal note prefaced the poem: “Mr. Davies, I stink at poetry, but since I didn't wanna get no forced study hall, I'm turning this in. Adam” (*Continued on p. 52.)*

SESSION 9

Scripture

I John 4:7-12, 16b-21

Skill Focus

Trust
Communication

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Prayer

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Guidance
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832

Dismissal

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

☐ Begin Here: Remembering Scripture

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. . . . God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

I John 4:7-12, 16b-21

Connect with the Personal Story

Read the Personal Story to the group. Ask each person to choose an emotion and assign it a color. Write a poem or draw a picture that represents your feeling about or interpretation of this emotion. Examples of emotions are trust, love, anger, compassion, hope, pity, or sorrow.

☐ Questions

- Have you ever known anyone like Adam?
- How could you show love to someone like Adam?
- Can someone as angry as Adam ever believe that God loves him? Could you show God's love to others?

RESPONDING ACTIVITIES

The activities to help or involve others in the community and church described in Sessions 2 through 8 are summarized in the chart at the end of this session. Use these ideas or develop your own to strengthen relationships with family and friends.

☐ Individually

Working together or alone, think about ways an individual can respond to things you have learned about your study of relationships. Share your ideas, and write them on a piece of newsprint. Possible responses are listed below.

- Think of one person you know who is an outsider like Adam in the Personal Story. Make a covenant with another person in the group to find a way to show God's love to this person.
- Identify one member of your family that you have trouble communicating with. Do something anonymously for this person, such as making a bed, buying a favorite snack, or putting out fresh towels. Watch their reaction.
- Make a relationship wheel to help you work on your relationships. Make a circle on a piece of paper, or cut a wheel out of cardboard. Divide it into four sections: With God, With Family, With Friends, and In the Community. List things in each section to improve relationships, such as talk to God each day, or stop picking on my brother.

☐ As a Group

Think about ways this group can respond to issues raised in your study on relationships. List them on a piece of newsprint. Possible responses might include:

- Ask each person to name one thing they discovered about themselves during this study. Discuss similar things they discovered as a group. Write a statement, using one or two sentences, that captures the most important aspect of relationships from the group's point of view. Publish your statement in the church newsletter.
- Collect the poems and drawings made by the group that depict an emotion. With the writers' and artists' permission, put them together in a booklet that could be displayed somewhere in the church.
- Examine the relationships within your own group. Do you need a "family meeting" to iron out problems? Do you communicate well as a group? Do you care about each other? Make a covenant that you will use the things you learned in this unit of study to strengthen the relationships among your group.

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☐ Celebrate

Celebrate the completion of your study of relationships with a specific activity. Ask the group to think of an appropriate response or use one of the following options:

Art

- Invite the congregation to bring photos of themselves with their best friends. Or, take pictures of people in your church—families, couples, and friends. Make a collage from the pictures, leaving room to identify the people in a caption. Display the collage at a church picnic or other festive gathering.

Liturgy

- Look up the Prayers of the People beginning on p. 383 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Using the prayers as a guide, write your own prayers of the people, based on what you have learned about relationships, for a special worship service.
- Present one of the skits or role plays the group designed as a children's sermon at a worship service. Or, make up a new skit based on one of the analogies written in Session 3 for the Scripture passage in *Luke 18:25*, "Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Community

- Paint or draw and color a large rainbow to put on display in the church. Tie strings to pencils to hang nearby. Invite the congregation to write words or phrases on the sections that have the color appropriate to certain feelings. For example, I felt blue when my friend moved away, or yellow shows my excitement about getting a new puppy. Use the rainbow to share news about people's lives in the congregation.
- Contact a local nursing home for names of residents who would like to be pen pals with members of your group. Begin a relationship by writing regularly about school and church. Find a time to visit your pen pal and take pictures that the residents can keep.

Fun

- Plan a party for the people that participated in intergenerational Bible studies about relationships. Or, invite the families of your group to join you. Make a "Getting to Know You" game sheet for each person. Draw a grid on a piece of paper with room in each square for a signature. Write one characteristic in each square, such as only child, born in this state, or able to whistle. The object of the game is to get a different person's signature next to a statement that is true. The first one to finish gets to be first in line for refreshments.

FOLLOW THROUGH

Individually: Make a covenant with God to do one thing to improve a relationship that is important to you. Keep your relationship wheel in a place that you will see it often. Set a time to contact your partner about your success in showing love to someone who is difficult to be with. If you find your anonymous kindness to a family member was a success, do it again.

- Do you need help to keep your promise?
- Can you identify someone in this group, the church, or the community who can help you?

Group Response: Go back over the list of ideas the group made as a response to your study of relationships. Decide which of the ideas is most interesting to the group. Perhaps only one will be feasible, given time constraints and other commitments of individuals in the group. Discuss the actions that must be taken to complete the task. Estimate the time it will take, and ask the participants to designate someone to be responsible for getting it done. If you decide to have a "family meeting," set a time that everyone can be present.

- What kind of activity did the group select?
- Can every person participate who wants to?
- Can you identify people in the church or community who can help the group finish the activity?

Celebrate: Select one person or a group of people to choose an appropriate liturgy response to your study of relationships. You may want to write a prayer that captures the most important things you have learned. Ask a volunteer to gather materials for art projects, and find out who would like to participate in drawing the rainbow or other projects you identified. If the group decides to have a party, delegate responsibility for invitations, food, and decorations.

- Does the celebration include all participants?
- Do you want to invite people outside the group to join your celebration?

(*Continued from p. 50)*

The Color of Anger

"You can't tell when one color starts and another one ends becuz they get all mixed up behind your eyes. Red and orange and yellow spit at each other in your mind.

"Anger is fire and heat and flames and sparks that burn at your insides. I want to scream at everything and sometimes nothin.

"When I'm really mad I see white. I hate that becuz thats the wurst. Its hot. It hurts. I want to splash the colors with something cold.

"How do I stop the torchur? Can you stop the pain?"

Mr. Davies, answer my questions here.

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LOOKING BACK AND GOING FORWARD

Outreach Activities in Sessions 2-8

Relationships

Session	Theme	Suggested Outreach Activity
Know Yourself	1 2	• Share God's love with anonymous signs and notes to others in the church and community. • Stage an "un-talent" show for another group in the church.
Getting to Know Others	1 2 3	• Tell a round-robin story to another group about what clothes say about us. • Visit a group home and participate in activities with the residents. • Give an anonymous gift as a group to someone in the parish. • Make time to help someone by giving up something you like to do.
Costs of Relationships	1 2	• Present a play about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane during Holy Week. • Respond to suffering in the community or nations with a group project. • Help people in need identified during the intergenerational Bible study.
What Is a True Friend?	1 3	• Incorporate one new attribute of a true friend in your close relationships. • Publish stories about true friendships for others in the church.
Romantic Love	1 2 3	• Talk about romance and marriage with couples in the church. • Produce an ad for a younger audience about the importance of saying "no." • Share the group poem written from the lightning bolt of feelings.
Getting Along With Family	1 2	• Interview members of your extended family about their relationships with others in the family. • Write a letter to the editor addressing an issue of fairness.
Respecting Others	1 2 3	• Call attention to those whose good words go unnoticed. • Debate at an adult forum issues facing your diocese or the General Convention at their next meeting. • Present a play in a modern setting about Jesus eating with sinners.

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