Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

Success & Failure

A Guide for Leadership Teams

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Table of Contents

Background for Leadership Teams

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

Success & Failure: Session Titles

Planning Ahead 14
Defining Success 18
Defining Failure 22
Living Up to Expectations 26
Who Do I Want to Be? 30
Dealing with Stress 34
Competition 38
When the Going Gets Tough 42
Testing Our Ideas 46

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Success & Failure

Success and failure in life are subject to interpretation by individuals and the society in which they live. God's view on success and failure is very different from the view of humans, particularly in today's culture. Success for many is good grades, the newest model car, money, and material possessions. Failure often is the inability to get and have these things. God would tell us differently. Jesus' life and teaching are examples of the opposite of what the culture tells us. Jesus did not live in a big house, drive a fancy chariot, or have wealth of any kind. Success in Christ surely has a different definition.

The purpose of this study, called Success & Failure, is to explore the definitions of success and failure as they relate to our lives as Christians. Where can we find success within ourselves? How can we take failure, not as a measure of our worth, but as a chance for a new start? How can we use the strength given us from God to make it through difficult times? How can we find ways to accept our failures and turn them into joy?

Introduction

Success & Failure 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 Ahead," is designed for preparing to work with the sessions. It begins with a "Point of Contact"–the General Thanksgiving from *The Book of Common Prayer,* p. 836. The planning session begins, as do all other sessions, begins 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

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Planning and the Planning Reference Guide is included to facilitate the planning effort for all members of the leadership team. Because pre-planning is not always possible, the first session can also serve as a tool for involving all participants in the choices to be made.

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

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

Planning Ahead
Defining Success
Defining Failure
Living Up to Expectations
Who Do I Want to Be?.
Dealing With Stress
Competition
When the Going Gets Tough
Testing Our Ideas

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.

- **THEY ARE PEOPLE IN TRANSITION**
  Youth are in a transition stage of life. The essential element is

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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 stronger faith are being formed. Embrace the searching process and affirm the importance of the ability to question, doubt, and think. Your

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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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Success & Failure

Planning Ahead

Objective

Youth will be able to plan a course of study about living with success and failure that involves each member of the group.

A General Thanksgiving

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love.

We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side.

We thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us.

We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone.

Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of his Word and the example of his life; for his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation; for his dying, through which he overcame death; and for his rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom.

Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know him and make him known; and through him, at all times, and in all places, may give thanks to you in all things. *Amen.*

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 836

SESSION 1

Scripture

Joshua 1:5-9
Galatians 6:1-5

Skill Focus

Communication
Responsibility

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Prayer

God our Father, you see your young people growing up in an unsteady and confusing world: Show them that your ways give more life than the ways of the world, and that following you is better than chasing after selfish goals. Help them to take failure, not as a measure of their worth, but as a chance for a new start. Give them strength to hold their faith in you, and to keep alive their joy in your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Young Persons
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 829

Dismissal

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

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

A. No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:5-9

Commentary: At the beginning of the *Book of Joshua*, the death of Moses has been announced and Joshua has been named as his replacement as leader of the Israelites. God assures Joshua that if he is strong and has courage and follows the law of Moses, he will be successful. God also tells Joshua not to be afraid for God will be with him always.

B. My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.

Galatians 6:1-5

Commentary: Paul is writing to the Galatians about grace, God's unearned favor. He explains that the gifts of redemption come from faith in Christ, and not from anything people do themselves. At the same time, Paul urges Christians to take responsibility for their own work that flows from faith in Christ and love for one another. They are expected to test what they do and bear the responsibility as well as the joy.

☐ Questions

- Why does God repeatedly tell Joshua to take courage? When have you needed extra courage?
- How can God's assurance to Joshua help you when you feel discouraged or fearful?
- What does Paul tell us about taking responsibility for our own actions? What standards should we use in measuring our tasks?

Point of Contact

A General Thanksgiving

Read "A General Thanksgiving" (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 836, and on the previous page), the suggested scripture passages, and the prayer on this page to help you understand the topic of success and failure.

- How would you define success and failure?
- Have you ever had a failure that gave you a chance for a new start? Describe the situation.
- How can disappointment lead us to a closer relationship with God?
- How should we feel about success? What kind of situations demand our best efforts?

☐ Activities

Puzzling Situation

Bring in several simple puzzles from home or borrow some from the church school. Distribute according to the following: 1) Give each person or small group a puzzle that has all the pieces but has the wrong picture on the box top. 2) Give another a puzzle that has all the pieces but has no box or picture for guidance. 3) Give another a puzzle with one or two missing pieces. 4) Give out at least one complete puzzle in the correct box. Ask each person or group to put the puzzle together as quickly as possible. After everyone has completed their puzzles, talk about feelings of competition, success, failure, and fairness.

Bible Trivia

Play a game of Bible trivia using questions you make up or from one of the commercial games. Select both easy and difficult questions. Choose a person as moderator who randomly selects a question to ask participants who are sitting in a circle. A person who gives a correct answer continues to sit in the circle, while a person who gives the wrong answer must stand outside the circle. The game is over when there is no one left in the circle. How did it feel to be right or wrong?

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Picking Teams

Appoint two or more people to be captains. Tell them that they are to select people to be on their team to play an unnamed activity. They may need people who are athletic, who know the Bible, who are artistic, who write well, or who are patient. But no one knows. After the selections are made, talk about how participants felt being picked early, in the middle, or late.

- Did you resent being overlooked?
- Were you surprised to be picked early?
- Did the captains feel uncomfortable selecting a team?
- How does this relate to success and failure?

☐ Steps for Planning

1. Make sure that everyone has a copy of the Planning Reference Guide on the following page. It is important that you take some time to describe the themes for each session to help everyone see where the group is going. Give the participants time to review the sessions and answer the questions on the Reference Guide.

2. Give the participants time to discuss topics that interest and excite them. Which sessions do they want to study? Do they want to spend more time on sessions that are of greater interest?

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

4. Look at the resource posters and decide how each will be used.
   Poster 1: Success and Failure
   Poster 2: Expectations
   Poster 3: Who Do I Want to Be?
   Poster 4: Stress
   Poster 5: Competition
   Poster 6: When the Going Gets Tough

5. Distribute copies of the sessions to the participants who have agreed to be coordinators. This may be a good time to stop the process to see if anyone feels that his or her ideas have been overlooked.
   - Do you agree with the decisions made so far?
   - If there are still disagreements, can we find a way to come to agreement?

6. Make a calendar of the sessions using a calendar grid of your own design. Make sure every coordinator has a copy and post it in a central location.

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

8. If the group wants to have a snack before or during the meeting time, decide who will be responsible for assigning and reminding people to bring in food. Make some provision for cleanup at the same time.

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

10. Be sure to save time at the end of the unit of study to reflect on what you have learned and how you can put that knowledge into practice. Session 9 will help you do this. Plan for a celebration at the end of the Success and Failure Unit.

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PLANNING REFERENCE GUIDE

Success and Failure

Questions

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

Topic	Scripture	Theme	Notes
Defining Success	*Proverbs 3:1-12* *Matthew 19:16-26* *II Thessalonians 3:6-13*	What Leads to Success? Signs of Success Working for Success	
Defining Failure	*Psalm 113:5-9* *Luke 14:7-11* *I Corinthians 1:26-31*	Failure in God's Eyes Teach Us to Be Humble Failure Turned Upside Down	
Living Up to Expectations	*Deuteronomy 6:1-9* *Luke 15:11-32* *Matthew 14:22-33*	God's Expectations Parent's Expectations Our Expectations	
Who Do I Want to Be?	*Daniel 6:10-13* *Luke 18:9-14* *Philippians 4:8-9*	Obeying God Choosing God for Yourself Guarding Your Heart	
Dealing With Stress	*Psalm 62:1-2* *Matthew 11:28-30* *Romans 5:1-5*	Turning to God in Prayer Surrendering to God Growing Stronger	
Competition	*Jeremiah 12:1-5* *I Corinthians 9:24-27* *II Timothy 2:1-7*	Preparing for the Future Winning the Prize Competition for Right	
When the Going Gets Tough	*I Kings 19:1-9a* *Luke 12:22-31* *Romans 8:31-39*	Running from Problems Finding Peace Trusting God	

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Success & Failure

Defining Success

SESSION 2

Objective

Youth will be able to define the meaning of success from a Christian perspective.

Personal Story

When I was 7 years old, we moved to an upper-class neighborhood. It was a new and powerful experience for me. The houses were big and beautiful. My friends had toys that I had only dreamt about. I envied their fancy cars and the things they were able to do. My family struggled to pay the bills and do as many of the things that our more wealthy neighbors did.

Now that I am in high school the differences are more noticeable. My friends have fancy cars and the right clothes. The beautiful people seem so happy with their equally beautiful boyfriends and girlfriends. Of course, there are others like me, but I don't really see them.

Last year, I ran for sophomore class treasurer and was soundly defeated. I really worked hard in that campaign. I put up posters with my name on them and passed out leaflets listing my qualifications. One day after school someone told me that I would never win the election. She said the other candidate was much more popular than I was. I felt like such a failure and a loser.

I have now decided that when I get out of high school I am going to go to college and then law school. I dream that I will make lots of money as a lawyer. I fantasize about buying a big house and driving a fancy car. I dream that people will look at me and be envious. Based on my experience, happiness is being rich.

I have also added political ambition to my dreams and hopes. As a politician everyone would see me and know that I was a success. I guess that there is nothing wrong with these dreams, but I think that they were born out of my sense of failure.

I also struggle with my Christian identity. It seems to me that Jesus was a failure. He was killed. He didn't call down legions of angels to save him from death and destruction. He didn't say anything in his defense. It's very difficult to understand this seemingly weak figure. I really have problems with this notion of "turning the other cheek."

These conflicting emotions have left me in turmoil. Even though I don't understand everything Jesus stands for, I am still drawn to Jesus and Christian faith. I pray, but deep down I also believe that happiness is found in what you own and what you can buy.

I'm not sure where I will end up—what kind of job I will have or what I will believe. However, I look to the future with hope for better things to come.

Scripture

Proverbs 3:1-12
Matthew 19:16-26
II Thessalonians 3:6-13

Skill Focus

Choices
Independence

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Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, it is only by your gift that your faithful people offer you true and laudable service: Grant that we may run without stumbling to obtain your heavenly promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Proper 26
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 235

Dismissal

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

1 What Leads to Success?

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

My child, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments;
for length of days and years of life
and abundant welfare they will give you.
Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.
So you will find favor and good repute
in the sight of God and of people.
Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
It will be a healing for your flesh
and a refreshment for your body.
Honor the Lord with your substance
and with the first fruits of all your produce;
then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine.
My child, do not despise the Lord's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
for the Lord reproves the one he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.

Proverbs 3:1-12

Commentary: In this passage, the poet describes six ways God's people can find good fortune. The writer tells his listeners that success should be accompanied by the remembrance that every good gift comes from God. When people trust God and live according to God's commandments, they will be blessed. The writer also compares God to parents who love their children. Discipline from God comes from love for those "in whom he delights."

☐ Questions

- According to the scripture passage, what are the six ways people can find prosperity?
- Does being blessed mean wealth? If not, what does it mean?
- How do you react when you are disciplined by a parent? Have you ever been grateful for that discipline?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 1.

- Does success ever involve failure?
- Is success always the same?
- Is there always a clear definition of success? Is it different for different people?

☐ Activities

Personal Story

Discuss the Personal Story from the previous page. Contrast some of the feelings of the young person who wrote it with the words of the poet in *Proverbs*.

- What is success for you? How do you measure success in your own life?
- What is success for your parents? Your friends? Our society? The Church? God?

Ask each participant to list three people from school, church, the community, or the world who are successful. Share the lists with the group, and write down the attributes that make these people successful. Divide the attributes in two categories: In the Eyes of the World and In God's Eyes. Some attributes may be in both lists. From this discussion, write a definition of success from the group's point of view.

The Media

Bring in recent issues of magazines and newspapers. If possible, find copies of *Teen People*, the *Parade* magazine found in many Sunday papers, and *USA Today*. Look for stories of successful people, especially young people.

- What do they have in common?
- Why do we think they are successful?
- Do you know people who have done similar things?
- Do these people inspire you or discourage you?

Based on your discussion of successful people in the media, define success.

Interviews

Ask the group to write their definition of success on a piece of newsprint. Hang it in a place where everyone can see it.

Identify people at your church who are successful based on the group's definition. As a group, make up a list of questions to ask each person about how he or she achieved success. Invite those identified by the group to one of your meetings for a panel discussion about their definitions of success. Or, assign individuals or teams to interview the people identified before church, during coffee hour, or another convenient time. After the interviews or panel discussion, compare your findings with your original definition of success.

- How did successful people feel about themselves?
- Did they identify others who they thought were successful?
- How can people who are successful in the world's view also be successful Christians?

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2 Signs of Success

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then someone came to him and said, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, 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." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, "Then who can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

Matthew 19:16-26

Commentary: The person who approaches Jesus in this passage wants to know how to have it all. He is confident in his own success, but he wants to make sure he has not overlooked anything in his quest. Jesus recites the commandments, and the man confidently replies that he follows the law. However, he knows there is still something more. Jesus looks beyond the man's outward appearance and his words and into his heart. Jesus identifies material wealth as the main obstacle to his successful relationship with God. Sadly, the man leaves, feeling he is powerless to give up his possessions.

☐ Questions

- Does Jesus say that possessions are bad?
- Why do possessions keep the man in the passage from Jesus? Do you have possessions that keep you from God? What are they?
- What promise does Jesus leave with his disciples? What does that say to us?

☐ Activities

Doing Without

Without discussion, ask each participant to list everything on a piece of paper that he or she could not live without, such as a name-brand jacket, computer, car, or CD player. Ask a volunteer to record the items listed on a piece of newsprint. Encourage the group to add other items as they come to mind. Reread the scripture passage. Discuss the items on the list in light of the reading in *Matthew*.

- What price do we pay to have these things? If you own a car, do you have to work to pay for insurance and gas? If you have a CD player, do you ever listen to music instead of doing homework? Does wearing name-brand clothing ever put you at risk?
- What would you say to Jesus if he asked you to get rid of something that you put on your list?
- Were all of the possessions on your list and the group's list tangible?

Take a few moments to list possessions that you hold dear that are not tangible, such as friendship and faith. Does anything on your first list interfere with your intangible possessions? Close by spending a few moments in silence. Ask participants to close their eyes and imagine that they are the young man who approached Jesus. What does Jesus identify in your life that keeps you from a closer relationship with God?

Television Success

Bring in clips of scenes from popular television sitcoms and dramas, such as *Friends* or *ER*. Or, ask participants to briefly tell the story lines from some of their favorite television shows. Identify signs of success from different characters' points of view.

- What seems to be most important to the characters? How important are appearance, wealth, and jobs?
- What would Jesus tell the characters they had to give up?
- Are there some signs of success that help them in relationships with God and others?

Hint: Plan ahead to schedule a television and VCR for your meeting space if you want to show clips. Using scenes from the shows is not necessary, but it can add interest to the discussion.

Drama

Reread the scripture passage. Think about changes in the story if it were moved to a current setting in your community.

- How would you describe the person who comes to Jesus?
- Where would this person go to church?
- What kind of possessions would this person have?
- What would Jesus ask this person to give up?

After discussing the story, make it into a play. Assign parts and act it out, letting the characters make up their own lines. Add costumes and present the drama for another group in the church.

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3 Working for Success

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

II Thessalonians 3:6-13

Commentary: The *Second Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians* is primarily about preparing the Church for life in the world. At the time he wrote the letter, many people were anxiously awaiting the second coming of Christ. Paul makes it clear that no one knows the exact time. In this passage, Paul chides those who are waiting for Christ's return and living on the generosity of others. He encourages all Christians to earn their own living and persevere in doing what is right.

☐ Questions

- Are Paul's words too harsh?
- Is it possible to be idle or lazy and still be successful?
- Have you worked on projects with classmates who didn't carry their load? Did they share in your success? How did you feel about them? Read how Paul said to treat this kind of person in *II Thessalonians 3:15.*

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How can other people influence our definition of success?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 1.

- Does success come easily or does it take work?

☐ Activities

Crossing the Moat

Move all the furniture to the sides of the room. With masking tape, mark off two parallel lines about ten to twelve feet apart, if possible. Bring in two boards, about four inches wide and two feet long. If there are more than six or seven people in the group, bring in a second set of boards.

The area between the tape is the "moat." Challenge the group to get from one line to the other without touching the moat. If someone accidentally touches it, the whole group must return to the starting line. Everyone must cross; no one can be left out. After playing the game, talk about how the group solved the dilemma of getting everyone across the moat.

- What was the most frustrating part of the game?
- Did everyone participate?
- What happened if one or more didn't do their part?
- How did you feel when you were successful?

Companions

Reread the scripture passage. Talk about the results of associating with people who play positive or negative roles in your life.

- Have you ever stopped being with someone who was a bad influence?
- Do your parents influence your decisions about who your friends are? Have friends ever encouraged you to stop spending time with someone who was not good for you?
- What role do friends or acquaintances have in being successful?

Identify one person who has had a positive influence in your life. Think about that person and how he or she influenced you. Write a letter to that person thanking them for helping you work for success. Provide writing paper and envelopes for letters. Encourage participants to mail their letters the following week.

Working Together

Sponsor an activity at your church, such as a pancake supper for Shrove Tuesday, a coffee hour, or a Valentine's Day dance. After deciding what the group wants to do, list all the tasks that need to be done before, after, and during the event. Assign each person in the group at least one area of responsibility.

After the event, schedule a follow-up meeting to talk about how well the group worked together.

- Was the event a success?
- Did everyone carry their load?
- What happened when something didn't get done?
- Would you do this again?

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Success & Failure

Defining Failure

SESSION 3

Objective

Youth will be able to compare society's definition of failure with meanings from scripture.

Personal Story

I am the youngest in my family. My siblings are a good bit older than I am. As I talk with my family about my hopes for the future, they are very supportive. I have always wanted to work in a job where I can help people. Perhaps I will work for the Red Cross or go into social work.

My parents think that this is great. My older brothers, however, think that I am crazy. My oldest brother started his own company and is doing well. He tells me that I should not waste my talents on work that will not pay me enough money and that I would be a fool not to go into business or law. My other brother is not so pushy, but he does think that I should find work with more status and money.

I know that my brothers are concerned about me and that they love me. But I don't think that they are listening to me! I can't imagine myself being happy doing the things that they want. I hate feeling that they don't approve of my choices. When I try to explain my feelings, they just don't listen. They say that I don't understand how the real world works. Yet I can't imagine having their lives.

Last summer, I did some tutoring for students at the local elementary school. They were having difficulty reading. I didn't make very much money, but I really enjoyed my job. I didn't even bother to share these feelings with my older brothers, but I found out that I've got to do what is right for me. I can't say that their opinions don't hurt, but I would really be miserable if I tried to do what they wanted.

I really think that God has a purpose for my life. I am not sure that I know exactly what that purpose is, but I know I have to trust myself and God. I can't live for other people.

I am glad that my parents have not put a lot of pressure on me. They want me to be a good person and a Christian. They tell me that I can do whatever I want. Their encouragement allows me the freedom to pursue my own dreams.

To be honest, I would like to have enough money to buy the things that I want and need. I worry about not having enough. If all else fails, I could return home for a while. It is nice to have that safety net. I do hope that I can make it on my own when I finish college.

Scripture

Psalm 113:5-9
Luke 14:7-11
I Corinthians 1:26-31

Skill Focus

Conflict
Fairness

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Prayer
O God, your never-failing providence sets in order all things both in heaven and earth: Put away from us, we entreat you, all hurtful things, and give us those things which are profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Proper 4
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 229

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

1 Failure in God's Eyes

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Who is like the Lord our God,
who is seated on high,
who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?
He raises the poor from the dust,
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes,
with the princes of his people.
He gives the barren woman a home,
making her the joyous mother of children.
Praise the Lord!

Psalm 113:5-9

Commentary: *Psalm 113:5-9* is a hymn of praise to God as helper of the humble. The psalmist first rejoices in the power of God, the creator and ruler over all. Yet this same God is concerned with the weak and the poor and lifts up those who are in trouble. This psalm reflects the sure and certain hope in God's power to restore those who have experienced failure. All people can take hope in the knowledge that failure does not have the last word in the lives of God's people.

☐ Questions

- What message of hope do you get from this passage?
- If you were writing this psalm, who would you picture as the poor and needy?
- Compare this passage with *I Samuel 2:4-8* (Hannah's song) and *Luke 1:48-53* (the Magnificat). How are they similar to *Psalm 113*?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.
- How does God use people to "raise" and "lift" the poor and needy?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 1.
- Does failure sometimes come as a surprise?
- Can success for one person appear to be a failure to another?

☐ Activities

Professions

On a piece of newsprint, list every profession or career the group can think of. On a separate sheet divided into two columns, write "Most Successful" at the top of one column, and "Least Successful" on the other. Look at the first list and categorize the way our society ranks each career or profession in one of the columns. When the group cannot agree, put a star by the listing and continue.
Hint: Allow adequate time for disagreements, but be ready to move on if consensus cannot be reached.

Bring in a picture of a dilapidated house from a book or newspaper and relate the following scenario: This house was recently purchased by a lawyer. The plumbing and wiring were unusable and the furnace barely functioning. He hired two skilled people who had never finished high school to make the necessary repairs.
- Who was more likely to be successful in getting the house in shape: the lawyer who bought it or the people who repaired it?
- Can the definition of success and failure change depending on the situation?

Return to the lists made earlier and make up scenarios that reverse which list a career or profession is in.

Defining Failure

Identify people who have experienced failure in public life, including politicians, entertainers, business leaders, and musicians. Talk about the reasons they have failed.
- Who determines failure?
- How does God define failure? Is God's definition the same as ours?
- How does God treat those who fail?

Write a definition of failure based on your discussion and the scripture passage. Give everyone paper and pencil. Ask each person to write a letter to God about a failure in his or her life. Come back together as a group and burn or shred the letters. Pray in silence about personal failure and God's love and forgiveness for all people.

Music

Listen to contemporary music that deals with failure.
Hint: Coordinators can convene a small group sometime before this session to help them identify and locate music for this activity.
- What do the lyrics say about failure?
- Would you define failure the same way? How would your definition differ?
- What message of hope do the lyrics offer?

If possible, find a copy of the soundtrack of *The Man of La Mancha*. Listen to the lyrics of the song sung by the main character to the woman he sees as the beautiful Dulcinea.
- How does he see this woman?
- How does she see herself?
- Is he right or is she?
- Would others describe you as a failure or a success?
- How would you describe yourself?

As a closing, sing or read the words of "Hail to the Lord's Anointed" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 616).

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2 Teach Us to Be Humble

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Luke 14:7-11

Commentary: In this passage, Jesus is talking to his disciples about humility. He uses an event that they have just witnessed in which a group of guests have selected their places at a gathering. Jesus tells his followers that honor and prestige are not something a person can attain alone; they are granted by others. If people approach life in humility, they can avoid outwardly imposed shame.

☐ Questions

- Have you been in a situation like the one Jesus describes in the parable? What happened?
- Does our society encourage humility? How?
- Is it possible to have too much humility?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Can a person be humble and succeed materially in our culture?

☐ Activities

Finding Our Place

Before the group arrives, set up several tables for the number of participants expected. At one table, set out the snacks and use the best chairs available. On the other tables, use less comfortable chairs and leave the tables empty. If the group is large, differentiate among the tables by adding extras such as a tablecloth and decorations. As the group enters, don't give any instructions except to sit down.

Hint: A variation would be to make place cards at the tables to see if people change the seating arrangements.

Read the scripture passage. Discuss the reasons the participants selected their seats.

- Were the seats at the best table taken first or last?
- According to the passage, which table does Jesus think you should choose?
- How does this passage go against our competitive nature?

Rearrange the room to bring the group together. After the group is settled, ask them to think of scenarios they have witnessed that Jesus could use in a new parable. Select one, and write a new parable about humility.

Planning a Celebration

Ask the group to come up with a seating plan for a church-wide function that includes this group, other young people and children, committee chairs, members of various groups such as the choir and Altar Guild, vestry members, and the clergy.
Hint: Before the group meets, collect lists of people from the groups you want to include.

On a large piece of paper draw a diagram of a room with a podium at the front. Make a head table and draw other tables beginning at the front that seat four to eight. Put everyone on the lists somewhere in the room.

Read the scripture passage and discuss the seating chart.

- Where did the group put itself?
- Where did you put friends and family members?
- If you had read the passage before beginning the exercise, would the seating pattern be different?
- Selecting a seat may not be very important. Where is humility important in your life? Why?
- Do you find the concept of humility difficult? Are there times humility may not be an appropriate response? Describe those instances.

Serving Others

Select a group activity that involves serving others in humbleness. For example, the group could plan a Maundy Thursday liturgy in which they offer to wash the feet of the participants. They could also select a service project that involved cleaning up after others, such as scrubbing down the bathrooms after a church-wide event, or cleaning up after coffee hour for a month.
Hint: For the activity to be effective, take time to discuss it when it is over. Find out how participants felt doing tasks that some felt were degrading. How do they feel about people who do this kind of work all the time? Have their opinions changed?

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3 Failure Turned Upside Down

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

I Corinthians 1:26-31

Commentary: In this passage, Paul is writing to the Corinthian church which apparently felt it was a great spiritual success. Paul first reminds the people of their humble origins. Paul points out that many of them were thought of as weak, foolish, and even despised. He then tells them that when they were weak by worldly standards, God chose them because of their belief. The power to change weakness into strength comes from God—not from the people themselves.

☐ Questions

- How do human standards differ from God's?
- Do you know people who are considered foolish and weak who have shown wisdom? Describe the situation.
- Why did Jesus say in *Matthew 19:14* that it is children to whom "the kingdom of heaven belongs"? Using a concordance, find other places in the Bible Jesus refers to being like children.

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Who is wiser—the writer or his older brother? Why?
- How do we know whose advice to take? Does God give us any guidelines?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 1.

- In the poster, the ladders seem to be going up. If you turned it upside down, the top part would now be on the bottom. Do success and failure sometimes depend on perspective?

☐ Activities

Bake a Cake

If possible, plan the meeting in the church kitchen or the kitchen in someone's home. Find a recipe for a pineapple upside-down cake, and gather enough ingredients for a cake (or several cakes) for everyone in the group to sample.

While the cake is baking, read the scripture passage. Talk about situations suggested by the passage that seem to defy logic. Use the cake recipe as an example of things that seem upside-down can actually be right. Enjoy the cake at the end of the time period, or share it with another group in the church.

Hint: A variation of this activity is to gather a small group the day before the meeting to make the cake. As you serve the cake, let the bakers describe to others in the group how it is made. Discuss the scripture and share situations as described above. Bring in Bibles and one or two concordances to find examples of other places in the Bible Jesus shows that the wise are not always right and the foolish are not necessarily weak.

From Weakness to Strength

On a piece of newsprint, write down human weaknesses identified by the group—such as blindness or poor eyesight, mental deficiencies, lack of coordination. On a second sheet of paper, write down situations or ways that a weakness can lead to a strength. For example, blind people often develop their sense of hearing and can detect sounds that others miss.

Pass out identical slips of paper and the same kind of pencil or pen to each person. Ask the group to write down their own weaknesses, and then fold the paper over once. Collect the slips and put them in a paper bag. Take turns selecting one slip of paper at time. Read the weakness, and, as a group, find a way a strength can flow from it. For example, a person who has trouble in math may be a good tutor for someone who is struggling with material this person has learned.

As each weakness is discussed, put it in a bowl. At the closing, stand in a circle around the bowl. Pray individually or as a group that God will turn your weaknesses into strengths.

Movie Night

Plan a movie night to talk about success and failure. Watch *Crimson Tide*, a movie about leadership and the reversal of roles. Before beginning, ask the group to be especially aware of the relationship between the two main characters played by Denzel Washington and Gene Hackman. Discuss the movie together.

- Describe the main characters' vision of success and failure. How did the visions differ?
- How did the two characters decide what was right or wrong?
- How did they react to failure?
- What does this movie have to say about success and failure in your life? How can you be sure you are seeking the right goals?

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Success & Failure

Living Up to Expectations

SESSION 4

Objective

Youth will be able to list expectations others have for them.

Personal Story

Mark grew up in an affluent village outside of a large city. The neighborhood was just about perfect. The streets were always clean, the houses all looked nice, and lawns were kept neatly trimmed, everyone had a good job, and all the neighbors seemed to excel in everything they did.

There were many advantages that came with living in such a place: no crime, good schools, and no worries about food or shelter. The lifestyle, however, hid problems. In such a nice community, everyone lived a model family life.

Mark's dad went to work every day at the same time and returned every day in time for dinner with the family. He coached Mark's soccer team and his eldest son Mike's basketball team. Mike was the team's star point guard and at the top of his class at school. Meanwhile, Mark's mom volunteered every hour her kids were in school. Everything was perfect—that was the problem.

Everything Mark did was closely watched by his parents. As the younger son, he was expected to follow in his brother's footsteps. Mark was pressured to make good grades, to give 110 percent in athletics, and to always behave. All this pressure was too much.

Mark wasn't especially smart or good at sports. He was quiet and liked to read and play computer games. When the family sat down for dinner, they usually asked, "How was your day, Mark?" Mark would always reply with an answer that would please his parents. He didn't have the courage to tell them he didn't want to play soccer. He avoided discussions about grades and college.

When Mark came home from school one day, his mother was waiting for him. This wasn't unusual, but something was different. Mark's science teacher had called earlier that day to say that Mark was failing her class. This was just what Mark had been dreading.

He didn't want to disappoint his parents, but he just couldn't keep up with all his classes. Instead of making excuses, however, Mark told his mother everything. He told her how he bottled up all his feelings and how he felt too pressured to succeed. When he was finished, both he and his mother were crying. It was the first time he had really ever talked to his mother.

Scripture

Deuteronomy 6:1-9
Luke 15:11-32
Matthew 14:22-33

Skill Focus

Trust
Relationships

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Prayer
O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Proper 10
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 231

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

1 God's Expectations

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the Lord your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Commentary: At this point in biblical history, Moses and the Israelites have left captivity in Egypt and are traveling to the promised land. Through Moses, God is giving the people the laws that are to govern their lives. If they follow the commandments, they will live peacefully "in a land flowing with milk and honey." (The commandments refer to the Ten Commandments given to the people directly by God.) By putting the law on the hand, forehead, and doorpost, it will live in the heart, constantly thought about and acted upon. The Hebrews wore head and wrist bands with the law written on them.

☐ Questions

- What does God expect from the people?
- Are God's expectations hard to live up to?
- What are God's expectations for your life?

☐ Activities

Create an Emblem

After reading the scripture passage, talk about expectations God has for your lives. Make emblems to remind people of God's expectations in the form of bracelets, posters, or buttons. Individually or as a group think of a phrase that represents God. Some young people have used the initials WWJD to remind them of the words "What Would Jesus Do?" Use this or create your own "emblem."

Bring in craft supplies to make the emblems. For bracelets, use thread and beads that can be woven together. Others may prefer to make small signs of the emblem that are backed with magnets to fit inside school lockers.

The group could also opt to make posters of the design to hang in different places around the church. Be sure to explain the significance of the emblem on the poster. Make buttons (blank ones are available from craft stores) that correspond to the posters to hand out to the congregation on a special Sunday.

Ten Commandments

The commandment in *Deuteronomy 6:1* refers to the Ten Commandments given by God to his people at Sinai in *Deuteronomy 5*. Write down each commandment from *Deuteronomy 5* on one side of a piece of newsprint, condensing when necessary. On the other side of the paper, write a commandment in your own words that directly affects you. For example, across from "you shall not bear false witness," you could write: "Don't spread rumors."

Talk about the role of the commandments in your life.

- Did you think the commandments were written for adults?
- When you put them in your own words, are the commandments harder to live up to? Why?
- Do you have a better idea of God's expectations for you? Name one expectation you will honor.

Community Rules

Think about rules that are part of the community or neighborhood you live in, both written and unwritten. For example, no one should drive a car that is more than five years old unless it's a classic, or middle-school teens cannot invade senior-high territory. Your parents may live by rules that seem completely silly, such as not wearing white clothing until Memorial Day, or taking down the Christmas tree on New Year's Day.

Write down formal and informal rules in your school and community. List these on newsprint.

- Which rules strengthen the community?
- Which rules divide people?
- How do these rules compare to God's expectations for us?

Think of new rules that would make your community or school a better place.

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2 Parent's Expectations

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

Luke 15:11-32

Commentary: This story is the third of three parables Jesus told his followers as he traveled toward Jerusalem. The parables are about God's concern for those who are lost. The lost sheep, the lost coin, and the tale of the lost son illustrate God's acceptance of those who are lost but then are found. The brother's anger over his sibling's return shows the human tendency to be self-centered and the inability to love unconditionally.

☐ Questions

- Have you ever rebelled against your parents? What happened?
- What were the father's expectations for his sons?

☐ Activities

Personal Story

Ask a volunteer to read aloud the Personal Story on the first page of this session. Discuss the story and Resource Poster No. 2 with the group.

- Have you ever felt like Mark?
- Do you know a friend who has been in Mark's position?
- How do God's expectations differ from those of parents, family, and friends?
- Did you relate to the older brother? Is it hard sometimes to be the one who succeeds?
- Identify the different kinds of expectations depicted on the poster. Which ones relate to you? Why?
- Are you harder on yourself than others are?

Pass out paper and pens for each person to write their own personal story or the story of a friend who is trying to live up to other people's expectations. Share stories if you feel comfortable doing so.

Hint: Ask for volunteers to tell their stories. Never force anyone to share stories that are personal or confidential.

The Lost Son—The Play

Act out the story of the prodigal son. Ask people in the group to take the role of the father, elder brother, the lost son, the people who help the son lose his fortune, the citizen who hires him, and the slaves who serve the family. The group can also add characters or change the story. For example, add a mother and other siblings or change the story to the lost daughter. Discuss the story and the emotions the people felt as they portrayed the characters.

As a variation, change the setting of the story to the present. Before assigning parts, decide where the family lives, how much money they give the child, how the fortune is lost, where the child turns for work, and what happens at his or her return.

- Why did the son leave in the first place? Have you ever thought about leaving home? What did you do?
- Caring for pigs was the ultimate indignity for a Jew in Jesus' day. What would be a corresponding task today?
- Was the son courageous to come back and face his father? Why?
- Did you sympathize with the older brother? What would you have done in his place?

Classic Art

Visit an art gallery or get books of classic art from your school or library. Look for pictures from different artists who have painted their vision of the lost or prodigal son. Discuss the different scenes that have been painted and the characters that are included in the pictures.

- What part of the story did the artist choose to portray?
- Can you find any symbols in the painting?
- Which characters would you put in a painting? What would they be doing?
- Which painting is your favorite? Why?

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3 Our Expectations

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Matthew 14:22-33

Commentary: The story in this scripture passage takes place immediately after the feeding of the 5,000. The disciples have boarded a boat while Jesus goes alone up a mountain to pray. Rough weather forces the boat into the sea. The only way Jesus can join his disciples is to walk across the water. They were terrified to see him, but Peter asks to join him on the water. At first Peter's faith carries him over the water, but gusts of winds make him lose faith, and he begins to sink. Jesus, however, is ready to save Peter from drowning.

☐ Questions

- Would you have the courage to join Jesus in the water?
- Would you expect Jesus to keep you from drowning?
- What events or people, like the winds that pummeled Peter, cause you to lose faith?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Did Mark expect his parents to understand him?
- Would he have had fewer problems if he had confronted his parents earlier?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 2.

- Which of the expectations depicted on the poster do your parents or others have for you?
- Which expectations do you have for yourself?

☐ Activities

Other People

On newsprint or a chalkboard write headings that illustrate people in your life, such as parents, friends, teachers, coaches, clergy, and others. Ask the group to list their expectations for the people in each group. For example, under "parents," they might write "provide food and shelter." Encourage them to go beyond the obvious.

Discuss the expectations the group has for others in their lives. It is easy to forget that just as we struggle to live up to others' expectations of us, they are trying to live up to our expectations?

- Do your expectations of your parents, friends, and others differ from the group's?
- How do you feel when someone disappoints you? What do you do about it?
- Are your expectations realistic?
- In the scripture passage, were Peter's expectations of himself realistic? What did he expect of Jesus?

As you gather to close, identify one person who hasn't met your expectations or whom you have disappointed. In silence ask God to help you find a way to change this situation. Find time in the coming week to talk to the person you identified.

Cultural Expectations

Bring in different kinds of magazines, including ones aimed at teens, such as *Teen*, *Seventeen*, or *Teen People.* Look through the magazines to find pictures in advertisements of people who look like students you go to school or church with. Talk about how images in advertising and popular culture clash with reality.

- Why do advertisers pick the slender people with perfect hair to sell their products?
- Why are so few "real" people in ads?
- How does this influence our expectations about ourselves?
- Which attributes are most important in a friend—looks or character?
- What is the best thing you could say about a friend or that a friend could say about you? Is that quality apparent in the pictures you found in the magazines?

At the Movies

Watch the movie *Yentl* with Barbra Streisand. Look for expectations the main character has for herself and expectations that others have for her.

- What are Yentl's aspirations? How do they conflict with those of her father?
- What do the people expect of women in the movie?
- How does Yentl defy society?
- Why does Yentl change her expectations? Was she right to do so?

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Success & Failure

Who Do I Want To Be?

SESSION 5

Objective

Youth will be able to describe how God can help them discover who they are and what they can become.

Personal Story

"The world started out with the collision of large masses," lectured Mrs. Thomas. "With the new images from the Hubbell telescope, we now believe the Big Bang theory to be true."

Wait a second, I thought to myself. How does this fit in with the story of creation in the Bible? *Genesis* says that God created the world. These ideas clashed in my mind. How could both be true?

I wanted to ask the question. I thought Mrs. Thomas might be able to show both explanations could work together. But I didn't have the courage to say anything in front of my friends and classmates.

I hadn't spent a lot of time thinking about what I would say if someone asked me if I believed in God. This was a perfect time, but I wasn't prepared to respond.

Do I believe in God? Yes, that question is easy to answer. Why, then, is it so hard to describe how I feel in words? Why can't I stand up in front of the class and let them know that I believe God is a part of my life?

I know I cannot force religion on my classmates just as Mrs. Thomas cannot force knowledge into our minds. However, belief in God seems like such an easy choice, and I can't understand why it's so hard for others.

The day after Mrs. Thomas' lecture, I got to school early to talk to her. I was surprised to hear that she is a Christian. I asked her to explain the conflicting stories of creation.

She said that the world is too complex to have originated from giant balls of mass colliding together. Something more was there. Someone, she said, was watching over us and has a plan for us.

I then asked a harder question. "Why doesn't everyone believe in God?" Mrs. Thomas smiled at me and said, "God works in mysterious ways."

My teacher's answers still left a lot of questions. However, our conversation made me feel God's presence in a new and different way. I also had another revelation that could change my whole life: I want to be a teacher.

Scripture

Daniel 6:10-13
Luke 18:9-14
Philippians 4:8-9

Skill Focus

Trust
Influences

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

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

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

1 Obeying God

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously. The conspirators came and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human, within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." Then they responded to the king, "Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day."

Daniel 6:10-13

Commentary: Daniel was a young man living in Babylon in exile from his home in Judah. The king recognized Daniel's abilities, treating him with respect and giving him power and authority. Jealous officials in the king's court plotted for Daniel's downfall. They coerced the king into signing an edict. Anyone who worshiped another god would be thrown into a lions' den. The decree became law and could not be revoked. In spite of it, Daniel continued his daily prayers. The conspirators, knowing this, went to his room and caught him praying before the windows that opened toward Jerusalem.

The king saw through the plot, but he was powerless to change the decree. Daniel was thrown into the lions' den. He was protected by angels and emerged unhurt. The joyous king proclaimed that "in all my royal dominion people should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel" (*Daniel 6:26a).*

☐ Questions

- Why did Daniel openly defy the king? Could he have continued to pray to God in secret?
- Have you been in a situation in which you were uncomfortable talking about your faith? Describe what happened.

☐ Activities

Personal Story

Ask a volunteer to read the Personal Story from the previous page. Discuss the story and the scripture passage.

- How many of your close friends know what your relationship is with God?
- Do your classmates and acquaintances know if you believe in God? Do they know you go to church?
- Are there many opportunities at school, during sports, or at other times for the topic to come up? Do you avoid it?

Reread the scripture passage. From the commentary provide background information and the setting for the story. Talk about the discipline Daniel showed in his prayer life. Spiritual disciplines in Christian life, such as daily prayer, Bible study, and attending church are forms of this today.

- Do you do any of these things?
- How do you obey God?
- What are you doing to obey God? What could you do?

Select one spiritual discipline for each individual in the group to try during the next week. Find a way to help each other meet the goal.

Change in Attitude

On a piece of newsprint or chalkboard write down tasks or disciplines the youth are required to do at home or at school, such as taking out the garbage, practicing an instrument, doing homework, cleaning up after pets, babysitting, or eating right. Talk about how youth feel when they do these tasks.

- How would it feel to do these things joyfully or with thanksgiving?
- Can our attitudes make the task more tolerable? How can you change your attitude?

Divide into pairs. Ask each person to identify one disagreeable task he or she must do regularly. Discuss with your partner how you could approach the task with thanksgiving or joy. Try this new approach and report back to your partner in one week.

- Did your attitude change anything?
- Was the task easier to do? Did you feel better about doing it? Will you try this approach again?

Showing Our Faith

Talk to the clergy about how the group could participate in a Sunday worship service one week. For example, the group could lead prayers of the people that they wrote themselves or assist at a children's chapel.

As a variation, participate as a group in another activity of your church, such as an ongoing outreach project or in one of the church school classes. Afterwards, talk about the different ways you can obey God by serving in your parish.

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2 Choosing God for Yourself

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Luke 18:9-14

Commentary: In this parable, Jesus shows his followers that outward appearances don't always show what's in a person's heart. The Pharisee was a person whose faith was reflected in his public acts. He tithed his income and prayed publicly as the law required. He was respected by the people for his faith. The tax collector, however, was despised and regarded with suspicion. He represented an oppressive government. Tax collectors often cheated people for their own financial gain. God looks past the outward appearance of individuals and rewards those who pray and live in humility.

☐ Questions

- What is humility?
- Why were the prayers of the Pharisee displeasing to God?
- Why did God embrace the prayers of the tax collector?
- Is it easy to sometimes say the prayer of the Pharisee? When have you done that?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story

- How can you be humble and still proclaim your beliefs with certainty?
- How can humility help us know God better?

Options: Discuss Resource Poster No. 3.

- Do you have many choices for who you want to be or only a few?
- Is there a difference between who you want to be and who you think you will be? Describe it.

☐ Activities

Sing a Song

Sing one of the rounds in the back of *The Hymnal 1982*, 710 to 715. Youth may be familiar with "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," p. 711, from worship services or camp experiences. Make sure the whole group knows the tune and the words.

Hint: It may be helpful beforehand to make copies of the words of the round for each person in the group.

Divide the group, and sing the round you selected. After everyone is comfortable with the two-part round, divide into three groups. Continue until each person has his or her own part and is singing alone. Try to get through the song with everyone singing at a different time. Afterward, talk about the experience.

- How did the song sound when there were only two groups? How did it sound when everyone sang differently?
- Did you hold your own? Could you listen to the other voices?
- Why is it easier to sing together than to sing alone?

Read the scripture passage and talk about it in light of your singing attempts.

- When the Pharisee looked down on other people, what happened to his relationships?
- When the group sang together, were they more like the Pharisee or the tax collector? Why?
- How does humility lead to greater harmony?

Changing the Setting

Reread the scripture passage about the Pharisee and tax collector. Describe the Pharisee's standing in the community and the distrust people had of tax collectors.

Write a new version of the parable set in the present time in your community. Who will be the Pharisee? What occupation will take the place of tax collector? Where will they go to pray? What will they say? Ask a volunteer to read the new version of the parable. Discuss the two versions of the parable and what Jesus meant about being humble.

- In your school, who is in the "in" crowd? What does a person have to be or do to be a part of this group?
- Which group at your school do you not want to be identified with? Why?
- Which are you a part of?
- How are these groups like the two characters in the parables? How are they similar or different?
- Why is humility important to Christians? Can you be humble and still be a part of the in crowd?

Act It Out

Make a play out of the parable that the group wrote that was based on the story of the Pharisee and tax collector. Decide if you want to make any changes in the characters and setting. Before you make final decisions, determine your audience—an adult class, younger teens, or children.

Ask for volunteers to be actors and to make costumes and sets. Assign one person to be the director. Set up a time and place for the play. Decide if you want to lead a discussion afterward.

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3 Guarding Your Heart

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9

Commentary: The scripture passage is an excerpt from a letter Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, the first church he established in Europe. There was opposition to the church from the beginning. A major theme of the letter is standing strong in the faith even under the threat of death. In this passage Paul lists the attributes of faith and then encourages the people of Philippi to "keep on doing the things that you have learned."

☐ Questions

- Are Paul's words comforting or demanding? Why?
- Where does Paul say we should turn for guidance?
- Where do you look for guidance?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Where does the writer go for help?
- Where can you go for help in exploring what you want to be?

☐ Activities

Words of Faith

During the week, collect local newspapers and news magazines. Bring in several pairs of scissors and a poster board.

Before you begin this exercise, ask a volunteer to read the scripture passage aloud. Assign to small groups or individuals the words Paul uses to describe faith in the first part of the passage, including true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellence, and worthy of praise. Ask participants to look through the papers and magazines to find articles, stories, or pictures that illustrate the word they have been assigned. At the same time, look for examples of the opposite of the assigned word. For example: true becomes false, pure becomes sordid.

After everyone has located as least one example of each word and its opposite, share the findings with the entire group.

- How easy was it to find examples of your attribute?
- Was it easier or harder to find the opposite? Why do you think this was the case?
- Were you surprised or disappointed in how many examples you found?
- In your own life, are you more likely to see an example of one of Paul's attributes or its opposite? Explain.

Design a poster about guarding your heart with the attributes described by Paul. Use pictures, headlines, and words from the exercise as part of the poster. Hang the poster somewhere in the meeting space.

Spiritual Suitcase

Describe the following scenario to the group: We are going on a journey and we may be gone for a long time. In addition to clothes, makeup, and toiletries, we are going to pack a spiritual suitcase that will help us guard our hearts. We don't know our final destination, but we must be prepared for any situation. We may end up in a college dorm or in an apartment. We may be starting our first full-time job or going to school. Wherever we go, we need to be prepared for a spiritual journey. What do we need to pack in our suitcase?

Brainstorm ideas about things to pack in a spiritual suitcase, both tangible and intangible. For example, an alarm clock to help me get up for church, phone numbers of people I can turn to for help, photographs of good memories, patience, and compassion.

- What would you leave at home? Why?
- What items should you discard that may hold you back on your journey?

Bring in two small suitcases or briefcases. Open both and put them on top of a table in the center of the group or at the front of the room. Label one case "Things to Take," and the other "Things to Leave." Pass out two slips of paper to each person in the group. Write on one piece of paper the most important item you would pack in your spiritual suitcase. On the second slip, describe something detrimental in your life that you would leave behind. After each person has deposited their slips in the appropriate cases, close and latch them. In silence, pray for guidance to use the things that help us and to leave behind the things that harm us.

Scavenger Hunt

Visit a local mall as a group. Pass out a list of the attributes of faith from the scripture passage (true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellence, worthy of praise) to each person. Divide into groups of three and walk around the mall to find an item or observation that fits each of the categories. For example, a stranger helping someone who is disabled might be an example of commendable. Meet back together after a set time.

- What makes you think about God at the mall?
- Did you find examples of the words in the actions of people or items in the stores?
- How can being aware of God's presence guard our hearts?

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Success & Failure

Dealing with Stress

SESSION 6

Objective
Youth will be able to name ways God can help them deal with daily stress.

Personal Story

Sydney is a junior in high school, an important year for her. Many things are happening in her life. She is a member of five different clubs in school, and an officer of one. She participates in sports, and plays an instrument in the marching band. She also takes private music lessons, and goes to dance classes during the week. When possible, she babysits her next-door neighbor's children.

The weekends are busy, too. On Saturdays, she helps her parents in their business by waiting on customers and working behind the counter. On Sundays she spends much of her time at church acolyting, attending Sunday school, and attending youth group meetings in the evening.

Her class load at school is heavy because she is taking two advanced placement courses along with her regular schedule. This is also the year to take SAT tests and begin to look at colleges. In addition, she has to find time to practice driving because her road test is coming up in a few months.

The family business dominates much of the family's time together. Her parents spend long hours six days a week running the business. They try to sit down at least once a week to have a meal together. Sydney's older brother graduates from high school this year and is counting the days until he is out of the house and headed to college. After he leaves, Sydney's grandmother is going to come and live with them. Her grandfather died a few months ago, and her grandmother is very lonely.

One night, as Sydney was trying to finish her homework, tired and exhausted, she began to cry. She felt like she couldn't take it anymore. The weight of the world rested on her shoulders, and she didn't know what to do about it.

The next morning, she talked to her dad. She explained how she was feeling and how stressed out she felt. After sharing her frustrations and anger, she felt a lot better. She was surprised that her dad was such a good listener. After their talk, Sydney's dad suggested that they make a list of all the stuff she was doing and decide what was important.

Then it was time to act. Sydney quit a few clubs but decided to stay in marching band. She also started saying no to people.

Changing her lifestyle is difficult for Sydney, but her stress level is going down and she is enjoying life again. Keeping her problems inside and taking on so many jobs and activities had limited her ability to get anything done. Sydney decided the next time her life gets out of hand, she will look for help before she falls apart.

Scripture
Psalm 62:1-2
Matthew 11:28-30
Romans 5:1-5

Skill Focus
Influences
Forgiveness

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Prayer
Most loving Father, whose will it is for us to give thanks for all things, to fear nothing but the loss of you, and to cast all our care on you who care for us: Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal, and which you have manifested to us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Eighth Sunday after the Epiphany
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 216-217

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

1 Turning to God in Prayer

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

Psalm 62:1-2

Commentary: *Psalm 62* is a song of trust and confidence in God's protection. *The Book of Psalms* contains many songs of trust that are often coupled with a lament over a specific grievance, such as illness or an attack by enemies. The passage here proclaims God to be the psalmist's only help. The writer awaits this help in silence, knowing God will bring strength and solace.

☐ Questions

- Do you usually approach God in silence or with words?
- How has God been a rock or a fortress for you?
- If you were writing a psalm, what images would you use to portray God's strength and support?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 4.

- When have you felt like the person in the poster?

☐ Activities

Finding God in Silence

Ask the group what prayer means to them. Brainstorm ideas and suggestions.

- What do you want from God?
- Have you ever asked God to help you with stress? What was that like?
- How is that different from asking God for something specific or tangible?

Introduce the idea of spending time with God in silence or in meditation. Find out if any of the participants do this on a regular basis or have tried it in another setting.

- How does being quiet help us deal with stress?
- What do you do to find calmness or peace?

Spend some time in silence together using the following method or one of your own choosing: Find a comfortable sitting position in a chair or on the floor and close your eyes. Think about the people or events in your life that cause stress. Ask a volunteer to read the scripture passage. Pause several minutes in silence. Reread the passage very slowly, and pause again. After the second reading, invite the participants to either stay where they are, find a quiet place nearby, or go outside. They can take a Bible to reread the scripture passage and pencil and paper to reflect on their thoughts. Give them a time to come back together. Talk about the experience.

- Do you feel different? How?
- What are other ways to be in silence?
- Would silence help you face stress in your life?
- What part of the day could you set aside for silence?

End with silent prayer.

Sounds of Silence

From a video store, rent a copy of a classical ballet performance and a rock concert or music video. Screen the tapes before the meeting to find the most relaxing, soothing part of the ballet and the loudest, craziest part of the rock tape.

Play the ballet video; make sure the segment you have selected is long enough to have an effect on the group. Then ask each person to take his or her pulse. Then put on the rock tape. Afterwards, ask the group to take their pulse again.

- What was their stress level during the ballet?
- What happened during the rock video?
- What do you do to relax? Are there different ways to relax?
- Based on this experience, what could you do to help you relieve stress?

Ask the group to list ways to ease stress, such as listening to quiet music, being silent, watching television, or playing a game. Identify the three that the group thinks are most effective. Encourage each person to try at least one of the stress relievers during the week.

Personal Story

Ask a volunteer to read the Personal Story from the previous page. Discuss the story and Resource Poster No. 4, encouraging participants to share their own dilemmas.
Hint: Do not require anyone to participate. Allow each person to determine his or her own level of participation.

- Did any one thing cause Sydney to feel under stress?
- What things cause you stress?
- What would make life easier?
- Who did Sydney turn to for help?
- Who do you go to when life overwhelms you?
- Look at the jagged line on the poster. What events or people make your "stress lines" increase or decrease?

Tackle your stress like Sydney did. Make a list of everything that adds to your stress. Include relationships that are difficult, activities at church and school, responsibilities at home and at work, and so on. Using the list, set priorities for things to do and activities to limit. If you are comfortable doing so, work with a partner who may see things more clearly than you. Do at least one thing in the next week that will help your stress level over time.

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2 Surrendering to God

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus said,] "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

Commentary: The stories in this section of *Matthew* illustrate the authority from God claimed by Jesus. In the first part of the passage, Jesus gives words of comfort to those who believe in him. He then uses an image, "yoke of the Law," from the teachings of the rabbis. The yoke refers to a wooden harness that fits around the necks of a team of oxen, keeping them together. Jesus encourages his followers to take up the yoke of belief—more demanding than that of the law but more rewarding.

☐ Questions

- What is a yoke? Why did Jesus select this image?
- Does Jesus imply that his followers will be able to take it easy?
- How can a yoke be easy or a burden be light?
- What burdens do you carry? How could you make them light?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did Sydney find rest?
- Where can you find rest from the stress in your life?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 4.

- Would easing some of your burdens reduce your stress?
- Does being tired affect your stress levels?

☐ Activities

Stressometer

On a piece of newsprint, list all the things that cause the group stress. Be as specific as possible. Some examples: taking care of a sibling, trying to go to school and work part-time, illness, demands of coaches, limited telephone time, picking out clothes, a live-in grandparent, parents who argue, and parents who are extremely busy.

On another piece of newsprint, ask for a volunteer to design a "stressometer" for measuring stress. It could look like a thermometer, a scale, or a gauge. The meter should take into account the seriousness of the situation, if it can be changed in the long or short run, and how many are affected by it.

Take each of the situations causing stress that the group identified. Using the stressometer, determine the stress level of each item. For example, a bad hair day can change in twenty-four hours, but a grandparent is probably in your house to stay. Note the stress level with a number or other rating.

Ask each person to write down the items from the list that add to his or her stress. If most of the items get a high stress level, he or she may need help. If the numbers are mixed, outside help may not be necessary—some stress can be healthy. Talk about ways to eliminate some of the causes of stress.

Carrying a Load

During the week, find enough bricks for each person in the group. Visit a construction site, or ask the person in charge of buildings and grounds to help you locate enough bricks.

Pass out the bricks at the beginning of the session and ask group members to carry them all during the meeting. After reading and discussing the scripture passage, ask them to think about the stresses in their lives represented by the bricks.

- How are bricks like stress?
- Do the bricks feel heavier at times? Why?
- How do you relieve stress? How does that make your burdens seem lighter?

Plan a service to get rid of the bricks and ease the burdens of life. For example, start with the prayer on the opposite page, and then read the scripture passage together. Designate a special place for people to bring their bricks. They could be left at a table that has been designated as an altar or placed in the corner of the room. If possible, leave them in the room during this unit of study as a reminder of Christ's promise that he "will give you rest."

Stress Reducer

Find a way for the group or for individuals to be stress reducers for others. Offer to take care of children in the parish while their parents run errands on a Saturday morning. Volunteer to take care of younger children during a special service such as Ash Wednesday. If you know of an older person who has been sick or is unable to do much outside the home, offer to rake the yard or run errands.

Hint: When planning activities involving children, be sure several adults are present.

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3 Growing Stronger

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 5:1-5

Commentary: *Romans* is the first letter of Paul to appear in the New Testament. It is also the longest and probably the most influential of all his writings. The major theme of the book is God's grace. In this passage, Paul says that peace comes from God's grace, not anything a person can do alone. Through God, even suffering can be turned into hope.

☐ Questions

- What did Paul mean about boasting "in our sufferings"?
- How does suffering feel to you? Do you want to boast about it?
- In what other areas in life do we talk about endurance? How can that be related to endurance that comes from suffering?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What did suffering bring Sydney? How did she respond?
- Should suffering be done alone? How can other people ease suffering?
- Do you have a friend who is under too much stress? What can you do?

☐ Activities

Positive Stress

Talk about ways that stress can be positive. Start with an area such as sports where stress can give a person a competitive edge.

- What would life be like without stress?
- Would you do well on a test if there were no stress?
- Would a world without stress be boring?

At the top of a piece of newsprint or chalkboard, write the word "Suffering" followed by an arrow pointing to the word "Endurance" followed by an arrow to the word "Character" followed by an arrow to the word "Hope." Ask the group to describe specific examples of how they have seen this flow of action happen to them or a friend. For example, a long-distance runner usually suffers while building up endurance. That leads to character, enabling the runner to keep going when exhausted. All the runner's efforts bring the hope of the finish line. Discuss experiences when difficulties have helped participants endure and succeed.

- Has a stressful experience changed your life for the better?
- What are some positive stresses in your life?

List stresses that have the potential of enriching your life. Map out a strategy for turning a stressful situation to your advantage.

Picturing Stress

Bring in art supplies, such as markers, paint, glue, glitter, pastels, crayons, and paper. Invite the participants to think about the stress in their lives, both the causes and the results. Ask them to draw a picture of stress. Look at Resource Poster No. 4 for inspiration. While they are working, play some loud, raucous music in the background.

When everyone has finished drawing, turn off the music and hang the pictures on one side of the room. Provide time to share the work if the group wishes to do so.

Reread the scripture passage, replacing the word suffering with pressure. Discuss it, using the questions provided or your own. Ask group members to draw another picture of stress based on the discussion. While they are drawing, play quiet, soothing music. After everyone has finished, hang the pictures next to the first set.

- Are the pictures different? If so, what are the differences?
- What changed? Why?
- How can the stress in your life reflect the pictures?

End the session by reading the prayer on the previous page.

At the Movies

Watch the video *Lorenzo's Oil* about parents who fight for their son's life. Before the movie, ask the group to pay attention to the way the family moves from suffering to hope.

Afterward, discuss the movie.

- What was the family's initial response to Lorenzo's illness?
- Did the medical profession give them hope?
- Where did they look for strength?
- How did they move first from suffering to endurance?
- Did hope mean that their son would live?

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Success & Failure

Competition

SESSION 7

Objective

Youth will be able to describe ways competition can be a positive force in their lives.

Personal Story

Cheryl had played the violin since the fourth grade. She found playing to be an emotional release. She might not be the most technically proficient player, but she was always complimented for the way she played.

In the fall of her sophomore year in high school, her parents asked her if she wanted to audition for the local youth symphony. If she was accepted, she would have to go into the city every Saturday morning for a two-hour rehearsal.

Some of the other kids at her high school were auditioning. They were not her closest friends, but at least there would be some people for a carpool. Cheryl decided to go for it. She was very nervous, and worried that she might not make it and be left to face the others and admit failure. But her parents and teacher encouraged her to at least try.

The audition was frightening. She had to play for the conductor who never cracked a smile. He made no comment while she played, and then asked her to sight-read a selection. He dismissed her without giving any indication if he liked her playing. She left, feeling certain that she had failed.

The next day, however, the assistant called and said she had been selected. She would sit near the back of the second violins which meant that most of the others were better than her. But she was in! Cheryl couldn't wait for practice the next Saturday.

The rehearsal was rough. Often the conductor would suddenly stop and ask an individual to play alone. Cheryl just wanted to go unnoticed. If she made a mistake, she would be sent to the back of the section.

Slowly, Cheryl began moving toward the front of the section. During the week she would practice for hours. Each time she was asked to play alone, she played her part perfectly. The kids in the carpool even complimented her.

The week before the annual concert, Cheryl found herself sitting at the front of the second violin section. She played like she had never played before and was filled with confidence. If she had been scared off by the competition, she would never have had this experience.

Scripture

Jeremiah 12:1-5
I Corinthians 9:24-27
II Timothy 2:1-7

Skill Focus

Respect
Ethics

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Prayer
O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Proper 19
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 233

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

1 Preparing for the Future

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

You will be in the right, O Lord,
when I lay charges against you;
but let me put my case to you.
Why does the way of the guilty prosper?
Why do all who are treacherous thrive?
You plant them, and they take root;
they grow and bring forth fruit;
you are near in their mouths
yet far from their hearts.
But you, O Lord, know me;
You see me and test me—my heart is with you.
Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter,
and set them apart for the day of slaughter.
How long will the land mourn,
and the grass of every field wither?
For the wickedness of those who live in it
the animals and the birds are swept away,
and because people said, "He is blind to our ways."
If you have raced with foot-runners
and they have wearied you,
how will you compete with horses?
And if in a safe land you fall down,
how will you fare in the thickets of the Jordan?

Jeremiah 12:1-5

Commentary: The prophet Jeremiah is sometimes called the suffering or weeping prophet. He closely identified himself with the people of Israel. In this passage, Jeremiah questions a commonly accepted idea that the wicked should suffer and the righteous should prosper. He counteracts these beliefs by saying that the wicked, by appearing to be faithful, had actually prospered in his own time. God tells the people through Jeremiah that the people should prepare for a more difficult future.

☐ Questions

- Can you name "evil" people who have prospered? Do you know good people who have suffered? What does Jeremiah have to say about this?
- How does competition help prepare a person for the future?

☐ Activities

Personal Story

Before the group arrives, tape several pieces of newsprint to the wall. Print different kinds of professions or careers as headings with space below for participants to write. For example: athlete, musician, artist, mechanic, craftsperson, writer, poet, teacher, business person, and politician. Ask a volunteer to read the Personal Story.

As a group, think of one or more persons for each category who they think has been successful. The person need not be famous. Talk about the qualities that helped the people in the lists achieve success.

- Are some attributes applicable just in certain professions and careers?
- Which qualities apply to most of the people? Why?

Ask individuals to share a pastime or hobby they are involved with, such as playing a musical instrument, being a part of a sports team, or involvement in a drama or debate club at school. Talk about their experiences.

- Why did you decide to take up this activity?
- Where do you look for inspiration?
- What do you hope to achieve?

Ask participants to think about their activities or academic pursuits. Set a reasonable goal to reach in the next month and in the next six months. Pray that God helps you in meeting your goals.

Great Expectations

Ask the group, if they feel comfortable doing so, to identify goals in their lives.

- Who do they want to be in the future?
- What kind of career do they envision?
- What skills do they need to achieve their goals?
- What role does competition play in reaching these goals?

Give participants writing paper and envelopes. Write a letter to yourself about your dreams for the future. Seal the letters and on the envelope write your name and an address that will be current when you graduate from high school. On the back of the envelope, write the year of your graduation. Identify someone in the group or the adult mentor who will take responsibility for sending the letters. Gather the letters in a basket or sack and place them at the front of the room or the center of the group. Ask each person to contribute one sentence to a group prayer about preparing for the future.

Memories

Take a trip down memory lane by revisiting your past. With the help of your parents or others in your family, look through your old papers and drawings from elementary school. Find samples of your best work. Compare the pictures, poems, old math papers, and reports with samples of work you are now doing. What has changed? How have you changed? Bring your early samples to share with the group if you feel comfortable doing so.

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2 Winning the Prize

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.

I Corinthians 9:24-27

Commentary: Paul wrote the people in Corinth because disagreements and divisions were causing struggles for power and authority in the community. Paul uses himself as an example of someone who exercises self-discipline and who restricts the use of power for the greater good of the community. Using the metaphor of an athlete, Paul compares the self-discipline of a runner to being a Christian. Just as runners must submit to strict training, so should Christians. The freedom gained through belief in Christ should not be confused with a life of ease. Christ calls his followers to lives of self-control and purpose.

☐ Questions

- Why did Paul pick an athlete for a comparison to Christians?
- Based on your own athletic involvement or that of your friends, do you think Paul chose a good metaphor?
- Is it easier to prepare for a sports event or an academic challenge than to be a good Christian?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 5.

- The artist has depicted four possible areas of competition. Which one is most competitive for you? Why?
- Is competition in these areas good or bad? Explain.
- How can you use competition to improve?

☐ Activities

Studying Scripture

Reread the scripture passage. Paul often used metaphors—a figure of speech in which a term is applied to something in order to suggest a resemblance—in his writing. He used the metaphor of a runner several times in his letters. Read aloud other times he talked about runners or running: *Galatians 5:7*, *Galatians 2:2*, *Philippians 2:16*, *II Timothy 4:6-8*, and *Hebrews 12:1-2.* Discuss the metaphor of the runner.

- If you had been writing these letters, what kind of a metaphor would you use?
- Would you have chosen another sport or something academic or artistic?
- How would your metaphor make more sense?

Rewrite the scripture passage using a new metaphor that you have chosen. Take the new passage home and reread it several times in the next week. Think about ways you can apply the self-discipline in your metaphor to your spiritual life.

Spiritual Training

Ask participants to list their favorite athletes, artists, musicians, and writers.

- What qualities do you admire in that person?
- In what area do you excel?
- What goals have you set for yourself in that area?
- Are any of these goals similar to the qualities of those you admire that you listed earlier?

Talk about your enthusiasm for serving God. On a chalkboard or newsprint, draw a line with ten evenly spaced marks. On one end draw a potato and label it “couch potato.” On the other, draw a medal and label it “Olympic gold.” Ask each person to mentally mark his or her enthusiasm for God on the line. Then ask participants to think about where they would like to be.

- Are you more likely to maintain a training schedule for physical fitness or spiritual fitness?
- What spiritual discipline would move you closer to the prize?
- How can we help each other in our spiritual training?

List ways that the group can move closer to the medal individually and together, such as Bible study, finding time each day to pray, or helping someone in need. In pairs or groups of three, make a commitment to each other to do at least one thing in the next week to “reach the prize.”

Field Trip

Visit a gym or go to the track at a high school. As a group, work out for thirty minutes or an hour—running, aerobics, calisthenics, weight lifting, or a combination of several activities. Afterward, talk about how you feel both physically and mentally. Does the scripture passage take on new meaning?

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3 Competition for Right

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.

II Timothy 2:1-7

Commentary: In *II Timothy*, a veteran missionary writes to Timothy, a younger, less-experienced associate. The writer uses three illustrations of a soldier, athlete, and farmer to encourage the young man to hold nothing back in his work. First he is told to be like a soldier who focuses on joy to the exclusion of all else. Timothy is then advised to be like an athlete who knows that winning means following the rules or facing disqualification. Finally, the author promises a just reward for the young man like a farmer who receives the first share of the crops for his hard work.

☐ Questions

- Who is the "enlisting officer" in the scripture passage?
- What are some "everyday affairs" that keep you from following Christ?
- What are the rules that a Christian must follow similarly to the athlete?
- What is the "first share of the crops" for a Christian?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What motivated Cheryl?
- Were these negative or positive motivations?
- If she hadn't moved to the front, would the experience have been the same?
- Have you ever competed for something? What happened?

☐ Activities

The Rules of the Game

Bring in a variety of board games or several decks of cards. If the group is small, use games with fewer players; if it is large, use games that four or more can play. Invite participants to select a game to play.

Everyone should begin playing at about the same time. In five or ten minutes, stop the game. Each person should lay down his or her cards, set down the dice, or put down anything else. Stand up and either switch places with the other person, or move around the table clockwise to the next position. Begin playing again from the new vantage point. The person who was winning may now be losing. Another alternative is to have people actually switch games, but don't allow them to find out who was winning or losing. After several switches—about a half hour—stop the games. Talk about the experience.

- What does it feel like to be winning or losing?
- How did it feel to walk away from a game you were winning?
- What is the purpose of competition?
- Can you enjoy playing a game if you lose? How?

Find out if you can sponsor a game night as part of another activity for the church. Use the games that were gathered for this exercise and ask others to bring their favorites. Don't tell anyone about switching places! After you play for about forty-five minutes, read the scripture from *II Timothy*.

What If God Gave Out Awards?

Make an award for each person in the group. Either buy small plastic toys or create a special certificate for each person on the computer. The award should recognize things that they do well. For example, someone may be a good dancer or musician. The awards could also be related to jobs or roles they perform in the group. Someone might make the group laugh a lot, while another always brings your favorite chips. Another might always be early to help set up.

Hint: Talk to your adult mentor for more ideas.

When the group arrives, ask them to help decorate for an awards celebration. Bring in streamers, balloons, posters, and markers. Ask a volunteer to be the master of ceremonies. If possible, let this person know ahead of time to give him or her time to make special preparations. Read out the category, and give the emcee a sealed envelope with the name of the person who is to receive the award. The winner should come to the front to receive the prize. Awards can be announced for those who are not present and given at a later date.

When all the awards have been distributed, read together Proper 26 (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 235).

- How do we get God's heavenly promises?
- What is another word for gift?

Going by the Rules

Volunteer to work with younger children in some kind of sports activity. An important part of sports is learning to play by the rules.

Contact a community sports association and find out if the group could help out at a tournament or teaching clinic. Or, sign up as assistant coaches. Or, volunteer to be time keepers at a swim meet or cross country meet. Or, find out if your community hosts a Special Olympics. Explore ways the group could help the competitors prepare for the events or serve as "huggers" to greet the athletes as they complete their events. After the event, talk about the experience.

- Was it hard to help the children learn the rules?
- Did they have more fun if they followed the rules?
- Was Paul right when he said, ". . . no one is crowned without competing according to the rules"?

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SUCCESS & FAILURE

When The Going Gets Tough

Objective
Youth will be able to list ways God can help them deal with successes and failures in their lives.

Personal Story
Bethany loves musical theater. She collects the CDs of all her favorite shows—*Camelot*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Brigadoon*, *Carousel*. When she is home alone she blasts them on the CD player and acts out whole scenes, singing at the top of her lungs. At the university near where she lives, the drama department puts on at least three shows a year and several in the summer. Bethany goes to almost every performance, savoring each moment.

Every spring, her high school produces a musical. In the ninth grade, she loved being in the chorus. In the tenth grade, she was in the chorus again, but had a solo. Being a part of the chorus was fun, but she hoped for something more this year. When the drama teacher announced that they would be doing *Camelot*, Bethany rejoiced. She already knew every song by heart and could be the best Guinevere—the female lead—ever.

Bethany's best friend Mindy also loves the theater and also planned to audition for a part. Mindy couldn't read music and didn't know the show. Bethany agreed to teach her the songs and practice for the audition with her. They had a wonderful time working together. After several sessions together, Mindy had her song down cold. Bethany, however, was confident that the role was hers—it had to be hers.

On the day of the audition, Bethany tried to calm Mindy's nerves. They warmed up together and gave each other back rubs. Mindy came out of the audition shaking like a leaf; she was sure she had messed up. Bethany patted her on the back and assured her that it would be all right. Then it was Bethany's turn.

The audition went great. Bethany put everything she had into it. The director smiled the whole time and asked Bethany to sing three songs. Bethany was sure she had the lead.

The next day, Bethany ran to school. She knew the list would be up in the drama room. The list was on the door, and a crowd of students was clustered around it, craning to see who would be the stars this year. Mindy was surrounded by people who were congratulating her. Bethany wondered which role Mindy got, but decided to check for herself.

She couldn't believe her eyes. Next to the part of Guinevere was Mindy's name, not hers. In smaller letters underneath, she was listed as Mindy's understudy. The room began to spin. Bethany felt huge sobs build in her chest. Then she saw Mindy looking at her full of concern. Everything in her wanted to run, but she knew everyone was looking at her.

Somehow she pulled herself together, walked over to Mindy, and gave her a huge hug. She even heard herself saying how excited she was. Inside she was crumbling, but outside she was smiling. She barely made it through that day. When she finally got back home, she cried bitterly, laying on her bed for hours. She didn't think she could face school again.

SESSION 8

Scripture
I Kings 19:1-9a
Luke 12:22-31
Romans 8:31-39

Skill Focus
Choices
Forgiveness

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Prayer
O God, the author of peace and lover of concord, to know you is eternal life and to serve you is perfect freedom: Defend us, your humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in your defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*
A Collect for Peace
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 99

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

1 Running from Problems

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beersheba which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

I Kings 19:1-9a

Commentary: In this passage, Queen Jezebel has just learned that Elijah has killed the prophets of Baal. She furiously proclaims that he will meet the same fate at her hands. Elijah escapes, seeking refuge in the desert where he succumbs to self-pity. Despite his best effort, Jezebel and Ahab remain in power. Elijah would rather die than live with this failure. God does not turn away from the tired and broken prophet, instead offering him the strength and sustenance for a journey to safety and a closer relationship with God.

☐ Questions

- Have you ever felt as discouraged as Elijah? What did you do?
- How did God respond to Elijah? How does God respond to you?

☐ Activities

Role Plays

Ask a volunteer to tell the story of Elijah and Jezebel that precedes the scripture passage, beginning at *I Kings 17:1*. Talk about the story and how God demonstrates his power through the word and actions of the prophets.

Divide into small groups to act out one or more of the following situations:

1. A couple breaks up after going together for six months. She goes to her best friend and says she is thinking about killing herself.
2. You see your friend pick up a CD and walk out without paying for it. What do you do?
3. Your parents are away for the weekend. Three friends arrive with two six packs of beer and a movie. Do you invite them in?

After each group has presented a role play, discuss the situations.

- What else could the characters have done?
- Have you had a similar experience? What happened?
- Is there only one way to deal with these situations?
- Do you ever run from problems?

End the session by saying the prayer at the beginning of this session. Ask participants to pray silently or aloud for difficult situations they are facing.

Personal Story

Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did Bethany handle her feelings of disappointment?
- Have you had a similar experience? What did you do?
- What should Bethany do about the musical? Should she drop out? Would that solve anything?
- How could Bethany's friend help her get through this?
- How can she prepare herself to face everyone the next day?

Ask the group to think about their response to disappointment and problems.

- Where is a safe place to run when you are having a serious problem?
- Who can you turn to for help?
- What kind of help does God offer us?

Ask participants to write down a difficult situation they or one of their friends are facing. Put the cards in a sack. Draw one out at a time and read the situation to the group. Talk about different ways the situation could be approached. After all the cards have been read, seal them in the sack. Pray individually or as a group for the problems the cards represent.

Outside Help

Contact agencies that deal with suicide prevention, hotlines, or eating disorders. Ask for copies of their literature and information for each person in the group. Arrange for someone from the agency to talk to the group about the problem the agency is involved with and the kinds of services they provide. Find out how participants can find help for themselves or their friends facing these problems.

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2 Finding Peace

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus] said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Luke 12:22-31

Commentary: In this passage, Jesus is speaking words of encouragement to his disciples and the surrounding crowd. He warns against the destructive exercise of worry, and tells them to free themselves from their preoccupation with material things. Worry, says Jesus, comes from a lack of trust in God's loving care. Instead of wasting time being anxious about possessions, Jesus calls his followers to seek the kingdom of God. If that can be done, all other needs will be met.

☐ Questions

- Jesus uses birds and lilies as metaphors in this passage. What would you choose to make the same points?
- What do you worry about?
- Is worrying ever productive?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How could this passage comfort Bethany?
- How can Bethany let go of her disappointment?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 6.

- While it's easy to talk about not worrying about your life, it's hard not to worry. The artist has drawn signs to symbolize the obstacles that can make life tough. Do you relate to any of the signs? How?
- Have you ever felt you were on a dead-end road?

☐ Activities

Prayer of St. Francis

Read "A Prayer attributed to St. Francis" (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 833). On a piece of newsprint, list every image from the prayer. Pass out sections of the Sunday paper and assign groups or individuals to find examples in the paper of images in the prayer. Talk about the stories or photographs the group finds.

- Were some images easier to find than others? Why?
- Which were the most difficult to find? Were you unable to find examples of some of the images?
- How could you turn around a problem in your life by the way you approach it?

Create a bulletin-board display featuring the prayer and the clippings from the paper. Use it as a focus of a worship service for the group. Decide what to include in the service. For example, the scripture passage could be *Luke 12:22-31*, and the prayer could be "A Collect for Peace" (BCP, p. 99). You could sing the round "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 711) or "Standin' in the Need of Prayer" (*Lift Every Voice and Sing III*, 177).

Let Your Cares Float Away

Give participants a few minutes to remember what they were worried about last week—an exam, asking someone for a date, or confronting a friend who is ignoring them. Those who are comfortable doing so can share their worries with the group.

- Did the worry resolve itself? How?
- How much time and energy did you spend worrying about the situation? Did the worry prompt you to action?

Now think about situations and problems you are worried about now.

- Can you predict how the problem will be resolved?
- Is the energy you are spending on worry helpful?
- Does worrying keep you from doing something to solve the problem?

If possible, go outside for the last part of the session. Hand everyone a bottle of bubbles and a wand, or make your own bubble solution with dish detergent and make giant wands out of wire for bigger bubbles. Tell the group to imagine that their worries are inside the bubbles. You may want to play Amy Grant's song based on the scripture passage called "Consider the Lilies of the Field."

- What eventually happens to bubbles?
- How is that like most of our worries?
- Are there any worries you could let go of today?

Quiet Day

Plan a quiet day or morning at your church or at a local monastery, convent, or retreat house. Sometimes our lives are so busy and filled with noise, we are unable to face our worries.

Use the scripture passage as the focal point of the day. Read it several times as a group or individually. Ask the group to respect each other's silence by not talking. End the morning with prayer and a simple lunch.

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3 Trusting God

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:31-39

Commentary: In his letter to the Romans, Paul discusses everything from God's saving act in Jesus Christ to the role of the Jewish nation in God's plan. Paul was writing to the first-century Christians who faced enormous difficulties and danger for practicing their faith. In this passage, Paul speaks of the new life made available as a result of Jesus' saving death on the cross: nothing can separate us from the love of God. Christians will face every kind of evil and even death, but nothing can separate them from God.

☐ Questions

- Look again at Paul's list of things that cannot separate us from God. What separates you from God?
- What outside forces keep you from a relationship with God? Does the music you listen to or the shows you watch on television keep you distant from God?
- How can you have a closer relationship with God?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Bethany felt cut off from everyone at the end of the story. Where was God?
- Would this passage help remind you of God's presence when you feel despair?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 6.

- How can God help you maneuver around problems symbolized in the signposts?
- What do you think is at the end of the road?

☐ Activities

Trusting

Reread the scripture passage using the questions to guide a discussion of Paul's words. Ask the group to think about the role of trust in their lives.

- How important is trust in friendship?
- What role does trust play in your relationship with your parents?
- Is there anything or anybody that you trust completely?
- What happens when trust is betrayed?

Play a trust game. Pair off, and take turns being blindfolded while being led around the church or church grounds. Make sure blindfolds are comfortable and effective. Switch places after five or ten minutes. Or, stand in a circle around one member of the group who is wearing a blindfold. Tell the person to fall in any direction, trusting the group to catch him or her.

Hint: If you use the circle game, make sure everyone in the circle is standing close together with arms outstretched and palms up.

Talk about the game and the importance of trust.

Illustrating Trust

Pass out Bibles or prayer books for each person. Assign portions of the *Book of Psalms* in the Bible or The Psalter in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 585-808, to small groups or individuals. Before beginning, ask everyone to turn to *Psalm 44:22* (BCP, p. 647), the verse quote by Paul in *Romans*. Briefly talk about the questions raised in this psalm and how the people trusted God.

Ask the groups or individuals to look for different ways of trusting God in the psalms they were assigned. After about ten minutes, list the findings.

Using the list, the scripture passage, and their own experiences, ask the group to illustrate the word trust on a large piece of butcher paper. Talk about trust as you work.

- Who do you trust? Why?
- What are symbols of trust?
- Do people trust you?

Hang the finished product somewhere in the meeting room or in a hallway of your church. Read aloud one of the psalms that you liked.

Reviving Trust

Talk about people whose trust has been betrayed by society or other people in their lives. For example, women who have suffered spousal abuse, children who have been abused by parents, or families who are homeless.

Find out how churches and community organizations help these people in your area. Identify one organization that the group wants to be involved with.

Young people could also volunteer at a homeless shelter by preparing meals or planning a party for the children. Afterward, decide if the group wants to continue an ongoing relationship with the agency or organization.

Hint: Because of privacy issues, youth may not be able to visit shelters for victims of abuse. However, the group could collect items for the shelters or raise money for a specific need.

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Success & Failure

Testing Our Ideas

Objective
Youth will be able to find ways to deal with success and failure both as individuals and as a group. They will discuss how accomplishments and disappointments can enrich and change their lives.

Personal Story

There were two minutes left in the final game of the regular season, and our minds were already set on the following week when we would play in the state field hockey tournament. I was so excited because we were the first field hockey team from our high school to make it to the tournament in ten years.

All of a sudden I was hit by the stick of an opposing player, and my left hand throbbed with pain. I played the remainder of the game, but when it was over, I sat down and cried. I knew something was seriously wrong with my hand.

I went immediately to the hospital emergency room to have the hand x-rayed. The doctor told me my hand was broken. Then I asked the crucial question, "Does this mean I can't play anymore?" The doctor replied, "Not in this season. Sorry."

My heart was broken. I loved playing field hockey. Since I was the captain, I felt that I was letting my team down. This was one of the saddest days in my life. I felt like so much had been taken away in a just a short period of time.

Before we knew it, the time for the tournament arrived and we were on our way. When the game began, I was devastated not to be a part of my team. The game went on, and I cheered with every ounce of my heart and voice. The game ended in a quadruple overtime, which meant that the winner would be decided in a shoot out.

I could feel the tension in every part of my body. The fans fell silent, and everyone focused on the goal. My eyes filled with tears; I had never been so nervous.

After three rounds of shots, a player from the opposing team popped the puck in for a goal. We had lost the game. I sat there and cried. My dad came over and just hugged me. He told me that I had done all that I could, and that without my encouragement from the sidelines, the team wouldn't have made it this far.

I knew he was right, but I still felt defeated. Not being able to play in the last high school game was devastating. It took more strength to stand and watch than to play.

Real strength and endurance is to keep on going no matter what is in your way. Even though I couldn't be on the field playing, I knew that I was still the leader of the team. Even in defeat, I found a success.

SESSION 9

Scripture
Joshua 1:5-9
Galatians 6:4

Skill Focus
Responsibility
Fairness

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Prayer
O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Quiet Confidence
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

A. No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:5-9

B. My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.

Galatians 6:4

Connect with the Personal Story

Read the Personal Story from the previous page. Identify a time in your life when you faced a tremendous success or a disappointing failure. Write your own story. Share the stories with the group if participants feel comfortable doing so.

☐ Questions

- God promises Joshua that God will be with him where he goes. Do you feel God's presence when you face failure? Do you think about God in the midst of success?
- The author of the Personal Story had to change her definition of being part of the team. Have you ever turned a failure into a success?
- Which brings more satisfaction—an individual accomplishment or being a part of a team?

RESPONDING ACTIVITIES

The group can test some of the things they have learned about success and failure in the individual and group responses described below. Activities to help participants get involved in the community and church from Sessions 2 through 8 are summarized in the chart at the end of this session. Use these ideas or develop your own.

☐ Individually

Individually or as a group, discuss ways an individual can deal with success and failure in his or her life. List your ideas on a piece of newsprint and encourage participants to select one thing to do. Possible responses are listed below.

- Make a list of the ten things in your life that cause you the most stress, such as tests, dating, or arguments. Make your own "stressometer" (see Session 6) to hang in your room or locker to monitor your own stress level.
- If the group did the activity involving a brick in Session 6, take the brick home as a reminder that God can make our burdens lighter.
- Pick out your favorite scripture passage from this unit. Copy it onto a piece of posterboard and decorate it. Put it somewhere you can read it every day.

☐ Group

Discuss ways the group can respond to ideas from its study of Success and Failure. List your ideas on a piece of newsprint or on a chalkboard. Choose at least one for the group to do. Possible responses are:

- Life is full of both successes and failures. Using a Chutes and Ladders game board and rules, play the game adding the following rules: When players land on a ladder, they describe a success in their lives or their friends' lives; when landing on a chute, they describe failures. If players have trouble thinking of specific experiences, suggest they think about successes or failures they have had in school, church, home, sports, or extracurricular activities. Have they ever missed a bus or lost a game? Did they forget to do something important a parent or friend asked them to do? Afterward, talk about the game. Do you have any control over success or failure? Do some things happen by chance like tossing dice? Where does God fit into these experiences? How does God help us with success and failure?

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- Look back at the unit of study and talk about the successes and failures of the activities and presentations. What worked? What didn't work? Why?
- Write new definitions for success and failure. Compare these definitions with the ones you came up with in Sessions 2 and 3.
- Identify one success the group experienced over this course of study. How can you build on it? Name a failure the group experienced. List ways you can avoid it in the future.
- Find a place in the meeting space for participants to write down prayer requests so the group can hold each other in prayer during difficult times. Explore ways the group can continue to share each other's individual successes.

☐ Celebrate!

Celebrate the completion of the unit on Success and Failure with a specific activity. Ask the group to think of an appropriate response or use one of the following options.

Art

- Make a bulletin-board display that highlights things the group learned while studying Success and Failure. It could include photographs of the group, scripture passages, or quotes from famous people about success and failure. You could also display papers and drawings from your childhood along with more recent work (see Session 7).

Liturgy

- Expand the liturgy designed for Theme 2 in Session 6 that used bricks as a symbol of the burdens into a youth service. Find a way youth can carry the bricks around to get the sense of bearing a burden.
- Ask group members who play musical instruments to bring them to accompany the group in singing songs sung during the course of study. End by reading together the Prayer of St. Francis (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 833).

Community

- Invite a group of children from the church school to blow bubbles outside with you (see Session 8).
- Identify the scripture passages from the unit of study the group liked the best. Type the words onto an index card and photocopy enough to pass out before a worship service.

Fun

- Identify one or more people in the group who has recently experienced a specific success. Celebrate by taking them out for pizza and a movie, or make a cake to celebrate the successes of the entire group. Successes can include making a better grade on an exam than you had anticipated, getting a driver's license, bettering a time in an individual sport, learning a difficult music piece, or getting a part in a play.
- Go on an Outward Bound weekend or climb a local mountain. Celebrate the experience when you return with a picnic or dinner. Give out achievement awards for the best athlete, the most courageous, most improved, most helpful, or most humorous.

FOLLOW THROUGH

Individual Response: Provide appropriate materials for each person who wants to make a "stressometer" or illustrate a scripture passage. Make a covenant within the group and between individuals to check each other's stress levels. Remind each other about activities identified as stressful and ways to reduce stress.

- Do you need help in dealing with success and failure in your life?
- Can you identify someone in this group, the church, or community who can help you?

Group Response: Look at the list participants made of possible group responses to your study of Success and Failure. Decide which of the ideas has the most appeal to the group. You may only have time for one of the responses. Write the activity at the top of a piece of paper. Write down everything that must be done to complete the activity and whether a discussion leader is needed. Estimate how much time the activity will take and designate someone to be responsible for getting it done.

- What kind of activity did the group select?
- Can everyone participate?
- Can you identify people in the church or community who would be helpful?

Celebrate: Ask for volunteers to help plan an appropriate liturgical response for the group's study of Success and Failure. Musicians may need advance notice to practice their parts, and you may need to coordinate with others for worship space. If the group plans an activity away from the church, you will need to arrange for transportation. Identify people in the church to include in an activity who could also provide transportation. If you have a success party, discuss the logistics of when, where, and how. Find someone who is willing to identify successes that can be celebrated for each person (see Session 7).

- Is everyone involved in the celebration in some way?
- Do you want to invite others from the church or community to join your celebration?

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TESTING OUR IDEAS

Success & Failure

Outreach Activities for Sessions 2-8

SESSION	THEME	SUGGESTED OUTREACH ACTIVITY
Defining Success	1 2 3	• Involve successful people in a panel discussion. • Present a drama of a scripture passage to another group in the church. • Write a thank-you letter to someone who has had a positive influence in your life.
Defining Failure	2 3	• Find a way to serve others at your church or in the community. • Share a pineapple upside-down cake with another group in the church.
Living Up to Expectations	1	• Make posters of a symbol to remind others of God's expectations and hang it in the church. • Make buttons of the symbol to pass out to the congregation on a special Sunday. • Design a set of rules to make your community or school a better place.
Who Do I Want to Be?	1 2 3	• Participate in a Sunday worship service. • Volunteer to help with an ongoing outreach project at your church. • Turn the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector into a play the group produces for adults, younger teens, or children. • Hang a poster about guarding the heart somewhere in the church.
Dealing With Stress	2	• Be a stress reducer for others by providing child care, caring for children during worship services, or helping an older person who has been sick.
Competition	2 3	• Make a commitment to do at least one thing to reach the prize of serving God. • Sponsor a game night at your church with you in control of the rules. • Volunteer to work with younger children in a sports activity or serve as huggers at a Special Olympics.
When the Going Gets Tough	1 2 3	• Contact agencies that deal with teen problems to learn more about the services they provide. • Create a bulletin board display based on "A Prayer attributed to St. Francis" (BCP, p 833). • Hang in a hallway the mural about trust the group created. • Identify an organization that helps people whose trust has been betrayed and find a way to help by collecting items, raising money, preparing meals, or planning a party.

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