Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

What Is Evil?

A Guide for Leadership Teams

Episcopal Curriculum for Youth—What Is Evil?
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Note: This module is designed for groups that are already established. It is not recommended as an introductory unit for a newly formed group.

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What Is Evil?

The presence of evil in the world is explored through issues raised in the questions asked in the service of Holy Baptism in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 302-303. The first question that calls for the renunciation of Satan and the spiritual forces of wickedness refers to cosmic evil that occurs throughout the universe. The second question deals with the evil powers of the world that corrupt and destroy God's creation, such as war, natural disasters, disease, crime, and violence. Question three looks at sin and temptation that come from within and that drive people from the love of God. The final three questions call people to turn to Jesus, to trust in his grace and love, and to follow and obey him as Lord.

This module does not provide any easy answers or glib responses to the evil that exists within and without. However, within each session, God's loving presence with all people is emphasized. Even though we cannot erase evil from our lives, we can always depend on the presence of a loving God.

The module is not recommended for groups that have not worked together before. Some of the topics may be painful for some participants. In addition, the discussion of sin and evil calls for a certain amount of trust within the group. Finally, whenever we deal with Satan and the forces of evil, it is important to immerse ourselves in prayer. Encourage the group to not only begin and end each session in prayer, but also to pray for each other often during the study.

Introduction

What Is Evil? 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 Our Study," is designed to prepare for work with the remaining sessions. It begins with a "Point of Contact"—a list of questions asked during the service of Holy

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Baptism from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 302-303. The planning session begins, as do all other sessions, with prayer and the scripture study to focus the experience on the presence of God in our hearts and God's will for our lives.

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

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

Sessions 2 - 8 examine the issues of *What Is Evil?* through these individual topics:

Defining Evil
Satanism and the Occult
Evil Powers
Temptation
Sin
Alternative Spirituality
Goodness in the Face of Evil
Turning Away From Evil

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

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

Other Modules in the Episcopal Curriculum for Older Youth

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

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How to Use These Materials

1. DECISIONS ARE MADE BY LEADERSHIP TEAM

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

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

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

2. BUILDING A YOUTH-LED TEAM

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

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

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3. CORE COMPONENTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. SAMPLE SESSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. SOME GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

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

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

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

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

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to take place.

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

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

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

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

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

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

3. Be real—be honest.

4. Send "I" messages—share feelings.

5. Talk about your own experiences.

6. Listen with great respect.

7. Listen, understand, but do not fix.

8. Be specific.

9. Respect confidentiality.

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

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6. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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

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

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

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

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For Members of the Leadership Team

A General Philosophy of a Teaching Ministry

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

Who are Older Youth?

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

Characteristics of Older Youth:

- **THEY LIKE TO HAVE FUN**

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

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

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

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- **THEY ARE PEOPLE IN TRANSITION**

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

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

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

- **THEY LIKE MAKING CHOICES**

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

• **THEY NEED TO BE HEARD**

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **RELATIONAL MINISTRY**

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

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

- **OWNERSHIP**

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

Who Are The Adults?

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

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

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Characteristics of Effective Adult Leaders:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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A Final Word

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

For More Ideas

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What Is Evil?

Planning Our Study

Objective
Youth will be able to plan a course of study to investigate the power of evil, the effect of evil in people's lives, and the importance of God's presence in their lives.

From Holy Baptism

Question Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?

Answer I renounce them.

Question Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?

Answer I renounce them.

Question Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?

Answer I renounce them.

Question Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?

Answer I do.

Question Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?

Answer I do.

Question Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?

Answer I do.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 302-303

SESSION 1

Scripture
Psalm 23

Skill Focus
Communication
Respect

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Prayer
Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Third Sunday in Lent
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 218

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

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

Psalm 23

Commentary: One of the most well known psalms, *Psalm 23*, claims God as protector and defender. The psalm moves from the vulnerability of the outside world to the security of home. Along with this shift from external to internal, the psalmist moves from talking about God in the third person to directly addressing God, revealing a confident intimacy in the writer's relationship with God. In the early church this psalm was sung as a newly baptized person emerged from the water. Today it is frequently used in funerals as a testimony to the never failing love of God, even in the face of death.

☐ Questions

- What does the darkest valley mean to you?
- What are some of the dangers in that valley?
- The psalm contains a number of images of God. Which one is most appealing to you?
- Where is your cup overflowing?

POINT OF CONTACT

Holy Baptism

Look over the excerpt from the service of Holy Baptism from the previous page or on p. 302 in *The Book of Common Prayer*. These six questions are asked near the beginning of the service. The candidates, or those speaking on behalf of infants or younger children, decisively renounce evil and sin and embrace a new life in Christ. The first three questions deal with the renunciation of evil, first in its cosmic form throughout the universe, next as it appears in the world, and finally as it exists within each person. The final three questions describe a person's relationship with Christ. In the early Church, the candidate would answer the first three questions facing west, and then physically turn to the east as a sign of repentance and turning toward God.

- What does it mean to turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?
- Which part of the baptismal questions seems most difficult? What, if anything, seems easy? Why?
- What things in your life draw you from the love of God?
- Do you trust Jesus Christ with your life? What does that mean to you?
- How have you experienced grace and love? Who has shown you grace and love? Describe the experience.

Look at Resource Poster No. 1 and read over the Baptismal Covenant on p. 304-305 of the prayer book. How does the artist depict both the questions and the covenant in this poster?

☐ Activities

Evil/Live

On one piece of newsprint write the word "Evil" vertically down the side and on another write the world "Live." On the paper with the word "Evil," include the first three questions from the baptismal service on the previous page. Add the last three questions on the paper with the word "Live." Invite each group member to list particular actions, places, or things that fit for each sheet. For example, on the first paper, they might write pollution or war. On the second, they might write "comfort" or "being a part of a community of faith." Afterward, talk about the comments on the papers.

- What do you notice?
- Are there any surprises?

Write a prayer to be used by the group for the remainder of the sessions. Close with a time of silence to ask God for the strength to turn from evil and live.

A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

Bring in newspapers, magazines, scissors, glue, and posterboard. Ask the group to make a collage that illustrates the first two questions in the baptismal service from the previous page. When that is completed, ask each person to make a collage or write a statement that personally answers the third question. Challenge each person to focus on the things that draw him or her from the love of God. Close with a prayer in which participants present their personal collages and ask for strength to turn away from evil and toward God.

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Movies
As a group, watch *Schindler's List* or *Life Is Beautiful*. (**Hint:** *Schindler's List* is a profoundly disturbing movie—allow adequate time for processing this movie together. If your time is limited, consider watching only portions of the movie.)
Give each person a paper to list events or circumstances that reflect cosmic evil and the "spiritual forces of wickedness," collective evil from the evil powers of this world, and personal evil. On another sheet list the times when people turned away from evil, even at a cost to themselves. The movie shows that one person can make a profound difference not only in the moment, but also for the future. Close with prayer. Give each person a lighted candle as a symbol of hope and as a commitment to be a light in the darkness.

STEPS FOR PLANNING

Compare *Psalm 23* with the questions from the baptismal service (p. 302-303).

- What similarities can you find in the way the questions and the psalm are structured?

As a group, look at different translations of *Psalm 23*. In addition to the one in this session, read three other versions that appear on p. 476-477 and 612-613 in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Ask each person to select the one he or she likes best and make a copy to keep.
The topic of this module may be disturbing to some of the participants. Be prepared to seek outside help if there are questions or problems the group is struggling with. The use of prayer at both the beginning and closing of each session is especially important as you look at the topic of evil. Suggested steps for planning are outlined below.

1. Save enough time after your initial discussion of evil in this session to select the themes and scriptures you want to study. Make copies of the Planning Reference Guide on the next page, which lists themes and scriptures for Sessions 2 through 8, and distribute them to participants. Depending on the size of the group, divide the sessions among individuals or small groups. Tear out sessions from a second copy of the guide to give to the appropriate people or groups. An activity may stimulate interest as much as a scripture or theme. Give the participants time to review the sessions and answer the questions on the reference guide.

2. The purpose of the planning session is to give the group freedom to decide how they want to approach the topic. The group may decide to spend three weeks on one session and skip another entirely. Find topics that are relevant to your life. After a brief discussion, ask a volunteer to write down the sessions and themes the group has selected to study. Next to each entry, write the name of participants who agree to be leaders or coordinator. This person will select activities and gather necessary materials. Coordinators may not actually lead the session, but they are responsible for finding a leader and making all the preparations.

3. Look at the resource posters and decide how each will be used.
   Poster 1: Baptismal Promise
   Poster 2: Defining Evil
   Poster 3: The Roaring Lion
   Poster 4: Symbols of the Occult and Christianity
   Poster 5: Natural Disasters
   Poster 6: Map of the World

4. Distribute copies of the sessions to those who have agreed to be coordinators. Stop the process long enough 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 disagreements, can we find a way to come to an agreement?

5. On a piece of newsprint, make a calendar of the sessions and themes the group will study. Include items from your church calendar that may affect scheduling. Make sure every coordinator has a copy of the calendar and post it in a central location.

6. Discuss responsibilities and ground rules for the group.
   - What are our expectations for attendance?
   - If coordinators get sick or have a conflict, who can they call?
   - Who can make changes in the schedule if necessary?
   - Should someone call coordinators to remind them about upcoming responsibilities?

8. If the group wants to have snacks, decide who will be responsible for assigning people to bring in food. Make provisions for cleanup at the same time.

9. Measure how well the planning session went by asking the following questions:
   - Did everyone participate?
   - Did the group listen to each person?
   - Is everyone comfortable with the study plan?
   - Does everyone have a role for this unit of study?

10. Save time at the end of your study of *What Is Evil?* to reflect on what you have learned and how you can process that knowledge. Session 9 will help you do this with individual and group activities. Keep in mind the importance of prayer during this study of forces that can lead you away from the love of God.

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PLANNING REFERENCE GUIDE

What Is Evil?

Questions

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

Topic	Scripture	Theme	Notes
Defining Evil	*Colossians 1:11-14* *Exodus 32:7-10* *Proverbs 6:16-19*	Evil in the Universe Turning Away From God Evil Within	
Satanism and the Occult	*I Peter 5:6-11* *II Kings 17:9-13* *Ephesians 6:10-17*	Resisting Satan In Secrecy Armor of God	
Evil Powers	*Psalm 120:6-7* *Ecclesiastes 9:11-12* *Psalm 64*	People Against People Natural Disasters Crime and Violence	
Temptation	*Genesis 11:1-9* *Luke 4:1-13* *Hebrews 2:14-18*	Defying God Temptations of Christ Suffering With Others	
Sin	*Romans 7:14-25* *John 8:1-11* *Psalm 119:9-16*	The Inner Conflict Casting Stones Victory Over Sin	
Alternative Spirituality	*Galatians 1:6-9* *Isaiah 44:9a, 14-17* *I John 4:1-6*	Confusing the Truth False Gods Spirit of Truth	
Goodness in the Face of Evil	*Psalm 30:11-12* *John 9:1-5* *Romans 8:38-39*	Mourning Into Dancing Revealing God's Works Nothing Separates People from God	

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What Is Evil?

Defining Evil

Objective

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

Personal Story

Last summer I was a counselor at junior high camp. We had a pretty good session until two nights before camp was supposed to end. That evening, Ellen, one of the campers, called me to the chapel to talk with another camper named Bryan. Bryan was going through a tough time with his parents, at school, with his friends, everywhere. Ellen and another camper had been talking with Bryan for most of the afternoon, but they hadn't been able to help him very much. Now Bryan refused to leave the chapel, so Ellen went to get me.

Bryan was a loner who didn't talk very much. When I arrived, Bryan was sitting in the middle of the chapel floor and was clearly afraid. I sat down to talk. For the first time, he had plenty to say. As he talked, I tried to help him feel safe. We talked for almost four hours, but I wasn't able to make any headway. Bryan was as frightened as ever, and I decided I was going to have to spend the night there with him. I sent Ellen to tell Father Mike, the camp director, that we were in the chapel, and would probably be there for the night.

Within minutes, the camp director arrived. The first thing he did was to state emphatically that lights out was in ten minutes and everyone was expected to be in their cabins. When he came in, I first thought he didn't really comprehend what was going on. Bryan was really fragile, he couldn't handle being yanked out of the chapel. I was going to explain the situation, but before I could open my mouth, Father Mike laid his hands on Bryan and began to pray. He prayed for God to make Bryan know and feel that God was present with him and protecting him. He prayed for God to send angels to minister to Bryan and bring light into his darkness. He prayed that all of us would feel the light of God's healing presence.

While he was praying, something snapped in me. I couldn't believe that I had felt so desperate just a few minutes before. While I was talking to Bryan, it had seemed really dark and close in the chapel. I realized it was really pretty light—there were lots of bare 100-watt bulbs and they were all on. I also couldn't believe I had thought staying in the chapel all night was a good idea. When Father Mike finished praying, we all got up and headed back to our cabins. Everything seemed normal and Bryan was calm. There was no trace of the emotional roller coaster we had all been on for hours.

I've spent a lot of time thinking about that evening. The other campers and I wanted to help Bryan. We wanted him to know that we would listen to him and be with him when he was hurting. But as the hours spun on, Bryan became more, not less desperate, and so did we. There was evil in that place, which is a strange way to describe a chapel. The evil took our best intentions and twisted them. Instead of helping him, we wound up down in the muck with him, powerless to help either him or ourselves.

The night turned when Father Mike faced evil with prayer. I hope I remember the power of that prayer whenever I encounter the darkness and despair of evil.

SESSION 2

Scripture
Colossians 1:11-14
Exodus 32:7-10
Proverbs 6:16-19

Skill Focus
Conflict
Influences

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Prayer
Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Daily Devotions Collect
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 137

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

1 Evil in the Universe

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from [God's] glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
Colossians 1:11-14

Commentary: This is part of a longer prayer that begins with verse nine. The author prays that the Colossians will know God's will, live as God's people, and be strengthened with God's power to resist the powers and principalities that battle against God. The prayer concludes with a statement of thanksgiving for God's saving actions. God's people have an inheritance with the saints, they have been rescued from the powers of darkness, and they have been granted the forgiveness of their sins.

☐ Questions

- How do you picture the "power of darkness"?
- How can God help you resist these powers?
- Where do you look for light when you are in the presence of evil?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Who rescued Bryan and the other campers from the power of darkness?
- Who can help you deal with the darkness of evil?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 2.

- Which symbols of evil relate to the scripture passage?
- How would you represent evil?

☐ Activities

Evil in Scripture

The Lord's Prayer includes the petition "deliver us from evil." What are we praying to be delivered from? Use concordances to look up references to evil in the Bible. If you have a large group or additional time, also look through *The Book of Common Prayer* for references to evil. Break into groups and assign each group a word describing evil, such as darkness, Satan, or the devil. Ask each group to write down on a piece of newsprint how the word is used or defined. When everyone is finished, compare the lists.

- Are there similarities among the words?
- What is different?
- Were you surprised by any of the passages?

From the discussion, develop a definition of evil. Close the session with prayer thanking God for delivering us from evil through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Warfare in the Universe

Brainstorm words that are synonymous with evil. Look at the list and discuss how the group views evil.

- What kinds of words are on the list?
- Do people personify evil by called it Satan or the devil?
- Do the words describe evil that is around us or the evil within us? Why?

Relate the following scenario or one of your own: A neutron bomb explosion together with biowarfare has killed all the people and animals on earth. Does evil still exist? Divide into two groups to debate the question. One group will take the affirmative answer and the other the negative. Give both groups time to prepare their argument. **Hint:** It is not necessary for people to believe the side they have to defend.

After the presentations, discuss what they have learned and whether their concept of evil has changed. Close with silent prayer, ending with the Lord's Prayer.

Story Time

Bring in several books or videos of fairy tales.

- What makes a story a fairy tale?
- How do fairy tales usually portray evil?
- How is evil overcome?
- Do the stories cover all the aspects of evil? Explain.

Select a fairy tale to dramatize and ask for volunteers to portray the characters in the story. Afterward, talk about the experience from the perspective of each character.

- How did it feel to be the hero?
- Was it easy to portray an evil character? Explain.
- Why is it sometimes more fun to be the bad guy instead of the hero?

Rewrite the story as a modern fairy tale. What is gained or lost in the retelling? Close the session with a prayer for strength to stand fast in the face of the evil encountered in life.

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2 Turning Away From God

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation."
Exodus 32:7-10

Commentary: People often attempt to provide what God alone can offer or do the things that God has already done for them. In the passage, the people of Israel wanted tangible assurance of God's presence. Moses was on the mountain receiving instruction about the Tabernacle that would serve as an assurance of God's presence. The people, impatient with the delay, began creating their own image of God. The golden calf was not a rejection of the Lord, but an attempt to create God in the image they thought God should have. The golden calf broke the new commandment that "you shall not make for yourself an idol." From that time, any representation of God was forbidden for the Israelites.

☐ Questions

- Though some Christians avoid image making, others use images or icons as a fundamental part of worship. Many churches are adorned with stained glass, sculpture, or other art. Why would Christianity allow images?
- What is the difference between an icon and an idol?
- When does something become an idol?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Did the narrator or the other campers try to provide what only God could offer?
- How did Father Mike bring God into the setting?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 2.

- The Israelites made an idol of a golden calf to worship. What idols do people worship today? Do these idols always look evil?
- What symbols or idols would you include in a poster depicting evil?

ICON

An image, symbol, or picture of Christ or a Christian saint through which a person is drawn to God. The opposite of an icon is an idol—something a person worships.

☐ Activities

Turn Around

Play the mirror game with a partner. Ask each pair to stand facing one another. One person will be the leader, while the other mimics each movement. Give each person a chance to be a leader and a mimic. Then ask both people in each pair to face the same direction with one person in front of the other. The person standing behind is now the leader. As a group, talk about the experience.

- What happened when the follower couldn't see the leader?
- Could you even play the game?
- God never leaves us, but we can turn away from God. What are ways people turn away from God?
- Why does God let us turn away? Is freedom always a good thing? Why?

Give each person some clay to create a sculpture that represents turning away from God. Participants can work individually or as a group. Discuss the work when everyone is finished. Before the final prayer, put all of the clay images back into a single ball. Ask God to be with you when you turn away and to help you to turn back.

Aaron's Choice

Begin the meeting by playing the smile game. Ask everyone to sit in a circle with one person in the center. That person goes around and says to each person, "(name), if you love me you will smile." Without smiling, the person replies, "Honey, I love you, but I just can't smile." If he or she smiles or changes expression in any way, that person joins the one in the center in trying to make others smile.

Look at the *Exodus 32:21-24* which describes Moses and Aaron discussing how the golden calf came to be made. Although Aaron did not suggest making the golden calf, he did not oppose it. Ask participants to think about why they sometimes do things in groups that they wouldn't do alone. Divide into pairs to share stories about times they went along with a group and times when they didn't.

- What made the difference?
- How many people in a group does it take to change the way things are going?
- Where do you get strength to go against the group?

Encourage participants to support each other through prayer.

Idols Everywhere

Look at the Bible story again and the accompanying questions. Make a list of objects or people that have become idols in our society. Break into smaller groups of two or three. Go out into your community and make lists of where there are idols, such as billboards, stores, or on the radio. When the group comes back together, share the findings.

- How are these idols being worshiped?
- What do people hope to receive from them?
- Did anyone find the same things?
- Do you agree with the objects other groups identified as idols? What is the most appealing idol? Why?

At the end of your time together, set out an icon from an art book or other source. Ask the group to silently pray using the icon as a way to reach God.

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3 Evil Within

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

There are six things that the Lord hates,
    seven that are an abomination to him;
haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
    and hands that shed innocent blood,
a heart that devises wicked plans,
    feet that hurry to run to evil,
a lying witness who testifies falsely,
    and one who sows discord in a family.
Proverbs 6:16-19

Commentary: *Proverbs* celebrates the wisdom and actions that support community well-being in ordinary life. This section uses body imagery, moving from the top with the eyes down through the tongue, the hands, the heart, then to the feet to show how the whole body can be involved in negative behavior. Arrogance, lying, victimization, and plotting all interfere with people's ability to live together peaceably. Jesus addressed this same issue in *Matthew 15:10-11, 17-20.* He reminded his followers that evil lies within each person.

☐ Questions

- What would you add to the list in the passage? For example, what would be the seventh thing the Lord most hates?
- Which thing listed do you find most hateful?
- Describe any of the things in the passage that you have done.

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- The campers and counselor were trying to be helpful. Why did they fail?
- Did the evil in that scenario come from within or without?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 2.

- What images would you use to depict the six things that the Lord hates?
- Are any of the images in the poster also in the passage?

☐ Activities

Liar, Liar

Play the card game Go Fish but add a new twist. Tell participants that they can lie and also challenge someone if they think that person is lying. If challenged, the player must be truthful. If the person challenged was lying, the other player gets all of his or her cards. If the person was not lying, he or she gets the challenger's cards. Afterward, talk about the experience.

- How did lying change the game?
- Was it easy to lie?
- Did you know when someone was lying? How?
- What was it like to be accused of lying when you weren't?
- Why do people lie? Are people more likely to lie in a group or one on one?

In small groups or pairs, talk about the pain and alienation participants have experienced from lies. Identify ways that an individual can stop lies by squelching rumors or challenging the truthfulness of a lie. End by praying for God's help in seeing the truth clearly.

Evil Around Us

Write each word or phrase on one side of a piece of newsprint that describes one of the things God hates. Leave space between the phrases for additional information that will be added. Bring in newspapers, scissors, tape and different kinds of magazines. Find stories, pictures, or headlines that illustrate each of the phrases on the newsprint. For example, a picture of a runway model might depict haughty eyes or a story about a court case may illustrate a lying witness. With tape or thumbtacks, put the clippings next to the appropriate phrase.

On another piece of newsprint, write down ideas for the opposite of each phrase. For example, haughty eyes could be changed to compassionate eyes or hands that shed blood might become hands that work with the poor. Find examples of these traits in the papers and magazines and put them next to the appropriate phrase.

Discuss the opposites you have found and how God can help you turn hateful things into goodness. Select one clipping from both categories and pray for the situation or people described.

Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes

Look at the passages from *Proverbs* and *Matthew*. Both use body imagery to talk about some of the ways people participate in evil. Draw a stick figure on a chalkboard or on newsprint. Using chalk or sticky notes, label ways people use their bodies inappropriately. For example, noses might be used to take drugs and mouths might be used to spread gossip.

On a piece of newsprint, draw an outline of a volunteer from the group. Label this figure with all the ways that we can use our bodies for good. For example, arms could hold a baby for a sick mother or legs could run an errand for an older person.

Using the notes on the second figure, brainstorm ways the group could help others. You could volunteer once a month to buy groceries for a shut-in or to watch a group of children during a church function. Identify the support you need to accomplish this goal and people in your church or community who can help.

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What Is Evil?

Satanism and the Occult

Objective

Youth will be able to define Satan and the occult and to describe how these lead people away from God.

Personal Story

Marquesha and I met in youth group. I liked her because she was interesting. She wore the most awesome things and always had lots of really deep things to say. She also said some things that were just off—but they were still funny.

She seemed to speak her mind no matter who was listening. That was so cool. She would speak out in the group; she didn't seem to care what anybody thought. I remember one time when she walked in with her brown hair bleached blonde. It was a mess! Everyone just stared at her.

Marquesha invited me to her house a couple of times, and I learned more about her family. Even though her mother went to church, she was into astrology and Tarot cards and stuff like that. They had some kind of altar in one the rooms downstairs.

Marquesha's room was her private place. She said no one, including her mom, ever went in there without her permission. I thought to myself, that certainly isn't true at my house. Marquesha's room was full of pictures of spirally colors, black cats and moons, and candles. When I asked her about it, she said she was just being creative. It was all just for fun. She said when she felt really lonely or down, she would light her candles and think about one of the pictures that she had on the wall. She said it always made her feel better.

As I spent more time with Marquesha, she started to make up little friendship rituals. Some of them were a little strange. And she always wanted whatever we did or talked about to be a big secret.

Then Marquesha started telling me about some of the little things she did when people made her angry. I thought, this child is really tripping! When I found myself spending a lot of time thinking about her music, pictures, and the rituals, I decided not to spend so much time at her house. Maybe the things she did were all in fun, but after a while they didn't seem that way.

SESSION 3

Scripture

I Peter 5:6-11
II Kings 17:9-13
Ephesians 6:10-17

Skill Focus

Influences
Independence/Individuality

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Prayer
Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*.

First Sunday of Advent
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 211

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

1 Resisting Satan

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.
I Peter 5:6-11

Commentary: The writer of *I Peter* encourages people to open themselves to God and let God share their troubles. Even then, people are to be watchful and ready because the devil is hungry and looks for opportunities to lure them away from God. Knowing this will help them resist the many temptations of life. The writer also says that others face many of the same trials and to be patient and strong. God will help all who turn to God.

☐ Questions

- What does it mean to be humble?
- How do you cast your anxiety on God?
- What are some examples of resisting the devil?
- How does God restore, support, and strengthen us? Give examples from your own experience.
- What is your responsibility to others?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What is the roaring lion in the story?
- Is there something the writer should have said to Marquesha?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 3.

- Have you ever felt like the figure in the poster? What were the circumstances? What did you do?
- The writer of *I Peter* used a roaring lion as an image of Satan. What would you use if you were writing this passage? How would you depict your image in a poster?

☐ Activities

Satan in Art

Collect five to ten pictures of Satan depicted in art, including Resource Poster No. 3. Look in your library for books of classic art and images in cartoons, advertisements, commercials, and TV shows. Discuss and analyze each image and the messages the artists are trying to convey.

- What do the pictures suggest about who Satan is and the nature of his power?
- What do the pictures suggest about Satan's effect on others?
- Have the images of Satan in art changed over time? If so, what does that suggest?

After looking at the art, draw a picture or describe in words your image of Satan. Talk about your characterizations of Satan. Afterward, share your images with the group.

- How do you see Satan?
- What does it say about who he is and the nature of his power?
- What is Satan's effect on others?

Put a waste basket in the center of the room. Ask God to help you fight Satan. As each person says a silent prayer, he or she can throw their image of Satan away.

Satan in Scripture

Brainstorm all the words you have heard used for Satan. Divide the words among small groups or individuals. Look up the words first in a dictionary and then in a Bible concordance. Find and discuss scripture passages that use these words to describe the nature of Satan and Satan's power. Share your findings with the group and discuss.

- Could you find all the words on your list in the Bible?
- What does scripture say about Satan?
- What is the effect of Satan's presence in the world?
- Where does help come from?

The Bible also uses the following phrases to describe Satan: the accuser, the evil one, a murderer from the beginning, the father of lies, the god of this age, and the ancient serpent. Make a list of phrases that best describe Satan's actions in the world today.

Movies

Watch the movie *Bedazzled* or *Oh God, You Devil*. Discuss the image of Satan in these films.

- How is Satan depicted?
- How does the saying "be careful what you ask for" apply?
- Have you ever been surprised when answers to your prayers turned out differently than you expected?

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2 In Secrecy

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

The people of Israel secretly did things that were not right against the Lord their God. They built for themselves high places at all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city; they set up for themselves pillars and sacred poles on every high hill and under every green tree; there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the Lord carried away before them. They did wicked things, provoking the Lord to anger; they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, "You shall not do this." Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law that I commanded your ancestors and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets."

II Kings 17:9-13

Commentary: This passage is part of an explanation for the fall of Israel. The writer places the blame on the sin of the Israelites alone and not on any foreign nation. Israel could have been saved by taking on a proper attitude toward God and setting up internal religious reforms. But the proud people refused to heed the warnings of the prophets. The result of their secrecy and worship of idols was the destruction of Israel.

☐ Questions

- What did the people of Israel do that was not right?
- Why did their behavior provoke the anger of God?
- Does our society have idols on high?
- Are there prophets in your life who warn you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How do you know when it is appropriate to keep a secret?
- What do think about the secrets the narrator of the personal story was asked to keep?
- What was the conflict between Marquesha's church and faith life and her home environment?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 4.

- Do you or your friends display any of the symbols from the occult side of the poster? Have you thought about the meaning of those symbols?
- What is the difference between symbols of Christianity and symbols of the occult?

☐ Activities

Personal Story

Bring in library books and articles from the Internet about the occult. Occult is defined in the dictionary as beyond the bounds of ordinary knowledge, mysterious, secret, communicated only to the initiated. After sharing the resources, reread and discuss the Personal Story.

- What is the occult?
- What seem to be the influences in Marquesha's life?
- Is Marquesha involved in the occult? Why or why not?
- If you had been the narrator, what would have been your response to Marquesha? Her rituals? Her secrets?
- Do you know people like Marquesha?
- What is Marquesha looking for? Why is she coming to youth group?

Write a different ending to the story. Think of a way the narrator could have helped Marquesha without getting hurt herself. Close the session by praying for each member of the group. Ask God to help you avoid evil in your lives.

Secret Rules

Pass out decks of cards to small groups or individuals. Ask them to slightly change the rules of a familiar game. Write down the new rules, but don't let others in the group see them. Play the games with one person who knows the new rules and another who doesn't. See how long it takes for others to figure out the new rules.

- How did it feel to be at a disadvantage because you didn't know all the rules?
- Did knowing the rules give you a sense of power over the other person?

Make a list of groups that use secrecy. For example, clubs that children make up, survivalist groups, honor societies, fraternities and sororities. Talk about how and why secrecy is used by some groups.

- What role does secrecy play in these groups?
- When are secrets harmless? When are they harmful?
- How do you know when to keep secrets?

One characteristic of cults is the use of secrecy. Be on guard against organizations that insist on keeping secrets from friends and family. If you are uncertain, talk to an adult at your school or church who you trust.

At the Mall

Visit the mall to find symbols of the occult. Before the trip, look at Resource Poster No. 4 and brainstorm a list of occult symbols. Give everyone a copy or descriptions of the symbols. Divide into small groups to visit different parts of the mall. Look in accessory shops for jewelry, in music stores for CD covers, and in bath shops, hobby stores, New Age stores, and others. Afterward, discuss your findings.

- Were you surprised at the number of occult symbols at the mall?
- At which stores did you find the most?
- Are the symbols evil? Why?
- How many Christian signs did you find?

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3 Armor of God

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:10-17

Commentary: In this passage Paul encourages the Ephesians to be firm in their confidence in God and God's real power. Paul compared life to a battle. At times, visible and invisible enemies seem to surround the people of God. How can they defend themselves? God gives Christians the armor of faith, salvation, truth, righteousness, the gospel, and the Holy Spirit. All but one of the images in this passage are defensive; only one, the sword of the Spirit is aggressive. Not only does God equip people to withstand evil forces, but God also gives them the power to proclaim the word of God.

☐ Questions

- What do the images in this passage evoke? How are they useful in thinking about Satanism and the occult?
- What does it mean to be strong in the Lord?
- What does the writer mean by rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this present darkness?

☐ Activities

The Armor of God

Talk about each piece of armor described in the scripture passage. As a group, draw a picture of each piece of armor on newsprint. Discuss the way each piece of armor protects people and who gives it power.

- Are there any other pieces of armor that you would add to Paul's list?
- Would this armor protect you from evil you face at different times in your life?

Think about different forms of evil you are facing in your life right now. Look at the pictures and select one or two that would give you the most protection. Add anything to the drawing that would make the armor more helpful or personal. As a group, talk about ways to put on God's armor. For example, Bible study and research could be the belt of truth. Prayer and coming to church could help you forge a shield of faith. Find at least one thing you could begin doing now that would better equip you against the forces of evil.

Personal Story

Reread and discuss the Personal Story and scripture passage. Make a list of each piece of armor described by Paul in the passage. Using paper, wood scraps, old shoes, clothing, and other supplies, make the pieces of armor. Rewrite the story using the armor in some way. For example, when the narrator enters Marquesha's room, she could put on the belt of truth.

- How would using the armor change the story?
- Would you need other people to help you prepare and use the armor? Who would they be?

Act out the new story, using the armor you made as props. Afterward, talk about ways you can confront evil.

Consider sharing your drama with a younger group of children. Begin by letting them make pieces of the armor and joining in the action of the play.

Occult in Films

Visit a video store as a group. Look for movies that deal with the occult, horror, or that depict Satan and evil. Look at the covers and how the marketers try to get your attention.

- What is the appeal of these films?
- What kind of words and pictures are used to capture the audience?
- What are the ways that evil or Satan is depicted?
- Make a list of recent occult films and their plots. How does evil take over in the film? How do the characters get involved in the occult?

Discuss your findings. Talk about ways evil and Satan have become a part of our culture. By making evil commonplace, we forget its real power. Ask God to protect you from different forms of evil in the world.

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What Is Evil?

Evil Powers

SESSION 4

Objective

Youth will be able to describe how evil powers corrupt and destroy creatures of God.

Personal Story

Regina Fuentes was new in our school. She had just moved here from the Dominican Republic to live with her aunt. Her family at home included about six or seven kids, and they didn't have much money. Her parents thought that her aunt could take better care of her in the United States.

Regina told me that she was glad to be here. Her parents had been right—it was much better for her. Although she was new, there are lots of people from the Dominican Republic where we live. Regina has lots of people around her who can speak Spanish. Whenever I spent time with her, there seemed to be lots of people who knew her and knew her family at home.

When hurricane Mitch hit her homeland in 1998, lots of people from our school were affected—Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Cubans. For several days kids talked about how their parents were waiting to hear from their families. They also talked about going to church and lighting candles. I hadn't even known that they were into God or church or anything.

During that time, I saw Regina looking really sad. I knew she had heard some bad news. She said that her whole house had practically been destroyed back home. Her brothers and sisters were split up, staying with relatives and friends for now. She was mad at herself for leaving them. But what really made her mad and confused were the things people at school had been telling her.

There's this lady who works in the library who is always quoting the Bible and talking about evil days. She told Regina that the devil was really mad that Regina was living with her aunt. The hurricane and its destruction were just the devil's way of getting back at people who were bad. Another person told her that the hurricane was God getting back at her family because Regina came here.

I told Regina that those people were just crazy. Her new life with her aunt was good, not bad. But she was still messed up by the things people had said. She hates this place now and is ready to go back home. I know God doesn't want bad things to happen to us. God's always with us to help us face the bad things. I'm wondering what I could say or do to help Regina understand this.

Scripture

Psalm 120:6-7
Ecclesiastes 9:11-12
Psalm 64

Skill Focus

Forgiveness
Fairness

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Prayer
Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let your blessing be upon us always; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*
The almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us. *Amen*.

Daily Devotions Collect
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 140

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

1 People Against People

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Too long have I had my dwelling
among those who hate peace.
I am for peace;
but when I speak,
they are for war.
Psalm 120:6-7

Commentary: Psalms are prayers or hymns written to God. Writers often expressed their deepest fears, emotions, and longings. This writer looks at the current situation and decides that he has spent too much time among people who are not peace-loving. The psalmist longs for peace, but other people want war.

☐ Questions

- What are the emotions expressed in *Psalm 120*?
- What are some ways that evil appears in the psalm?
- What does the psalmist believe God will do for him or her?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Sometimes, people hurt each other with words. Why would someone say hurtful things to Regina?
- Have you ever said something that hurt someone else? Did you know what you were really saying at the time?

☐ Activities

In the World

Display Resource Poster No. 6 or any map of the world in the center of a bulletin board that is otherwise empty. Bring in newspapers, magazines, pushpins, and yarn or ribbon of the same color as the pins. **Hint:** If you decide to do this activity for all three themes in Session 4, you will need three colors of pins and yarn or ribbon.
Ask the group to look through the publications for pictures and articles about wars and conflicts throughout the world. Cut out the stories and mount them on the bulletin board around the map of the world. Describe the situation you found to the other participants. Put a pushpin to mark the location of your story on the map, and connect it with yarn to the clipping.

- How many active conflicts did you find?
- How much of the world's resources are involved?
- What can you do about this situation?

To close, pray for the people who are affected by conflicts and wars throughout the world. During the week, be aware of similar stories in the media.

Sneeches

Beforehand, find a story in a newspaper or magazine about a war or conflict somewhere in the world. Bring in the Dr. Seuss book called *Sneeches and Other Stories* about the conflict between the star-bellied and plain-bellied Sneeches. (**Hint:** This book should be available at public libraries.) Read the story aloud to the group. Then ask a volunteer to read or describe the conflict from the media. Compare the events in the story to those in the clipping.

- Who is involved in the story? Who are the warring parties in the clipping?
- What is the human cost of war? What is the environmental cost?
- Is there hope for peace?

Using the Internet or other media, find out more about the conflict in the article. Discuss ways you can be a part of the solution. For example, through prayer, holding a fundraiser, or writing letters.

Conflicts Among Us

Visit another neighborhood in your community. Before your visit, learn about the history, people, and culture of that neighborhood. One of the causes of conflict and wars is a lack of understanding between different groups of people.

- What are the issues and concerns of your neighbors?
- What are the critical needs of this neighborhood?
- What does this neighborhood have to offer you and others in your community?

Find out if you could visit a youth group from a church in the neighborhood you selected. Invite the group to visit your church as well. Plan a special celebration in their honor. (See Session 9.)

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2 Natural Disasters

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful; but time and chance happen to them all. For no one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like fish taken in a cruel net, and like birds caught in a snare, so mortals are snared at a time of calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them.
Ecclesiastes 9:11-12

Commentary: *Ecclesiastes*, a book in the wisdom tradition, offers a pragmatic view of life. In this passage, the writer observes that life is not always fair. Unexpected events often bring about unexplainable misfortune. Events seem to happen by chance. Anyone can be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

☐ Questions

- Does this passage help you understand unexpected events?
- How does God act in the midst of disaster?
- What shapes the writer's view of life?
- What resources do we have when disaster falls upon us?

Option: Discuss Resource Poster No. 5.

- How many types of natural disasters are depicted in the poster?
- Which kind of disaster—floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, high winds, etc.—is most devastating? Why?
- Have you ever been in the midst of a natural disaster? What was that like?

☐ Activities

In the World

Bring in newspapers and magazines to look for pictures and articles about natural disasters that have occurred in the world. Similarly to Activity 1 in Theme 1, cut out the articles and mount them on a bulletin board around Resource Poster No. 6 or another map of the world. Use a different color of pushpin and yarn or ribbon to mark natural disasters.

Ask participants to describe the disaster they found in the media and how it affected the people and the environment. Discuss the stories.

- What was the extent of the damage?
- What relief efforts are in place?
- What will be needed in the long term?

Select one story and learn more about the place and the people where the disaster struck. Also find out about the disaster as a natural phenomenon and where else it occurs in the world. Pray for the people whose lives have been affected by this event.

Personal Story

Reread the Personal Story. Discuss the story and how people responded to Regina.

- What effect did the hurricane have on Regina?
- How did it affect the narrator?
- How did you feel about the other people in the story? Why did they respond as they did?

Identify natural disasters that could occur in your vicinity. Name one that would wreak the most devastation. Imagine it striking your town or community. Talk about how you would react to this kind of event.

- What would be the effect on the people and the environment?
- Who would be hardest hit?
- Are certain areas or housing more susceptible than others in the community?

Learn about resources your community has for disaster relief from government agencies or local chapters of the Red Cross. For example, are there places people can go for temporary shelter during a blizzard or heat wave? Do any organizations stockpile food? Do hospitals have plans for emergency medical care? Are churches organized to provide spiritual assistance?

Collate information you collect and turn it into an emergency information bulletin for your church and community. If there are gaps in emergency relief arrangements, find a way to bring them to the attention of the proper authorities.

Finding Relief

Select an area in another country or nearby community that has been affected by a natural disaster. Look at Resource Poster No. 5 for ideas. Research how both the people and the environment were affected and what has been done to bring relief. Contact the Red Cross or the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief to find out what is being done and which organizations are involved.

Find a way that the group and your church could be involved in helping the people who live in this area. Plan a fundraiser, collect specific items such as blankets or clothing, or support governmental efforts.

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3 Crime and Violence

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint;
preserve my life from the dread enemy.
Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,
from the scheming of evildoers,
who whet their tongues like swords,
who aim bitter words like arrows,
shooting from ambush at the blameless;
they shoot suddenly and without fear.
They hold fast to their evil purpose;
they talk of laying snares secretly,
thinking, "Who can see us?
Who can search out our crimes?
We have thought out a cunningly conceived plot."
For the human heart and mind are deep.
But God will shoot his arrow at them;
they will be wounded suddenly.
Because of their tongue he will bring them to ruin;
all who see them will shake with horror.
Then everyone will fear;
they will tell what God has brought about,
and ponder what he has done.
Let the righteous rejoice in the Lord
and take refuge in him.
Let all the upright in heart glory.
Psalm 64

Commentary: The psalmist calls on God with a complaint and a plea for protection. People who have evil intentions often appear to be clever and strong. Under the onslaught of the unjust, their victims feel like prey. Their evil words and actions seem to taunt God. But God is able to pierce through all of their schemes. All who eventually see justice done will praise God.

☐ Questions

- What makes violence so attractive?
- What are the psalmist's complaints?
- Can you remember situations where you have felt like prey?
- Where are the sources of power in the passage? Which are lasting?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Where can you find the people who hurt Regina in *Psalm 64*?
- Could the narrator use this passage in comforting Regina?
- What would you have said to her?

☐ Activities

In the World

Bring in newspapers and magazines to look for pictures and articles about crime and violence in your community, city, the United States, and other parts of the world. As in Activity 1 in Theme 1, clip the articles and mount them on a bulletin board around Resource Poster No. 6 or another map of the world. Use a third color of pushpin and yarn or ribbon to mark and connect places where violence and crime have occurred. As an alternative, if you live in or near a community that has a high crime rate, look for stories over a period of time and use a local map.

Ask participants to describe the crime they found in the media and the impact it had on members of the community and their quality of life. Discuss the stories.

- Who were the victims in the story?
- How were others in the community affected by this event?
- Does crime affect the way others view certain areas? Are these perceptions justified?

Select one story and write the names of all the people mentioned in the article on a piece of newsprint. Include people charged as well as their victims. Pray for God's healing presence to be a part of the community and the families and friends of those involved.

Violence and You

The dictionary defines violence as physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging, or abusing. Reread the scripture passage and write your own definition. (**Hint:** See the guide about violence in this curriculum series.)

- Is violence always physical?
- What words does the psalmist use for violent people?

Think about violence in your own life or that you have observed. Share examples if you feel comfortable doing so.

- Have you ever used violence to solve problems? In what way?
- Make a list of potential violent confrontations. Can you think of alternatives to violence?
- Are there resources at your school or community to help people confront each other without the use of violence?
- Have you ever been part of a mediation program? What was that like?

Individually or in small groups write your own psalm about violence and how God is present even at the darkest hours. Share your work with the group.

Violence and Entertainment

Hint: This activity may not be appropriate for some groups, especially if a group member has been a victim of crime or violence.

Ask the group to describe violence they have seen at the movies, on television, or as a player or spectator of a sports event. Observe their voices and body language as they recount their observations.

- Why is violence exciting?
- What are the costs of violence?
- Does the prevalence of violence in the media affect people's acceptance of it? Explain.

Ask participants to silently reflect on the violence that is a part of their lives and the question, "Where is God?" Look for ways during the week to replace violence with God's love.

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What Is Evil?

Temptation

Objective

Youth will be able to compare temptations faced by others with those they face themselves.

Personal Story

José was one of the stars in school. He was good looking, the quarterback on the football team, a student government representative, and a member of the honor society. He was very outgoing and friendly. He seemed to thrive on attention and excitement on the field, in the hallways, and in the classroom. He always spoke to people, giving out compliments and slapping hands all the way down the hall. He was a charmer and always seemed to get his way.

James, on the other hand, was quiet. He always looked as if he was having a bad hair day. He continually ran his hands through his hair when he was under stress. James was smart. He was good at computers and played the trombone in the band. He often wore his band pants to school, which made him stand out even more. James did not relate that well to other students, but he really was a kind and funny kid.

One day during chemistry, the teacher announced that she wanted students to pair up to work on laboratory experiments. As usual, she allowed the students to choose their partners. After her announcement, she noticed that José and James were sitting next to one another. She walked over to them and pointedly looking at José, suggested that he and James be partners. She thought they would make a good team.

"You know all about teamwork," she said to José. José responded to her just as pointedly, but with a smile. He said he would either work alone or with Tony or Brad. He pointed over to two students laughing and talking with a group in the corner.

In the end, James ended up working alone on the lab. José got help from his friends. Later that week as José left the lab, he noticed that James was still hard at work on the assignment. He walked more quickly, laughed to himself, and then shook his head. He headed off to football practice.

SESSION 5

Scripture

Genesis 11:1-9
Luke 4:1-13
Hebrews 2:14-18

Skill Focus

Ethics
Relationships

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Prayer
Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Sunday in Lent
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 218

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

1 Defying God

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the Lord said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.
Genesis 11:1-9

Commentary: The book of *Genesis* begins the story of God's relationship with humankind and the people of Israel. This passage tells the story of the Tower of Babel and is part of the oral tradition that preceded the history of the Israelite people. The word "Babel," meaning Gate of God, also comes from the Hebrew word for confuse. Here God halted the prideful attempt of the people to reach into heaven. Their motivations had more to do with fame and security than a desire to be closer to God. God changed them from one people with one language to scattered bands of nomads with many languages.

☐ Questions

- Compare the Tower of Babel with the story of Pentecost in *Acts 2*. How does God act in each of the stories?
- Describe the relationship between God and the people who were building the tower. Why did God stop their work?

☐ Activities

Images of Power

Bring in pictures and articles from newspapers and magazines that illustrate power. Include pictures of world leaders, advertisements showing power and wealth, and other symbols that suggest power to you. Spread the clippings out on a table along with a single match taped to a piece of paper. Individually or in small groups, look through the articles and select and rank the five that illustrate the greatest power. Discuss the choices different people or groups made.

- Are there any differences in the definition of power from a cultural or a spiritual point of view? Explain.
- What is the difference between real power and promise of power?
- Do you have personal power? How do you use it? Do you ever give it away?

Point out that only one of the items on the table is real. Only the match holds real power—the power to give light and destroy. Ask each person to reflect on the power he or she has. On an index card, write down one way that the power could be used destructively. On another card, describe how the power could be used constructively. Gather the destructive cards and put them in a fireproof container. Use the match to burn them. Take the other cards home as a reminder to use your power in positive ways.

Collective Power

Write your own definition of collective power. Discuss how it can be used in positive and negative ways. For example, groups working together can rebuild a house for Habitat for Humanity. However, gangs seeking to protect their turf increase the violence and crime in a community. Think of examples that you have observed or been involved in.

Look at ways technology has affected everyone's lives. For example, the Internet brings research libraries to your computer and genetic engineering has brought animal clones and a better understanding of diseases. Reread the story of the Tower of Babel.

- List positive and negative uses for this technology.
- Can something start off with good intentions but end up actually causing harm?
- What lessons can you take away from the Bible story?

Give thanksgiving to God for the gifts that enable new discoveries that help all people. Then pray for God's guidance in the wise use of those gifts and the technologies they generated.

Being in a Group

Go to a place in your community where youth tend to congregate, such as a mall or park. Observe the young people and the groups they belong to. Choose a symbol for each group that is not derogatory, such as skaters, rockers, or fashion plates.

- How are those groups defined or judged by what they wear and the music they listen to?
- What do the different groups have in common?
- What would be the symbol for your group?

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2 Temptations of Christ

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written,

'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,
to protect you,' and
'On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Luke 4:1-13

Commentary: After Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River and God declared him as beloved son, Jesus went into the wilderness where he fasted and prayed for forty days. During that time, Jesus had an encounter with the devil. Although Jesus' stomach was empty and his body weary, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. The devil tempted him with food, to test God, power, and wealth. With the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus overcame the devil's traps. His resistance to the devil is a model for ordinary people facing temptations.

☐ Questions

- What role does the Spirit play?
- Why did Jesus turn Satan away?
- What does the last sentence in the passage mean? Was there another time Satan came to Jesus?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What were the temptations José faced? How did he respond?
- Have you faced similar temptations? What did you do?

☐ Activities

Power, Popularity, the Spectacular

Henri Nouwen, a Christian theologian and writer, describes the sins Satan tempts Christ with in the following terms:

Popularity: By feeding the hungry
Power: As a ruler
The Spectacular: Being caught by angels

In small groups, create contemporary skits about Jesus being tempted by Satan in these three ways. Reread the Personal Story for ideas of how Satan tempts young people just as he tempted Jesus. Act out your skit for the whole group and talk about ways to stand up to temptation.

- Where is God when you are being tempted?
- Who can help you deal with temptation?
- Are popularity, power, and the spectacular bad? Give examples of how they can be used for good.

Select one or more of the skits to share with another group in the church. Plan a discussion period afterwards.

In the Wilderness

The wilderness is used throughout the Bible to describe a bleak place both in reality and figuratively. For example, Joseph's brothers deserted him in a pit in the wilderness in *Genesis 37*; throughout *Exodus* the Israelites wander through a wilderness; David retreated to the wilderness to avoid Saul in *I Samuel*; and John the Baptist is described as the "voice of one crying out in the wilderness" in *John 1*. Read these and any other passages you find.

Imagine that you are in a wilderness and that Satan comes to tempt you in three ways. Remember that Satan usually tempts people at their weakest point. After you have reflected on your own wilderness, discuss the experience.

- Where would Satan take you?
- What would Satan show you?
- What would Satan promise you?

Ask God to help you when you are in a wilderness and to recognize Satan's temptations. While quiet music is playing in the background, visualize a place that is the opposite of the wilderness for you. In your mind, look for ways that God is present in this place. End with prayer that God will lead you "beside still waters" and restore your soul.

Fasting

Find out more about fasting and how it is done.

- Why do people fast?
- When should people fast?
- Can it be harmful?

People fast for spiritual reasons, to promote social justice by bringing attention to a certain cause, or for physical reasons. Find out about the 30-Hour Fast described by World Vision. Using this format or another of your choice, plan a group fast. Fasting should be done in community—not alone.

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3 Suffering With Others

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Hebrews 2:14-18

Commentary: The Hebrew people who received this letter were facing persecution for their Christian faith. The writer assures them that because Jesus shared their humanity, he understood their pain and vulnerability. Yet Jesus was also able to overcome the shackles of death and the devil. Jesus did not come to help angels. He became human and suffered as any person does to help people in their time of need and to liberate them from their sins.

☐ Questions

- According to this passage, how is Jesus with us?
- What does Jesus' humanity mean to us?
- How is the power of sin, the devil, and death described?
- How did Jesus overcome these three things?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How was José tested?
- Could he have done something to put things right?
- Write another ending to the story after José goes to play football. How could José change the situation?

☐ Activities

The Compassionate Christ

The writer of *Hebrews* says, "Because [Jesus] himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to liberate us from our sins." Individually or in small groups, read two or more of the following passages for examples of Jesus' human side.

Jesus weeps for a friend: *John 11:1-36*
Jesus at a wedding: *John 2:1-9*
Jesus loves his friends: *John 13:1-2*
Jesus with children: *Luke 9:46-48* or *Luke 18:15-17*
Jesus angry: *John 2:13-16*
Jesus dying: *Matthew 27:45-46*
Jesus afraid: *Mark 14:32-36*

Discuss the passages. What do they tell you about Jesus? Think about a traumatic time in your life.

- Did you think about God or Jesus at that time?
- Did it help to know that Jesus faced similar problems during his ministry?
- Could knowing that Jesus really understands your problems be helpful in the future? How?

Keep the list of scripture passages that describe the humanity of Christ. Add others that you know about. When you are facing difficulties, refer to this list as a reminder that Jesus understands what you are going through.

Being With Others

Jesus is able to understand the different problems young people face because "he himself was tested." Identify different types of people who are different from you, such as the elderly who cannot leave their homes, physically or mentally challenged people, or new immigrants in your community. Find out more about their lives by taking on a short-term project to work with some of these people individually or as a group.

For example, if your church has a list of shut-ins, identify several to visit. Offer to run errands for those who have trouble getting around or mow their lawns for a month during the summer. You could also read to the blind, tutor a child or an adult who is learning English, or share your computer skills with someone Afterward, talk about your experiences.

- What did you learn about yourself and others?
- What insight did you gain about Jesus' ability to understand our problems and needs?
- Do you want to continue this activity?

What Tempts You?

Watch all or part of *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Compare different parts of the movie with your own life. List the temptations the characters faced in the movie on one sheet of paper, and temptations you face on another. Talk about the way the characters in the movie dealt with temptation and the way you deal with it.

- What makes the things on the list tempting?
- If some things weren't off limits, would they still be tempting?
- How do you resist temptation?
- Where can you go for help?

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What Is Evil?

Sin

SESSION 6

Objective

Youth will be able to describe sin from a scriptural perspective and identify how it influences people's lives.

Personal Story

Kyle and I have been friends for about a year. We fight a lot and we have had our ups and downs, but we still remain friends. He's not really an ex-boyfriend, but I still love him. He's a great athlete who plays varsity football and averages about thirty points a game in basketball. He's incredibly smart, has a great vocabulary, and is a good writer. He's one of those people you fall in love with even though you know that he's not the kind of person your parents would approve of. All the girls fall all over him.

Kyle had described himself to me as a master manipulator, but I never thought that he would ever do anything to me. He knew that I would do just about anything for my friends. I just never thought he would use that against me.

We had an English assignment to keep a journal for a week.. I dutifully wrote in mine every night. Kyle spent the week playing video games with two other friends. At the end of the week, he asked me to loan him mine. He wanted to get some ideas for his journal. He asked three times. Since he's my friend, I gave him the journal. He told me when we turned them in that he had used some of the same ideas.

The next thing I knew, my English teacher was accusing me of cheating on my journal. I could hardly hear what she was saying because I was so angry with Kyle. I couldn't wait to confront him and see what he had to say. I found out Kyle had just copied my journal and turned it in. My teacher said that the journal was really good, and since Kyle was a much better writer than I am, it was obviously his. This really infuriated me because I had spent hours and hours working on my journal. She said that I was in a lot of trouble and should just admit that I had cheated.

I gave her my side of the story, and Kyle was also questioned. He lied and said the journal was his. He said that I had waited until the journal was due and had borrowed his journal and copied it. I even had copies of our e-mail messages that proved my innocence. But the administrators claimed I had changed the wording in the messages.

I don't know why I am not more angry with Kyle. Maybe I'm still in love with him. I don't want to believe that he would do such a thing. Why would anybody as smart as he is do something like this? I also don't want to believe that he would ever hurt me so badly. I knew he cut corners, but I thought we were friends.

In the end, I lost about everything. I lost my friendship with Kyle, and I got an F on the journal for breaking the honor code. Things will never be the same between us.

Scripture

Romans 7:14-25
John 8:1-11
Psalm 119:9-16

Skill Focus

Choices
Forgiveness

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Prayer
Almighty and most merciful God, kindle within us the fire of love, that by its cleansing flame we may be purged of all our sins and made worthy to worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Lent and other times of penitence
Order for Evening
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 111

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

1 The Inner Conflict

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 7:14-25

Commentary: As a religious Jew, Paul is conflicted about his responsibility to the law and the gospel of grace he has found in Jesus Christ. Paul understands that the law helps people maintain their relationships with God. However, there is a danger that laws can become a substitute for having a relationship with God. The law can also be abused if people focus on the parts of the law they keep and conveniently ignore those they do not. Even though people know what they should do, sometimes they are unable to do it. Only by the grace of God can people be saved. Reliance on God also fosters an attitude of thanksgiving for God's grace, and continually reminds God's people of their need for forgiveness and to forgive others.

☐ Questions

- Can you describe a time that you have been a slave to the law of sin?
- Have you faced the dilemma of knowing what was right and doing the opposite? Describe the situation.

☐ Activities

But then . . .

Describe the following scenario or one of your own: "Mary asked to borrow the car to get some things she needed for school. She was going to be gone twenty minutes, straight to the store and straight home. But then she saw Tom and some of his friends walking home from school . . ." Take turns letting participants finish the story. Then ask members of the group to think of a time they started to do something with good intentions, such as trying to help a friend or going to the mall, but it turned out very differently than they had expected it to. Pass out paper and ask them to write their stories, leaving out or changing the names of those involved. If participants are comfortable doing so, look at the stories one at a time and identify the decision points.

- Where did the scenario change, where did it start to turn? After that turn, were there any points where the situation could have been saved?
- Where was the point of no return?

Talk about what you need to make good decisions. Could outside help from another person have made a difference in any of the stories? Close the meeting with prayer about the decisions members of the group make every day.

Temptations, Temptations

Years ago, C. S. Lewis wrote a satire entitled *The Screwtape Letters* that contained letters from the devil's senior tempter to his young protégé. The main topic of the letters was how to tempt a middle-aged businessman. Obtain a copy of *The Screwtape Letters* and take turns reading some of them—they are fairly short. Excerpts from the book are also available on an audiotape humorously read by John Cleese, an English comedian known for his antics with Monte Python.

Aferward, write one or more letters about issues teens face. For example, look at the letter about going to church and decide what the tempter would say about you and your friends. Share the letters, and talk about looking at sin from the perspective of Satan. Ask God to help you recognize sin and to give you the strength to resist the temptation.

Here Comes the Judge

Visit a trial court that deals with criminal offenses. Before you go, find out as much as possible about the case or cases you might witness.

- What most surprised you about the experience?
- Did your experience look like courtroom dramas on television? What was different or the same?
- What would you like to know more about?

Invite someone who works in the judicial system to talk to your group about the challenges he or she faces. Before the speaker arrives, brainstorm questions you have about the justice system. For example:

- How do laws help society function?
- Where do they fall short?
- Why did you choose to work in this area? How does your faith affect the decisions you make every day?

End the session by praying for those who work in the justice system and the people that they work with.

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2 Casting Stones

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then each of them went home, while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

John 8:1-11

Commentary: Jesus' opponents set a trap by making him either reject Roman authority or defy Jewish law concerning adultery. Jesus avoids the trap by asking the accusers to first account for their own behavior. Jesus continually returns the focus to a person's own behavior, knowing that people must be attentive to their own lives if they hope to influence others. "Do as I say and not as I do" has never been an effective or helpful approach to life. What people do has a much greater influence than words that are not backed with actions.

☐ Questions

- Who is one of the most influential people in your life? Why does this person have such a place of importance? Does this person's actions reflect his or her words?
- How do you respond to someone who says one thing and does another?
- Is it easier to judge someone else than to judge your own actions?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Why did the school authorities believe Kyle instead of the narrator?
- Have you ever been judged unfairly? How did you feel?

☐ Activities

Assumptions

Cut out pictures from newspapers or magazines that are ambiguous—such as a meeting, people in costumes, a gathering of all ages. Make a copy of the original photo caption or accompanying story if there is one before you remove it. Mount only the picture on a piece of paper.

Give individuals or small groups a picture and ask them to make up a caption and a brief story based on it. Share the pictures and the fictional stories with the whole group and then compare them with the actual captions and stories. Talk about the experience.

- What are the assumptions we make when we look at people?
- Why do we judge people based on what we see?
- What stereotypes do our versions of the stories reveal?
- What stones do we cast?

Ask the group to think about times they have been quick to judge someone else and the consequences of that action. Close with prayer asking God's help in putting down our stones.

Sin No More

Ask each person to write down on index cards a situation he or she identifies as sin. Shuffle the cards and give one to each person. Ask him or her to pantomime the sin written on the card while the rest of the group guesses what it is.

- Were some easier to guess than others?
- Did you agree that every situation on the cards was sinful?
- Which sins are teens particularly vulnerable to?
- Which sins are you are particularly susceptible as a group?

Ask participants to think of a nearby place where they can be alone to reflect. **Hint:** They could just separate within the meeting space. Give each person a stone (or stones) and a washable marker. Ask them to think about a sin (or sins) they would like to be released from. After a period of time, bring the group back together. Place a basin of water at a central location and invite each person to place his or her stones in the water. As each person puts his or her stones down, the group says "your sins are forgiven, go and sin no more." Take a few moments to inspect the stones that no longer bear the sins of the group. Close with silent prayer or meditation.

Point a Finger (and Three Point Back)

Ask participants to individually make a list of the qualities that really annoy them in other people. Then have them make a list of the things about themselves that they are frustrated about. Think about things you do or say that might annoy other people. Compare your lists. What do you notice? Often the things that annoy us the most are the things we struggle with ourselves.

Look at the Bible story and identify different sins. Prepare a mock trial for the woman in the passage. The prosecution will take the position that adultery is wrong and should be punished by stoning as prescribed in *Deuteronomy 22:23-24*. The defense will take the position that society has no right to judge her private life. Select a person to be the judge; others in the group will be the jury. Argue the case.

- Is there an easy answer?
- What is Jesus' position?
- Does Jesus condone her behavior?

During the next week, be aware of judgments you make about others. Notice if you judge people more harshly who have qualities that you dislike about yourself. Ask God to help you be less judgmental about others and yourself.

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3 Victory Over Sin

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then they said:
How can young people keep their way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commandments.
I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.
Blessed are you, O Lord;
teach me your statutes.
With my lips I declare
all the ordinances of your mouth.
I delight in the way of your decrees
as much as in all riches.
I will meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

Psalm 119:9-16

Commentary: *Psalm 119* is a reflection on what it is like to be in the presence of God in the midst of ordinary life. The law described in the passage refers primarily to an inner voice. When a person lives in relationship with God, the inner voice of conscience is similar to the law. When people turn from God, they know it. The voice grows dim and they feel its absence. The way back to a relationship with God is to turn away from those things that hurt themselves and others. The directions of a loving, caring God are written on each person's heart.

☐ Questions

- Does your conscience help you make wise decisions?
- How can you know if you are following God's direction?
- What happens when you turn off your inner voice and turn away from God?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Did Kyle heed his inner voice?
- Is being a loyal friend even in the face of betrayal always best? Why?
- Can sin affect our inner voice? How?

☐ Activities

Rules, Rules

On large strips of paper, ask participants to write down the most ridiculous rule they have encountered or a rule they really don't like. For example, no one can wear T-shirts in school or all coats must be kept in a locker. Put the rules up around the room. Ask everyone to pick a rule other than his or her own and explain why it might have been written. Talk about rules and why people have them. Is there another way to accomplish the same end?

God's rules, called the Ten Commandments, are summarized in the Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 847-848. (**Hint:** Make sure each person has a copy or a prayer book.) Read the section aloud.

Working alone, give yourself a grade on how well you keep each commandment. Select one commandment that is important to you. Write down three actions you will take to keep this commandment. Afterward, discuss the commandments and the questions and answers in the Catechism.

- Is there a topic or issue that's not covered in the commandments?
- Does your inner voice let you know when you break a commandment?
- What can you do when you fail to keep God's commandments?

All in a Day's Work

Make a timeline for a twenty-four-hour day along a wall or on the floor of your meeting area, leaving plenty of space between hours. Give each person two colors of post-it notes to write all the decisions that they make in one day. Use one color for decisions that affect only you and another for decisions that affect others. For example, when the alarm goes off you decide to get up. If your mom doesn't have to call you five times, then use the color for a personal decision. If she does, use the other color. Put your post-it notes on the timeline and talk about a normal day of decision-making.

- When do you face most of your decisions?
- How often do your decisions affect others? Does that enter in to your decision?
- What are the consequences of your decisions? For you? For others?

Write down a recent decision you made that affected you and others. Go back over the circumstances in your mind and identify how and when you made up your mind. If you had stopped for thirty seconds and asked God to be with you, would you have made the same choices? Put the decisions the group wrote down in a closed bag. As a group, pray for God's guidance in the future and remember that God is always present even when you make poor decisions.

Dear Abby Panel

Ask group members to write a letter to an advice columnist describing a situation that they have observed that resulted in sin. Do not include particulars such as places and names. Identify four people the group respects to serve on a panel to discuss possible outcomes to each situation, including direct and indirect consequences to those involved, why and when the sin occurred, and how it could have been avoided. For example, a teen goes to a party where everyone is drinking alcohol. She decides that having one beer isn't really going to hurt anyone.

Encourage group members to think of questions to ask the panelists. During the panel discussion ask one or more volunteers to take notes. Compile descriptions of the situations posed by the participants and answers from the panelists into a booklet that could be called Advice for Teens. Share the booklet with others in your church.

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What Is Evil?

Alternative Spirituality

SESSION 7

Objective

Youth will be able to differentiate between Christian spirituality and the world's spirituality.

Personal Story

In the fall, I went on a kayaking trip with a group of people on a saltwater bay. We had a wonderful time, although I've never worked so hard in my life. Every morning, I crawled out of my sleeping bag so sore I could hardly walk. But after a hearty breakfast, I soon joined the others in the kayaks.

The first day was cloudy, but the sky had shades of gray that looked like someone had painted it with watercolors. The water was rough, and in the open the waves were taller than I am. When we finally arrived at our first campsite, I was so relieved. While we were unloading our gear, one of the group let out a loud "whoop." He then yelled, "Get a load of the sunset." It was one of the most beautiful sights I had ever seen.

During that trip we fished, explored the marshlands, and ate—a lot! I could hardly take in all the beauty. Around the campfire we talked about all the things, big and small, that we had seen during the day. My friend said she felt that this place was almost holy. I felt the same way.

However, when I thought about our conversations later, I realized there was a difference in the way we described the experience. Although they talked about the incredible beauty of the place and felt that it was holy, they never talked about God. I was also moved by the place and found that it made me think about God the creator and what a good job God had done. Although I felt closer to God on that trip than I had before, I think my friends never got past seeing the beauty.

Something similar happened when I got home. Another friend, Carla, is really into New Age music. I like it too, especially when I feel stressed. We listen to it a lot at her house. Often we sit in a yoga position and use the music to relax our bodies and free our minds of the stuff we have to deal with at school and home.

After one of these sessions, I told Carla that I had found myself thinking about God and had felt God's presence closely. She gave me a weird look and said I had missed the point. I was supposed to clear my mind of all thoughts.

The beauty of nature, relaxing music, and yoga exercises are all good things in my life. However, I don't think they replace God, they just help me see God a little better.

Scripture

Galatians 1:6-9
Isaiah 44:9a, 14-17
I John 4:1-6

Skill Focus

Responsibility
Independence/Individuality

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Prayer
Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*.
Fifth Sunday in Lent
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 219

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

1 Confusing the Truth

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!
Galatians 1:6-9

Commentary: The letter to the Galatians addresses the question, "Who is a true Christian?" Several leaders in churches that had been founded by Paul began teaching that simple faith in Jesus Christ was not sufficient to be considered a Christian. In addition to faith, they taught that people must also keep the Mosaic law. In strong, passionate language, Paul writes that no matter what they hear to the contrary—even if it were to come from an angel—they are not to believe a message that is contrary to the gospels.

☐ Questions

- What does Paul say a person must do or believe in order to be a Christian?
- Do you think you need to do something to be a Christian? Is church attendance required? Do you have to be baptized?
- Have you ever had a teacher who confused you more than enlightening you? How did you deal with this situation?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Was the writer confused by other people in the story?
- How do you know when to believe something and when to question it?

☐ Activities

Mixed Messages

Put two large pieces of newsprint on opposite walls and set out markers. On one sheet, ask participants to list as many things as they can that answer the question, "What does the world say you should put your faith in?" On the other piece of paper, list as many answers as they can to the question, "What does the Christian faith say you should put your faith in?" Afterward, discuss the answers.

- How does the world communicate its messages?
- How are we affected by advertisements? The media? Conversations with friends?
- How does the Church communicate its message?
- Which is more convincing or persuasive? Why?
- If the Church had the ability to communicate its message the way the world does, what would happen?

Write a television ad for the Christian message that will appear during the Super Bowl. Decide what the message should be and the most effective means of delivering it. Share it with others at an appropriate gathering of the church.

Reading a Story

Obtain one of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books from a library or bookstore. Select one or more stories to read to the group. Afterward, discuss them.

- What is the primary point the story attempts to make?
- Regardless of whether you agreed or disagreed with the point of the story, how well did the story make its point? (**Hint:** In answering this question, invite participants to answer by standing somewhere along a line, ranging from "exceptional" to "nauseating." Then ask them to explain their position.)
- Does this story advance a point of view? If so, does that point of view advance the world's spirituality, or is it primarily about Christian spirituality? What makes it so?
- Could the story be used in a Sunday-school class to make a point about Christianity? Why or why not?

If most of the group has experienced or observed similar situations to those described in the book, invite them to write their own stories and compile them in a publication. Distribute the booklet to other youth in the church for Lent or Advent.

Finding Angels

In Judeo-Christian theology, angels are always messengers from God. In the Bible, whenever someone encounters an angel, that person is not really sure whether it is an angel or God. When people encounter real angels, they come away from the encounter talking not about the angels, but about the message the angels delivered.

Review these three points and then watch the movie *City of Angels*.

- Where is God in the movie?
- Does the movie portray angels as having some sort of existence of their own, independent of God?

See if the group can find any portrayals of angels in popular culture that meet the three criteria described above. How does our culture misrepresent angels as they are portrayed in the Bible?

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2 False Gods

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; . . . [A man] cuts down cedars or chooses a holm tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. Then it can be used as fuel. Part of it he takes and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Then he makes a god and worships it, makes it a carved image and bows down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he roasts meat, eats it and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Ah, I am warm, I can feel the fire!" The rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, bows down to it and worships it; he prays to it and says, "Save me, for you are my god!"
Isaiah 44:9a, 14-17

Commentary: God had been sympathetic to the people of Israel when they were slaves in Egypt and had raised up Moses as a leader and delivered them from slavery. When Pharaoh pursued them, God protected them by fire and clouds, and then when all seemed lost, he miraculously parted the sea for their safe passage. God continued to protect them during their time in the wilderness, and then gave them a generous and fruitful land to call their own. In spite of all this, once they were in a comfortable place, they forgot God and began worshiping idols. In a scathing satire, the prophet Isaiah mocks the human tendency to make false gods and scolds people for their foolishness in worshiping things which are man-made. With satire, the prophet tries to call people back to the true God.

☐ Questions

- It has been said that God is the only god who will love you back. Why did God's people keep turning to false gods, when the Lord God was the only God who kept loving them back?
- What attracts people to false gods?
- What love do false gods seem to offer?
- In what ways do we construct and worship false gods?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What were some of the false gods described by the narrator?
- Do you have false gods in your life? What are they?

☐ Activities

Crossing the Line

Gather as many of the following items, or something that represents them: $20 bill (representing money); herbal medicine (health); crystals, New Age music (New Age spirituality); running shoes, dumbbells (physical fitness); a rock, leaf (nature); letter jacket or sports logo (athletics); aromatherapy bottle, valentine's heart (love relationship). Also, put a line of masking tape on the floor across the length of the room.

Randomly distribute the items you collected. Explain that these items can be perfectly harmless or even good. But there is a human tendency to take good things and misuse them or expect too much from them. Ask participants to explain how the items they were given can be used for good, healthy purposes. Then, while moving toward the line, they should explain how the item can be misused. As they approach the line, they should say, "I think my item crosses the line from being something healthy to being a god when _____." Give other participants time to respond.

- Do you think there is danger in crossing the line earlier?
- What has to happen before the item crosses the line?
- Are there other items that aren't here that are in danger of crossing the line?
- Is there anything that is always safe?

Put all the items somewhere on the line. Select one that you have a tendency to make into a god. Ask God to help you to focus on God as the center of your life.

Glorifying God in Music

Collect music tapes or CDs that represent as many different types of music as you can find. Include some New Age music as well as Gregorian chants and contemporary Christian music.

Listen to samples of the music while the group gathers, switching tapes or CDs frequently. Afterward, ask participants to imagine that they are associates at a large, popular music store in charge of dividing the store into several different departments. Name as many different categories as possible, such as country, classic rock, soft rock, classical, opera, jazz, New Age, Christian, rap, hip-hop, and rave. After listing them, discuss the music categories.

- What is distinctive about each category of music?
- For example, what makes country music different from classical music? Rock from country? Rap from jazz?
- Listen to a selection of New Age music and Gregorian chants. What characteristics make a particular piece of music New Age? What are the unique attributes of the Gregorian chant? What are the similarities and differences between the two?
- Gregorian chants achieved tremendous popularity in the early 1990s, surprising most music-industry analysts. What do you think explains the sudden burst of interest in this type of music? Who would listen to these chants?
- Could New Age music be used in a Christian worship service? Why or why not?

Select some of your favorite music that would be appropriate in a church setting. Plan a liturgy that features this music. Share it with another group in your church.

At the Bookstore

Visit both New Age and Christian bookstores. Designate one person from your group to interview the owner or manager of each store. Prepare your questions ahead of time, such as:

- What is your best selling item, and why?
- Who are your best customers?

Tour the store and write down your impressions. Afterward, discuss your findings.

- What kind of merchandise was on display? What makes it appealing? What makes other items less appealing?
- Can any of the merchandise bring anyone closer to God?

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3 Spirit of Truth

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world. Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
I John 4:1-6

Commentary: *I John* was written to enrich the spiritual lives of its readers and to correct false teachers who denied that God really became human in the person of Jesus Christ. The author believes that belief and action are very closely related: What people believe affects how they behave and how they behave affects what they believe. Therefore, it is important for people to know what they believe and why, because those beliefs affect their behavior in the world. The author also says that every spirit is not from God—there are harmful, and even evil spirits.

☐ Questions

- How do you know if a spirit is from God?
- Who can help you figure this out?
- Can you identify popular messages that are from the spirit of error?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Are false teachers always easy to identify?
- Can you think of a false teaching that you have heard?

☐ Activities

False Predictions

During the week, clip the horoscope sections from a local paper. Next, cut apart each horoscope so that the descriptive paragraph and its corresponding sign are separated. If a sign is mentioned in the paragraph, black it out. Cut and paste descriptive paragraphs to other signs. For example, put Gemini's description under Virgo, and Virgo's under Sagittarius, and so on. Then photocopy the end result so there is one sheet with all the mixed up horoscopes. Distribute the horoscopes, and ask participants to find theirs and read it. Ask them if it seems be accurate, or if some other horoscope is more accurate. See if some youth pick their own sign as being the most accurate.

Or, write a code number (that only you know) on the back of each descriptive paragraph that is no longer labeled with an astrological sign. Bring the horoscopes in one envelope and the signs in another. Ask youth to match horoscopes according to signs.

If you used the first option, let the group know that the signs were switched. Afterward, talk about horoscopes in general.

- Why are horoscopes in newspapers?
- What do horoscopes do for people?
- Has anyone ever made, or not made, a decision based on a horoscope?
- What happens when people begin to live their lives by horoscopes?

Identify other sources that provide better words to live by, such as the Bible and *The Book of Common Prayer*. Find a passage in one of these sources that you would like to guide your life.

Making Decisions

Bring in M&Ms or other candies, a soft drink, and a magic 8-ball or dice. Make a list of decisions that people face every day. Start out with silly or trivial questions such as: Should I drink this soda? How many candies should I eat right now? Should I watch television tonight? Then move to slightly more serious ones: Will I make a new friend this month? Will I get into an argument with my parents this week? Finally, get to the serious questions: Should I try out for the team/play? Should I go to college? Should I break up with my boyfriend/girlfriend?

Play a game using the 8-ball or dice to answer the questions you wrote down. If you use dice, assign the numbers as: 1=definitely, 2=probably, 3=possibly, 4=maybe, 5=better not, and 6=absolutely not. Go from the trivial questions to the serious ones. Discuss what it means to turn over important decisions to things we have no control over. Identify other things people use, such as tea leaves, Tarot cards, and palm readings.

- What are some reliable sources of advice?
- What did the Bible passage say about turning important decisions to things or people other than God?
- What kinds of issues should we turn to God to get advice? How can we do that?

Look at the questions the group used earlier. On an index card, write down a serious decision you are facing now or will face in the near future. Take the card home, and during the week, ask God to help you make this decision.

Knowing the Difference

A major difference between the world's spirituality and Christian spirituality is the way people serve others. The Judeo-Christian tradition always leads to service.

- Do alternative spiritualities (New Age, horoscopes, magic, or cultural angels) ever lead to service?
- Do these spiritualities always lead to service?

After discussing this idea, find a service project that your group can be a part of. Identify groups or committees at your church that serve others. For example, a food committee that prepares casseroles for a homeless shelter or a group that goes once a month to a Habitat for Humanity site. Find one or more that the group would like to be a part of.

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What Is Evil?

Goodness in the Face of Evil

SESSION 8

Objective

Youth will be able to list ways God can help them deal with evil and the pain and sorrow it causes in their lives.

Personal Story

My aunt and uncle had hoped to have children for year, but were unable to have their own. They finally decided to try to adopt a child. Soon afterward, they began the procedure for adopting a baby. It took a long time, or maybe that's just the way it seemed to me. They had to fill out forms, go to interviews, and answer a lot of personal questions.

Then one day they got word from the agency that a baby girl was ready for adoption. The excitement of our family was more than words could say. We all knew how much my aunt and uncle wanted children. We also knew that they would be great parents. They both took time off from their jobs to travel across the state to pick up their child at the hospital. According to my aunt and uncle, it was love at first sight.

They had already bought a car seat and made sure it was fastened correctly in the back seat. After all the papers were signed, they left the hospital with their precious child. Carefully, they put her in the car seat. My aunt sat next to her while my uncle began the drive home.

Just a few blocks from the hospital, a car ran a red light and smashed into the side of the car. The police told us later that the driver was legally drunk.

The baby made a small whimper and then was silent. My aunt and uncle were shaken and bruised, but not badly injured. The medics raced back to the same hospital with the baby that both had held only briefly.

All we could do was pray to God that everything would happen the way it should. There were nervous phone calls each hour as they awaited the outcome. They told us it would be the biggest loss of their lives if something happened to their baby.

After what seemed an eternity, my aunt and uncle called with good news. The internal injuries were not serious and the baby was going to be all right.

God filled our lives with joy the day Eva was brought into our family. We have so much to be thankful for because of her. She is so perfect and she never stops smiling. God seemed to know she was just right for my aunt and uncle and the rest of us. She will grow up with a family who loves her and would do anything in the world for her.

We will give thanks and praise God forever. Eva is a blessing from heaven who touches our lives every day. God turned mourning into dancing both the day Eva was born and the day she survived the crash.

Scripture

Psalm 30:11-12
John 9:1-5
Romans 8:38-39

Skill Focus

Trust
Compassion

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Prayer
O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Collect for the Renewal of Life
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 99

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

1 Mourning Into Dancing

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

You have turned my mourning into dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,
so that my soul may praise you and not be silent.
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.
Psalm 30:11-12

Commentary: Often, it is difficult to know whether or not God answers, or even hears, people's prayers. Particularly in times of difficulty or when they are struggling through misfortune, they feel cut off from God. Perhaps they even feel that God is punishing them. During these times, it is helpful to remember that others have also had these feelings. The Bible is filled with passages such as *Psalm 30* that are full of strong, conflicting, and even difficult emotions. The psalmist describes his sorrow and affliction in detail, and seems to be saying, "Here God, this is what is going on, now do something about it." In this psalm, as in so many others, the psalmist finds something to give thanks for, evidence that God has heard his cry, and has in some mysterious way answered his prayer.

☐ Questions

- Have you ever felt that God answered your prayer? Describe how you felt.
- Have there been times you felt God just wasn't listening? What did you do?
- Does God always answer prayer the way you want it answered?

: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did God answer the family's prayers?
- Have you ever asked God for something you really wanted? What happened?

☐ Activities

Personal Story

Reread the Personal Story. While everything seemed to work out, there are other times in life when things don't work out so well. Individually or in small groups, write a new ending to the story from the perspectives of the aunt and uncle, the driver of the other car, and the rescue workers. Share the new endings with the larger group. Discuss the different perspectives.

- Where is God in each story?
- What, if anything, was there to give thanks for?
- How can God make a difference in the lives of each character in the future?

Think of a time when something tragic happened to you or to someone in your community. For example, a tragic car accident involving young people or the death of a child from cancer. Talk about ways people involved in the tragedy responded and how God turned mourning into dancing. Identify a fundraiser or project that grew out of a community or personal tragedy, such as a scholarship fund in a child's name. Find out how individuals or the group could get involved.

Lighting a Light in the Darkness

Distribute a lighted candle to each participant. After everyone has a candle, turn off all other lights in the room. (If possible, find a room with no outside lighting.) Invite one person at a time to name something that is negative or harmful. The only requirement is that it has to begin with the same letter as their first names. For example, John says "jealousy" and Natasha says "nuclear war." As the word is said, the person blows out his or her candle. When the last candle is extinguished, the room should be very dark.

After a brief pause, a volunteer says, "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness." While relighting his or her candle, each person says something positive or hopeful. These words should also begin with the same letter as their first names, such as "justice" for John and "noticing a lonely person" for Natasha. Afterward, discuss the experience.

- Did the fading light make you feel uncomfortable?
- How did the light of hope change that feeling?
- Is there something you could do for someone to bring light into his or her life?
- When has someone been a light of hope for you?

Ask participants to think about the word or phrase they said in the second part of the exercise. If possible, turn your words into action.

Light for Others

Bring in several commercial sympathy cards and read them to the group. Discuss how you felt about them.

- Is the card effective?
- Would you want to receive it if you were mourning?
- Does the card address feelings that you have had?

Write your own cards about turning mourning into joy. These do not necessarily have to be about death. For example, you could design a card for someone whose parents are undergoing a divorce, or another for someone who has broken up with a boyfriend/girlfriend. Share the cards with the rest of the group. Select ones that the group particularly likes and make color copies for everyone.

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2 Revealing God's Works

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

John 9:1-5

Commentary: People in biblical times believed that any suffering or infirmity was a result of someone's sin. When Jesus' disciples saw a man blind from birth, they assumed it was a result of sin; the only question was whether it was the result of his sin or his parents' sin. When they ask Jesus about this, he surprised them with his answer: neither. This man was born blind so that God's works might be revealed. Jesus taught that illness and evil are not the work of God, but that they provide a way to make God's will present in the world.

☐ Questions

- Have you ever heard someone say that an illness or tragedy was "God's will"? Based on the passage, how would Jesus respond to this? What would be a better response?
- Jesus called himself the light of the world. Who is responsible for being the light of the world today? Describe a time when you have brought light into a dark situation.

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Did the narrator's aunt and uncle do anything wrong that resulted in their inability to have children? What would Jesus say to them?
- Do you know someone who has faced a major disappointment? What did you say? Would you be better prepared now?

☐ Activities

Hidden Objects

Find a picture that has hidden objects or cut out several word searches from a newspaper or game book. Make photocopies for each participant. After everyone has found the hidden images or words, talk about how we often judge people by the way they look

- Have you ever been misunderstood because of your appearance?
- Think about a time you or someone you know changed appearance with a haircut, a new piercing, or a new clothing style. How did people react?

Distribute index cards. Ask participants to write down a prejudice they have. The word prejudice means to pre-judge, to form an opinion without getting to know the person. To get started, mention several stereotypes they may have about certain groups of people, such as politicians, lawyers, computer programmers, rock stars, the grunge group, or preppies. Gather and shuffle the cards. Look at each one and write on the card one or two words that describe how God's work could be revealed in that person. Afterward, throw the cards away one at a time while the group says, "Help us be the light of the world." During the week, be aware of the temptation to judge others and replace that judgment with compassion and understanding.

Living With Pain

The movie *Regarding Henry* is about a self-centered lawyer who loses all memory when he is shot. He is forced to deal with his lost memory and a body that is slow to recover. Watch the clip of the scene in which his physical therapist responds to Henry's complaints with his own story—an injury on the football field stopped his sensational athletic career and led him to his current profession. Afterward, ask participants if they have ever been injured for an extended period of time.

Brainstorm different kinds of pain that keeps people from living life the way they expected to. For example, a broken leg or other physical injury, pneumonia or other diseases, or a divorce that results in split custody. For each situation discuss the following questions:

- Is it sometimes tempting to complain without taking any action? Is complaining always bad?
- Is there something you can do in this situation?
- Is doing nothing sometimes the best solution?
- When you hurt, how can God's light shine in your life?

Think about someone you know who is feeling the kind of pain that is affecting his or her life. Pray for that person during the week.

Reaching Out

Find a way to work with children who have handicapping conditions or invite someone who works with these children to talk to the group. If you choose to work with children, you could work with a child who goes to your church, or volunteer at a place that helps people with handicapped conditions.

Afterward, talk about the experience. Before you begin the discussion, assign each participant a handicapping condition. For example, one person can use words with no more than three letters, another is blindfolded, another wear earplugs and cannot speak, and another cannot move anything below the neck.

- What is it like to be temporarily handicapped?
- How is God revealed in the children you met or heard about?
- How can the church use the gifts of people with handicapping conditions more effectively?

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3 Nothing Separates People from God

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

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 8:38-39

Commentary: Paul is addressing the Christians in Rome in this passage. To be a Christian in the first century was both difficult and dangerous. Paul encourages them with these famous words of hope, promising that God will never desert them. Neither the cosmic evil of the universe, nor the evil powers of the world, nor even our own sin will separate us from the love of God.

☐ Questions

- Think about a dark time in your life that was both difficult and dangerous. Could you feel God's love?
- Is God's love with us even when we don't recognize it?
- Which part of the passage is most comforting to you?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did the narrator's aunt and uncle respond to the disappointment of not being able to have children?
- When do you think God's presence meant the most to them?

☐ Activities

Being Close to God

The Bible was originally an oral tradition, meant to be spoken instead of read. Ask a male and a female to reread the passage aloud. Talk about its meaning to you.

- Which phrase or word did you notice? How does that word or phrase fit into your life?
- How does the passage make you feel?
- If you were troubled or frightened, would this passage soothe you?
- Can other people help you feel the love of God? How?

Bring in wood-burning sets, calligraphy brushes and ink, or painting materials. If possible, get a four-inch wood cube from a lumber or hardware store for every person. Select phrases from the passage that speaks to you, such as "Nothing separates us from the love of God." Burn, write, or paint the phrases on different faces of the cube. Keep it so you can take it out when you are in a painful, dark place. Or share it with a friend who is in a difficult or frightening place.

Listening to God

People can be in a crowd and still feel alone or be in a church and feel estranged from God. People are lonely and estranged in spite of their busy lives and full schedules. Take some time to experiment with different ways to become aware of God's presence. Try one or more of the following prayer styles:

- **Pray the Bible:** Ask a volunteer to read the passage from Romans or *Psalm 23* from Sessions 1 or 9. Listen for a word or phrase that jumps out at you. Stay with those words in silence. Later, write them down if they continue to have meaning for your life.
- **With Music:** Find a comfortable position either sitting on the floor or in a chair. Play soft music (without lyrics) in the background or sounds of nature such as running water, waves, or a thunderstorm. As your body relaxes, think about God's love for you. Feel his presence around you and others in the room.
- **With Words:** Relax your body with several deep breaths and sit in silence for a few moments. Ask a volunteer with a soothing voice to then set up a possible encounter with Jesus. For example, describe a scene at the beach or on a mountain trail where you are alone. From a distance, you see Jesus walking towards you. He just wants to talk. In silence think about the questions, emotions, or ideas you want to share with him. Don't be afraid to be angry or sad.
- **In Silence:** Sit in a comfortable position. Relax your body, beginning at your feet and working upward. As you feel the tension leave your body, breathe deeply from the diaphragm. Use a mantra, a word or short phrase, to help you clear away distractions. Try to focus on God's presence for at least ten minutes.

Encourage the group to use these prayer methods whenever they feel alone or estranged from God.

Sharing God's Love

Reread and discuss the scripture passage. The Bible often describes difficult and dark situations. Many of these take place in the wilderness. Using a concordance, look up references to the wilderness in the Bible.

- What is usually the situation in these passages?
- Where is God when people are in the wilderness?
- Where is your wilderness? Is God there?

Sometimes in the midst of problems, people need to be reminded of God's love and presence in their lives. Pass out construction paper and markers. Make bookmarks or strips of paper that say: "Nothing separates us from God." Make as many as possible to distribute at your church anonymously. For example, put the bookmarks in prayer books at your worship space; leave one at the lectern where the scriptures are read or the clergy preach; put them in Sunday-school classrooms before anyone arrives; or put them on windshields during a service. Do you like sharing God's love?

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What Is Evil?

Goodness in the Face of Evil

SESSION 9

Objective

Youth will be able to describe ways God helps them cope with evil.

Personal Story

When I studied Native American history, I didn't understand the wrongs that these people have suffered. When I went on a mission trip to a reservation in South Dakota, I came face to face with the evil people inflict on each other and the devastating results. Throughout history, many Native Americans were forced onto reservations, stripped of much of their culture, and discriminated against. I realized the impact that evil has on people. Evil spreads its tentacles and produces more evil and then blinds people to what is good in life. Because of the oppression of Native Americans, many live in poverty, surrounded by the evils of discrimination, alcoholism, and crime.

A result of past and present evils in Native American society has also brought a sense of hopelessness to some. They continue to be faced with a lack of jobs, land that cannot be farmed, and widespread discrimination.

At first, I was overwhelmed by what I saw. It was hard to believe that one group of people could have been so unjust to another group that I found to be kind, warm, and fascinating. The evil they have faced seems so contrary to God's desire that we love and care for each other. I wanted to just turn away and not face the effects of evil. My heart ached, but I also longed to reach out to these people.

It was very hard to know how to act in this situation. Then I realized that all I could do was ask God for strength to do whatever felt right in my heart. I plunged ahead to make preparations for the Bible Camp we were planning for the children.

The first day of camp brought a hundred children who were excited and eager. As they entered I realized that the best way to deal with the evils that burdened me was to show these children the love of God. The only way I could do that was to give them a part of myself.

Of course some children and adults turned away from us, but I found so many beautiful and loving children whose faces lit up at the love and care that we offered them. I also found many adults who accepted us and began attending our Bible study.

I learned that in an imperfect world, it's impossible to erase all evil. However, the power of God's love and the light it brings is greater than the darkest evil.

Scripture

Psalm 23

Skill Focus

Communication
Forgiveness

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Prayer
Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*
Of the Reign of Christ
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 254

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

☐ Begin Here: Remembering Scripture

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

Psalm 23

Connect With the Personal Story

Read the Personal Story for this session. Think about some form of evil similar to the one described in the story that you have experienced or read about, such as stories from the Holocaust or current events in the media. Talk about the evil the group identifies.

- What are the similarities and differences in the stories?
- Does evil always have the same face?
- Does evil also occur when people do nothing?
- Where is God in these stories?

The narrator found hope in the love of God and the ability of people to love one another. Look at the stories a second time. Discuss what the outcomes of your stories would be if people passed the love of God to each other instead of the darkness of evil.

☐ Questions

- What is your favorite part of *Psalm 23*? Why?
- What are God's rod and staff? How do they keep evil away?
- Have you discovered new ways to feel God's presence in the face of evil during this course of study? Explain.

RESPONDING ACTIVITIES

The group can review some of the things they have learned about evil and God's abiding presence 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 evil in the universe, from world powers, or from within. List your ideas on a piece of newsprint and encourage participants to select one thing to do. Possible responses are listed below:

- Try out the prayer methods at home that were described in Session 8. Find a place that is quiet and free from distractions. Identify the method that works best for you and use it once a day.
- Identify a symbol of a piece of God's armor (Session 3) that would protect you against an evil you are facing.
- Read Henri Nouwen's book, *??????*, that describes Satan's temptations of Christ. Compare Nouwen's images to your own life.
- Check back on your commitment to follow God's commandments (Session 6). Are you doing the three things you wrote down? Select another commandment and write down three things you can do to keep it.
- Read about people who have courageously faced evil even when they faced death. For example, find out what happened to Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he stood up to Hitler's government. Or read about Terry Waite's kidnapping and confinement in Lebanon. Or watch the movie *Gandhi* that describes Mahatma Gandhi's refusal to respond with violence in the face of evil.

☐ Group

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

- Look back at the definition of evil you wrote for Session 2. Is there anything you want to change or add? Rewrite the definition to reflect your study of evil and the power of God's love.
- Instead of looking for images of Satan in art and the media (Session 3), find images of God's love. Make an exhibit to hang in your meeting space or create your own art reflecting God's love.
- Find out more about mediation programs designed to curtail violence in schools and the community (Session 4). Consider asking a speaker to talk to the youth group at your church about how to confront people without violence.

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☐ Celebrate!

Celebrate the completion of the module on evil and the presence of God's love with a specific activity. Ask the group to think of an appropriate response or use on of the following suggestions.

Art

- Look at Resource Poster No. 2 used in defining evil. Make your own poster of symbols of goodness to be used in a liturgy or to hang somewhere in the church. In addition to Christian symbols (see Resource Poster No. 4), depict places you have visited that have brought you peace.
- Design an icon (Session 2) to be used by the group as a means of reaching God.
- Make copies of the cards you made in Session 8 for others in the church.

Liturgy

- Use the questions from the service of Holy Baptism on p. 302-303 of *The Book of Common Prayer* and the covenant on p. 304-305 as part of a liturgy to celebrate Christ's victory over evil and darkness.
- Use the passages you discovered describing the human side of Christ (Session 5) in a liturgy or prayer service.
- Incorporate the stone-washing exercise (Session 6) as part of a forgiveness liturgy.
- Use the music selected in Session 7 in a worship service.
- Hang the images showing God's love (described on the previous page) around the altar for a worship service.

Community

- Act out the fairy tales you chose in Session 2 for a group of children. Show how goodness triumphs over evil.
- Make a display of Resource Poster No. 6 with the newspaper clippings connected by yarn and put it somewhere in your church. Ask parishioners to pray for the conflicts, disasters, and violence in the stories you found.
- Invite another group in the church to join you in the World Vision 30-Hour Fast (Session 5).

Fun

- If you visited a youth group as part of Session 4, invite them to help you celebrate the end of this unit of study.
- Go to an amusement or theme park as a group. Celebrate the presence of God with laughter and by having a good time.

FOLLOW THROUGH

Individual Response: Make a covenant with each other to be lights in the darkness that members of the group might face in the future. Use the words, phrases, and symbols you created during this course of study to help you face your own darkness. If you decide to do something specific from the list on the previous page or from your own ideas, write the task or action down to remind you of the commitment you've made. Think about the steps that you need to take to accomplish this activity or goal.

- Do you need help to complete this activity or to meet your goal?
- Would the activity you selected, such as research, be more effective and fun if you did it with someone else?
- Can you identify someone in the group, the church, or the community who can help you?

Group Response: Review the list of ideas the group developed as ways to respond to issues raised in your study of evil. Decide which ideas the group is most interested in. You may decide to undertake one longer project or select several short-term activities. Take into consideration other commitments participants may have, such as sports and school-related activities. Talk about the tasks necessary to complete the project you have selected. Estimate how much time each task will take, and ask the group to take responsibility for seeing that each is completed. If you decide to work on a project that involves others in the church or community, discuss who you want to work with and how to get other people involved.

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

Celebrate: Ask for several volunteers to work on an appropriate liturgical response to your study of evil and the presence of God's love. Use the ideas on this page or develop your own. The group also may wish to complete an activity from a previous session suggested in the Celebrate sections that you didn't do earlier. Select someone to put together art displays or to make posters and icons. If you decide to go to a theme park, be sure to get appropriate permission and adult drivers. If you have a party with another youth group, send out invitations in time for them to make appropriate plans.

- Does the celebration you selected include everyone in the group?
- Do you want to invite others you helped you in your study of evil to your celebration?

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MOVING AHEAD

What Is Evil?

Outreach Activities for Sessions 2-8

Session	Theme	Suggested Outreach Activity
Defining Evil	3	• Pray for an evil situation you discovered. • Find a way to help others that uses your gifts
Satanism and the Occult	3	• Share your drama based on the armor of God with another group. Help them join in the action of the play by making armor.
Evil Powers	1 2 3	• Pray for those affected by conflicts and wars in the world. • Find ways to help people who are victims of war. • Research the effects of a natural disaster; pray for those whose lives and homes were devastated • Distribute information about disaster relief in your own community. • Plan a fundraiser or collect clothing and food for victims of a natural disaster. • Pray for God's healing presence in communities torn by violence.
Temptation	2 3	• Share a skit about Satan's temptations of Christ with another group at your church. • Work with people who are different from you to gain insight into their lives.
Sin	1 3	• Pray for those who are a part of the justice system and the people they work with. • Share the "Advice for Teens" booklet with other youth that you compiled from the panel discussion.
Alternative Spirituality	1 3	• Show your ad for Christianity to another group in the church. • Make a Lent or Advent book of participants' stories. • Join a group in your church whose members live out their faith by serving others.
Goodness in the Face of Evil	1 2 3	• Identify a community project that grew out of a tragedy and find a way to be a part of it. • Volunteer to work with children with handicapping conditions. • Distribute bookmarks about God's love anonymously to people at your church.

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