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books

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Leader's Guide



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Indianapolis, Indiana



explore

A Discipleship Series for Preteens

books

Uncover the Truth about God

1&2

Discover Your Place in God's Plan

explore leader's guide

Copyright © 2009 by Wesleyan Publishing House
Published by Wesleyan Publishing House, Indianapolis, Indiana 46250
Printed in the United States of America
ISBN: 978-0-89827-418-9

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introduction

Explore is a discipleship resource for your church's intentional ministry to preteens—those who may no longer consider themselves children but are not yet teens.

Your preteens are on the verge of becoming teens and embarking on a culture that is in need of an infusion of followers of Christ. Intentional discipleship as provided in *Explore* will help ground them in their faith, establish routines that will move them in their spiritual formation, and prepare them to face a world desperately in need of the Savior.

The *Explore* discipleship series is written in a small group format to provide opportunity for deeper, relational connections. It's progressive in design, moving students from an internal confirmation of their faith, to a commitment to a fellowship of believers, on to service within the fellowship, and finally to personal ministry outside the doors of the church. It's intentional in that it combines personal teaching moments that are highly interactive and reflective with corporate celebrations.

Transition is a key word to describe the life of preteens. Their bodies are transitioning as they move from child-size to adult-looking bodies. Their minds are transitioning as they move from concrete to abstract thinking. They are developing the ability to reflect, interpret, and assimilate. Socially, preteens are moving from being family centered to being friend centered. Spiritually they are moving away from the borrowed faith of their parents and teachers to a personalized faith that they own.

This Time of Transition

"What you believe by the time you are 13 is what you will die believing . . . most people's minds are made up and they believe they know what they need to know spiritually by age 13. Their focus in absorbing religious teaching after that age is to gain reassurance and confirmation of their existing beliefs rather than to glean new insights that will redefine their foundations" (George Barna).

This time of transition is a prime opportunity to instill biblical truths and to give your preteens an opportunity to confirm their faith. Preteens are capable of powerful commitment and have the ability to process deep spiritual insights, if given the opportunity and motivation. Here are some key things to remember when sharing biblical truth with preteens:

- They desire authentic relationships with adults who are transparent.
- Boys often respect male leaders greater than female, while girls usually respect either equally. Make sure you have male volunteers as part of your preteen ministry.
- They need you to answer the question "So what?" so they can understand why.
- They are active and loud as they sort out who they are and where they fit in.

- They are very self-conscious and desire a great deal of attention.
- They need routine and clear guidelines, but seek independence.
- They need to talk and question.
- They have drastic mood swings and waffle between levels of maturity.
- Girls are all about friends and are into make-up, fashion and appearance.
- Boys want to play and care little about personal appearance.

What Is the *Explore* Discipleship Series?

The *Explore* series is comprised of four student books, each containing six weeks of discipleship lessons for preteens, for a total of twenty-four weeks worth of material. Each set of six lessons culminates in a celebration. There are also two leader's guides, one for student books 1 and 2 and one for student books 3 and 4.

The outline of lessons for the entire 24-week course is:

book ①

Uncover the Truth about God

1. God
 2. The Bible
 3. Jesus
 4. Humanity
 5. Salvation
 6. Baptism
- Celebration: Baptism

book ③

Experience God's Power in You

1. Bible Study
 2. Prayer
 3. Evangelism
 4. Fellowship
 5. Service
 6. Stewardship
- Celebration: Student Leadership

book ②

Discover Your Place in God's Plan

1. The Trinity
 2. Temptation
 3. Bible Study and Prayer
 4. Holy Living
 5. Worship
 6. Membership
- Celebration: Student Membership

book ④

Encounter Your Mission for God

1. Fruits of the Spirit
 2. Spiritual Gifts
 3. Spiritual Disciplines
 4. Compassion
 5. The Call
 6. Missions
- Celebration: Mission Experience

Christian character development is a lifelong process. No one is too young or old to start or stop growing deeper in their life with Jesus. It is a privilege to disciple every person intentionally. If we want our youth, young adults, parents, grandparents, and culture to behave like Jesus, now is the time to explore the truths of God and His Church with our children.



note to leaders

Explore is a small group discipleship tool for the students in transition between your children's ministry program and youth group. The material provides for twenty-four weeks of teaching and four weeks of celebrations. This can be done by using two of the books in the fall semester for twelve weeks of programming and two of the books in the spring semester for another twelve weeks. It can also be used over two years providing a six week program each fall and spring for two years.

This small group can meet during the traditional Sunday school hour, during a midweek programming hour, or on Sunday evening. The books are also an excellent resource for setting up a time of independent programming—a time set apart from the typical ministry schedule for the purpose of intentional discipleship with preteens. Establishing a unique time of discipleship for preteens also allows flexibility in finding a time frame and location that works best for the group.

The Leader's Guide for each lesson contains the following elements in this order:

Thesis: A single sentence that summarizes the entire content of the lesson into one thought.

Main Points: Three sentences that summarize the primary teaching points for each lesson.

Lesson Preparation: Provides leader instructions for what to do prior to teaching each lesson.

Connect: Helps create a relational environment, giving the students and leader an opportunity to catch up on life.

Warm Up: Provides a "hook" and introduces the concept for the lesson to gain the interest and attention of students.

Engage: Presents the Bible teaching component, including biblical background.

Relate: Provides the real life application, answers the "so what?" question and makes the theme personal.

Question: Launches the group into asking interactive and exploratory questions about the content and relational elements of what was presented so that they can process and internalize.

Prayer: Offers a suggested prayer to pray with the students.

Unwind: Creates group connection and lightens the atmosphere before sending them home.

Challenge: Provides a tangible outcome that practically relates the concept to the students' real world. Also includes a challenge verse to study each week with the goal being they will commit the verse to memory.

Additional resources to enhance each lesson can be found at www.wesleyan.org/explore.

Of these elements, *Engage*, *Question*, and *Challenge* appear in the student book. The students are asked to use their book as a reflection journal, completing the content and following the challenges.

There is enough material provided in each lesson for a full 90 minutes of programming. If your time is shorter than that, pick and choose the elements that work best for your group and fill your time allotment. The elements that parallel the student's book—*Engage*, *Question*, and *Challenge*—would be the foundational elements you would begin with and build the rest of your teaching time from.

The Bible verses referenced throughout *Explore* are quoted from the *Live Bible*. We strongly encourage you to make available for each student a copy of the *Live Bible* so that you and your preteens can be literally on the same page. In a small group it is a challenge to have a Bible study with a leader and students using different Bibles and especially different translations. The Leader's Guide contains the corresponding page number for each biblical reference to help you find the verses quickly. The *Live Bible* is written in the New Living Translation which is most appropriate for this age level, providing easier readability and comprehension for preteens.

book **1**

Uncover the Truth about God

Leader's Guide



explore

In this book students will learn—

- How you can believe in God even though you can't see Him.
- God's Word, your instruction book for life.
- Who Jesus is and what He did for you.
- Why God forgives us.
- How being baptized marks the start of a whole new life.

You are on an amazing journey of faith—let's *Explore* it together!



1. God

We can believe in God even though we can't see Him.

Main Points

We can see the effects God has on nature.

We can see the effects God has in Scripture.

We can see the effects God has throughout history.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Genesis 1:1—2:4 and Psalm 19:1–6.

Items needed: *Live Bible* (one for each student), balloons (one for each student), play dough, paper, and pens. For the egg drop activity (per student): egg, two sheets of paper, a sandwich bag, tape, and four pieces of yarn.

Connect

What is the first picture that comes to mind when you hear the word *journey*?

Where was the last place you journeyed to?

Begin the conversation with a story of your last journey.

What was the best part of your trip?

Today we are going to begin our journey of faith together. During these next six weeks we are going to *Explore* key truths about our faith in God. Our starting point in this journey as we *uncover the truth* is God.

Warm Up

How can we believe in something we can't see?

Do you believe in air?

How do we know air exists?

plan

ask

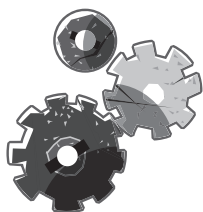
God

Let's do an activity to prove air exists even though we can't see it.

Give the preteens a balloon. Have them blow it up and pinch the end. Don't tie the balloons.

We know air exists even though we cannot see it because we can see the effect it has on our balloons.

Count to three and have them release their balloons.



Engage

There are so many things that we believe in even though we can't see them. We believe in gravity, wind, and air. We believe in these things, because we can see the effects they have on the world around us. Just like each of these things we can believe in God because we can see the effects that He has had on nature, in Scripture, and throughout history.

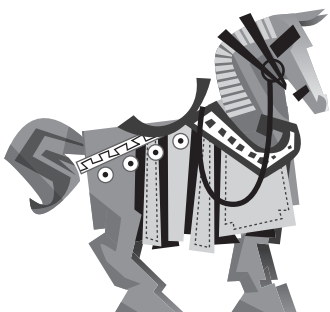
say

I Can Know It Is True

1. We can see the effects God has on nature. Nature didn't happen by accident. Nature is creative and organized. Nature points us to an intelligent creator, God. We can read about the effects God has on nature in Genesis 1:1—2:4 and Isaiah 44:24.
2. We can see the effects God has in Scripture. Even though humans wrote the Bible, God inspired each word. Scripture helps us know who God is and how to have a relationship with Him. We can read about the effects God has in Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16.
3. We can see the effects God has throughout history. The course of history has been affected by the many miracles that God has performed. Moses, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Daniel, Peter, and Paul are just a few people who witnessed God's power through miracles. As a result of these marvelous acts, their faith in God was strengthened. God still performs miracles and is changing lives every day! Read about the effect God has throughout history in Exodus 4:1–17; Daniel 6; and Acts 16:16–34.

These verses are extensive. If time does not permit the full reading of all three, ask preteens if they can summarize the stories by giving prompts. Exodus 4:1–17 is God's sending of Moses to free His people from Egypt. Daniel 6 is the story of Daniel's faithfulness to God. Acts 16 is the story of Paul and Silas being freed from prison.

Even though we may not be able to physically see God today, He reveals himself to us through nature, Scripture, and history. Take a look around you and begin to discover what an amazing and powerful God we worship!



Check It Out

Romans 1:20 says, “For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God” (p. 1110, *Live*).

➤ What are some of God’s invisible qualities that are revealed in nature?

His power, love, creativity, gentleness, humor, justice, and forgiveness.

Matthew 22:29 says, “Jesus replied, ‘Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God’” (p. 973, *Live*).

➤ How is the power of God shown in Scripture?

His power in creation, over death, over enemies, and over Satan.

Job 5:9 says, “He does great things too marvelous to understand. He performs countless miracles” (p. 504, *Live*).

Deuteronomy 10:21 says, “He alone is your God, the only one who is worthy of your praise, the one who has done these mighty miracles that you have seen with your own eyes” (p. 187, *Live*).

➤ What can we learn about God through the miracles He performs?

He loves us, He has power over nature and His creation, and He’s still active in His creation.

Relate

Earlier in the lesson, we saw the effects of air. Now, we are going to see the effects of another one of God’s invisible creations—gravity.

Hand out the egg drop materials to each preteen. Allow five minutes for each one to create a protective covering to shield their egg from the effects of gravity.

Check out the effects gravity has on this egg.

Go to an area where they can toss the eggs in the air. Permit each preteen to throw his or her egg in the air. After each egg has landed, examine the eggs to determine the effect gravity has on them.

God

How is not being able to see gravity like not being able to see God?

We know it exists because we can see the effect it has.

It's great to know we can believe in God even when we can't see Him.



Question

Read Job 38:1–12.

What verse sticks out to you? Why?

Nature is full of amazing and complex things. Think about the sun. If it were located any closer to the earth, we would not be able to survive because of the intense heat. If it were located any farther from the earth, we would not be able to survive because of the extreme cold. God, in all of His wisdom knew how large the sun needed to be, exactly where it needed to be located, and how fast the earth needed to rotate around it in order for us to live here on earth. Creation is no accident.

➤ Think about the world around you. What are four other parts of creation that you think are too complex to be an accident?

The human eye, the oceans and all their life forms, the various species of dogs, a flower, the way a bee pollinates, and the four seasons.

Take a moment and thank God for creating each of those things.

Psalm 106:2 says, “Who can list the glorious miracles of the LORD? Who can ever praise him enough?” (p. 593, *Live*).

➤ See how many miracles you can list in three minutes!

Deuteronomy 4:32 says, “Now search all of history, from the time God created people on the earth until now, and search from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything as great as this ever been seen or heard before?” (p. 181, *Live*).

In this passage, God was challenging the Israelites to look at their history and remember what God had done for them.

➤ Think about your life. List two or three things that God has done for you.

Prayer

Dear Father,

Thank you for showing Yourself in Your creation and history. Thank you that we can read about You in the Bible. Help us believe in You and see You during our journey this week. Amen.



Unwind

God knew what He was doing when He created all of creation. From the simple yet complex blade of grass to the creative uniqueness of the duck-billed platypus, all of creation points us toward God. Let's take some time to create our own fun creature.

Give each preteen some play dough, a piece of paper, and a pen.

I will give you five minutes to mold the play dough into your very own unique creature. Use the paper and pen to write down the name of your creature, what it can do, where it lives, and any other interesting facts about it.

After five minutes, have each one give a brief presentation to the class about their creature.

Challenge

As you *Explore* through the week, your challenge is to uncover five different ways God is at work around you. Make a list in your book of the effects of God you see and hear. At the end of each day take time to praise God for each one you have written down.



Don't forget to bring your list to class next week so we can compare what we have seen and heard.

Explore

Romans 1:20 says, "For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God" (p. 1110, *Live*).

See if you can learn this verse in one week! I challenge you to do it!

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



2. The Bible

God's Word is our instruction book for life.

Main Points

God's Word is true.

God's Word teaches us who God is.

God's Word helps us know right from wrong.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Psalm 1:1–2; Proverbs 30:5; Isaiah 44:8; Jeremiah 23:24; Matthew 5:48; Romans 2:18; 2 Timothy 3:15; and James 1:18–25.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one for each student), recipe cards (at least one per student), paper, markers, cookie ingredients (flour, baking soda, salt, butter, sugar, brown sugar, vanilla extract, eggs, chocolate chips), measuring utensils, bowls, and mixing spoons.

ask

Connect

Why can we believe in God even though we can't see Him?

Review last week's three main points: We can see the effects God has on nature, in Scripture, and throughout history.

What are three ways you uncovered God at work around you last week?

Allow the students to respond.

How difficult was it to observe the effects of God around you?

Be prepared to share your answer.

What do you know about the Bible? How important is the Bible in your life right now?

Encourage the students to be honest.

Today we are going to continue to *Explore* by discovering the importance of the Bible.

Warm Up

Show the students a set of recipe cards and let each choose one recipe to examine.

How many of you like to cook?

Allow time for responses.

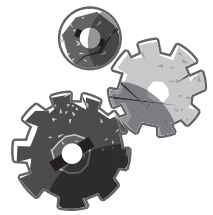
Cooking can be a lot of fun. An important part of cooking is following the recipe. Take a moment to look over the recipe in front of you. What are some of the important parts of a good recipe?

Allow time for responses.

Every good recipe gives you a list of ingredients, measurements for each ingredient, and instructions for mixing and cooking the ingredients.

Engage

God's Word, the Bible, is a lot like a recipe. It isn't a recipe for cookies and cakes; it's God's recipe for our lives. The Bible gives us instructions on how to live. To use a recipe there are things you need to know. Likewise the Bible has three truths that we need to know in order to understand and trust it. Let's take a closer look at what God's Word is all about.



I Can Know It Is True

1. God's Word is true. As we read the Bible, we can be sure that we are reading the truth. There is not one verse in the Bible that is false. God means what He says in the Bible, and we can trust in Him to keep His promises. Check out what it says in Proverbs 30:5 and James 1:18.
2. God's Word teaches us who God is. God loves us and wants us to know Him. All throughout the Bible, God shows us who He is and how to have a friendship with Him. You can learn more about who God is in Isaiah 44:8; Jeremiah 23:24; and Matthew 5:48.
3. God's Word helps us know right from wrong. Life is full of decisions, and we may not always know which way to go. The Bible helps us learn which choices are right and which choices are wrong. When we use His Word to make right choices, we will live a life that is pleasing to God. Read about it in Psalm 1:1–2; Romans 2:18; and James 1:22–25.

The Bible is God's way of talking and communicating with us. We don't have to wonder what God is like or guess how we can know Him. He has made all these things clear to us in His Word.

The Bible

If you want to make a good cake, you need to start with a good recipe. If you want to live a life that is pleasing to God, you have to start with the Bible. The Bible gives us instructions on how to live the best life possible.

read

Check It Out

Psalm 33:4 says, "For the word of the LORD holds true, and we can trust everything he does" (p. 549, *Live*).

Second Timothy 3:14 says, "But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you" (p. 1203, *Live*).

➤ Why is it important to know God's Word is true?

When you trust that it's true, you can trust that what it says about God is true.

Psalm 90:2 says, "Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God" (p. 585, *Live*).

Jeremiah 32:17 says, "O Sovereign LORD! You have made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!" (p. 769, *Live*).

Ephesians 2:18 says, "Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us" (p. 1165, *Live*).

➤ What do these verses teach us about who God is?

He was before creation, He created the earth and is powerful, He wants to be our Father, and we can come to Him.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work" (p. 1203, *Live*).

➤ What is one wrong thing the Bible tells us not to do?

Sin.

➤ What is one right thing the Bible tells us to do?

Good work.



Relate

It's important to have the correct recipe for life just like it's important to have the correct recipe for cookies.

Lay out the ingredients and measuring utensils needed to make chocolate chip cookies. Give the group a piece of paper and marker.

Today we are going to make chocolate chip cookies without the recipe. You are going to create your own recipe for chocolate chip cookies.

Give preteens five minutes to create their recipe. Then instruct them to mix their cookies according to their own recipe.

Now I'm going to read the real recipe on how to make chocolate chip cookies.

Read the instructions, helping preteens see the differences between their instructions and the real instructions.

Just like with these cookies, we need to follow the real recipe God gave us in His Word so that we can please Him.

If possible, bake the preteen's cookies according to their instructions during the next activities. Allow them to taste the finished product. Talk about how the cookies would have been better with the real recipe.

Question

➤ How is trying to live life without reading the Bible like trying to make cookies without using a recipe?

Allow for their responses.

We all know that God's Word is important. Yet many of us don't take time out of our day to read what God has to say to us.

➤ What are three things that prevent or keep you from reading the Bible?

Allow for their responses: not enough time, don't know what to read, don't know where to start.

➤ What are some ways that you can overcome those obstacles?

Set aside a specific time to read it each day, find a good preteen devotional, or ask someone to keep you accountable.



The Bible

God loves us and wants us to know Him. That is why He gave us His Word. The Bible is God's letter of friendship and love sent just for us. Make it a habit to take a little time out of your day to let God talk to you through His Word, the Bible.

pray

Prayer

Dear Father,

We thank you for giving us Your Word. Thank you for giving us instructions on how to live the best life possible. Help us *Explore* Your Word and follow Your instructions. Amen.

Unwind

Many people have recipes that have been given to them by their grandmothers or great-grandmothers. They have survived the test of time. The Bible, our best recipe for life, has been copied and preserved perfectly for centuries. Scribes were the first people to copy Scripture word for word by candlelight. If they made one mistake, they would burn their copy and start over. We are going to practice being scribes by copying Psalm 119.

Hand out a piece of paper and a pen to each student. Allow five minutes to copy as much Scripture without error as possible. For added effect, darken the room and use candlelight during this activity.

The scribes had an important job of copying the Bible.



Challenge

During this week as you *Uncover the Truth about God*, I challenge you to read the complete chapter of Mark 8 (p. 993, *Live*). Your book has a reading plan to help you accomplish this goal. As you read the chapter, use a pencil to underline anything that you don't understand. Circle the Scripture that describes who Jesus is.

Explore

Second Timothy 3:16–17 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work" (p. 1203, *Live*).

Every day before you begin your reading in Mark, repeat the *Explore* verse. By the end of the week you should have it memorized!

help

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

3. Sin

We have all sinned and there are consequences that come with sin.

Main Points

Because of Adam and Eve, we are all born into sin.

Sin is willful disobedience against God and can be an action or an attitude.

Sin separates us from God, but He provided the way to re-establish (reconcile) our relationship with Him.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Romans 3:23–26; 5:12–19; 1 John 3:4; James 4:17.

Items needed: *Live Bible*, jar with lid, vegetable oil, corn syrup, food coloring, reclosable baggies, pieces of paper numbered from one to four, and candy.

Connect

How did you do with reading your Bible last week?

Encourage honest responses.

How difficult was it to read an entire chapter out of Mark?

Let's take some time and share anything you read that caught your interest. Share anything that you read that was confusing.

If possible, help the student understand the passage.

Have you ever had a really tough choice to make? Like choosing to read an entire chapter of the Bible in a week or not? Maybe it was a choice about cleaning your room, doing your homework, staying off a Web site, or not playing a certain video game?

Did you ever make the wrong choice?

plan

ask

Today we are going to *Uncover the Truth* about God as we *Explore* a big problem that all of us have. Our problem is sin.

Warm Up

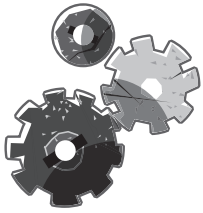
Set out a clear jar with a lid, a cup of water, a cup of oil, a cup of corn syrup, and food coloring.

What do you think will happen if I pour all three of these ingredients into this jar?

Begin by pouring the water into the jar. Add five drops of food coloring. Next, add the oil into the jar followed by the corn syrup. Place the lid securely on top and then shake the jar.

What happened to the ingredients?

They did not mix together but remained separate.



Engage

Just like the ingredients in our experiment remained separate, there is something in everyone's life that separates them from having a relationship with God. That thing is called *sin*.

We have all sinned and there are consequences that come with sin.

say

I Can Know It Is True

1. Because of Adam and Eve, we are all born into sin. Adam and Eve were created by God to live forever in a perfect place called the Garden of Eden. The only rule they were given was to not eat from one tree, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. However, when faced with temptation they gave in and ate the forbidden fruit. They sinned. This act of sin resulted in some serious consequences. These consequences do not just apply to Adam and Eve. They apply to us all. Read the story of Adam and Eve to discover the consequences of their sin in Genesis 2:15–17; 3; and Romans 5:12–19.
2. Sin is willful disobedience against God and can be an action or an attitude. It's easy to read the story of Adam and Eve and think that if we had been in their place we wouldn't have messed up like they did. But the Bible says that we have all sinned. At some point in our lives we have all chosen to deliberately disobey God. Sometimes we disobey God through our actions like lying, stealing, or cheating. Other times we disobey Him through our attitudes like being disrespectful, holding grudges against someone, or choosing not to love another person. See what the Bible says in 1 John 3:4; James 4:17; and Matthew 5:21–22.

3. Sin separates us from God, but He provided the way to re-establish or reconcile our relationship with Him. God sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the price for our sin so that we could once again have a relationship, a friendship, with Him! Discover God's plan for you to become re-connected with Him in John 3:16; Galatians 1:4; and Hebrews 9:27–28.

We have all sinned and consequences come with sin. Sometimes the consequence of our sin is being punished, being disciplined, or having to say you're sorry. However, the biggest consequence of our sin is a broken relationship with God. Thankfully God has made a way for us to once again have a relationship with Him!



Check It Out

First Corinthians 15:21–22 says, “So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life” (p. 1140, *Live*).

- What does this verse mean to you?
- Why do you think we all have to pay for Adam and Eve's sin?

Through Adam and Eve's sin, we are now all born with “original sin” and live in a sinful world. Because of “original sin” we are all guilty of sin and must pay the punishment for that sin.

Romans 3:23 says, “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard” (p. 1113, *Live*).

- How would you define sin?

Willful disobedience to a known law or command of God.

- What do you think God's glorious standard is?

Holiness and Christ-likeness.

Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (p. 1115, *Live*).

- This verse says that one of the wages or consequences of sin is death. What are some of the other consequences of sin?

Unhappiness, disease, loneliness, hatred, lying, cheating, and fear.

Sin

Relate

Scripture shows us that we all have sinned and consequences come with sin. We have also discovered that the main consequence of sin is separation from God. We are all going to make our own reminder that sin separates us from God.

I would like each of you to pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water in your baggie. Now add three drops of food coloring to the water. Next we are going to pour in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable oil and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup corn syrup. When you have added the ingredients seal your baggies.

Allow time for the students to add the final ingredients and seal their baggies. Make sure the baggies are sealed tight. You will need to slightly squeeze each bag to let out the extra air before sealing.

Now let's see if we can mix these ingredients.

Shake and mix the bags for one minute. Time how long it takes for the liquids to separate.



Question

On a scale of one to ten, one being easy and ten being hard, how hard do you think it would have been to *not* eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? Why?

It's easy to think that we would have been able to avoid making the same mistake that Adam and Eve made. However, each of us have fallen into temptation and sinned. We have more in common with Adam and Eve than we might want to admit. Each of us is born with a sinful nature. That is, why when you see a "Do Not Touch" sign, your first instinct is to want to touch it.

➤ What is the difference between making a mistake and sinning?

Sin is willful disobedience against God. It's choosing to do something even though you know it's wrong. The verse below has a long list of sins. Circle every sin that is an action sin and underline each sin that would be considered an attitude sin.

Romans 1:29–30 says, "Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents" (p. 1110, *Live*).

➤ Some people think that if you simply attend church every once in awhile, you can have a relationship with God. What are some other things people think they can do to earn the right to have a relationship with God?

Give money, be nice and good, be a good citizen, and serve others.

John 14:6 says, “Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me’” (p. 1063, *Live*). This verse reminds us that there is only one way to have a relationship with God and that is through Jesus Christ.



Prayer

Dear Father,

We are sorry that we have sinned. We thank you for providing a way that we can have forgiveness for our sins. Help us live a life pleasing to You. Amen.

Unwind

The choices we make affect our lives.

Tape a numbered paper on each wall.

There is a number located on each of the four walls. I am going to pick a number from one to four. When I say “choose,” stand by the number you choose. Whoever picks the same number I did will get rewarded.

Pick a number and secretly write it down. Then, say “choose” and allow the students to pick a wall. Reward those who chose the same number as you did. Play this several times.

How good were your choices? Although you didn’t know which wall to choose in this game, Scripture clearly tells us the right choices we need to make in life. If we don’t make the right choice, we must pay the consequences for our sin. However, the consequences of our sins are much worse than not getting a reward. Sin separates us from God.

Challenge

Your challenge this week is to examine your own personal journey and uncover three sins that you have committed or struggle with. In your own book, you will find a chart. I would like you to list the sins and the consequences that you have had to face because of those sins. Take time to reflect on what you have learned from each incident. You will not be required to share this next week if you don’t want to.



Explore

John 3:16–17 says, “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him” (p. 1049, *Live*).

Reflect on what that verse means to you and write your thoughts in the space provided.



For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

4. Jesus

Jesus paid the permanent price for our sins.

Main Points

God requires atonement or payment for our sins.

In the Old Testament, sacrifices were required to gain forgiveness for sins.

Jesus was our perfect sacrifice and paid the permanent price for our sins.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Hebrews 10:1–18 and 1 Corinthians 15:21–22.

Items needed: *Live Bible*, candy bar for each student, other items to swap out candy with (see warm up examples), clear glass, iodine, bleach, large mixing bowl, and water.

ask

Connect

How did it feel to list your sins last week?

Remind the students they do not have to share their list aloud.

What were some of the consequences you faced as a result of your sins?

Be ready to share one of your own consequences.

What is something you learned from examining your sins and consequences?

Allow time for responses.

The biggest consequence of sin is separation from God. It requires a payment. We're going to uncover what kind of price tag that payment has!

What's the most expensive item you've had to pay for? How did you pay for it?

As we continue to *Explore*, we are going to *Uncover the Truth* that God has provided the perfect sacrifice and paid the price for our sins.

Warm Up

Give each preteen a candy bar.

Each of you has a piece of candy. You can choose to keep your candy and eat it, or you can sacrifice your candy for a secret item.

Give each one a chance to decide. Do not reveal the exchange item until all have made their choice. If any of them choose to sacrifice their items, give them a tic-tac, a carrot, a celery stick, or a pretzel.

Was it hard to sacrifice your candy bar without knowing what you would get in return?

How did you feel when you sacrificed your item and got something less tasty?

Engage

Sometimes making sacrifices can be hard, especially when we're sacrificing something that we love. Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us. Jesus sacrificed more than a candy bar or a video game. Jesus sacrificed His life for us. Jesus paid the permanent price for our sins.



I Can Know It Is True

1. God requires atonement or payment for our sins. The Bible says that the payment for sin is death. That is a big price to pay. We read about what God requires for payment for our sins in Romans 6:23 and 1 Corinthians 15:21–22.
2. In the Old Testament, sacrifices were required to gain temporary forgiveness for sins. Different sacrifices were required for different kinds of sin and situations. Each sacrifice also had a list of requirements that had to be met for the sacrifice to count. These sacrifices were temporary which meant that people had to continually make sacrifices in order to remain in a right relationship with God. We can read what the Bible says about Old Testament sacrifices in Leviticus 4:1–2, 32–35; Hebrews 9:22; and 10:1.
3. Jesus was our perfect sacrifice and paid the permanent price for our sins. After a while, the sacrificial process in the Old Testament started to become nothing more than a meaningless routine. God knew that people needed something different, something that would really change their lives. God sent Jesus to pay the permanent price for our sins. Jesus came to earth and lived a perfect life (a life with no sin) and then died for our sins. See what the Bible says about Jesus and the perfect sacrifice He made for us in Galatians 1:4; Hebrews 10:12; and 1 Peter 2:22–23.

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us. He gave His life to help make a way for us to have eternal life in heaven with God. Jesus paid the permanent price for our sins.

Jesus

read

Check It Out

Hebrews 4:15 says, “This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin” (p. 1216, *Live*).

➤ What kind of temptations do you think Jesus faced?

Remind preteens that He was a young boy who grew up to a man, so at one time He was a preteen, a teenager, and a young adult.

First John 2:2 says, “He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world” (p. 1248, *Live*).

Hebrews 10:10 says, “For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time” (p. 1221, *Live*).

➤ What do these verses tell us about the sacrifice that Jesus made?

It was complete and final for all the sins of the world.

Relate

Sin is a big problem in our lives, but God provided us with the perfect solution. Jesus is our perfect sacrifice and paid the price for our sins. He provided a way for our sins to be forgiven.

Let this glass of water represent your life.

Hold up the glass with water and pour a few drops of iodine in the glass.

When sin enters our life, we cannot get rid of it on our own. We need Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross to get rid of our sins. Watch what happens when we trust Jesus as our Savior.

Pour the bleach into the glass until all the solution becomes clear again.

Jesus is the only way for our sins to be forgiven.

How does this remind us that Jesus is the perfect solution to our problem?

Jesus can clean up our hearts, minds, and lives like the bleach cleaned the water.

Why did Jesus become our sacrifice?

John 3:16—because God loves us.



Question

➤ Why do you think God requires payment for sin?

When we get in trouble for doing something wrong we often complain that the punishment is unfair or unjust. Do you think that God was unfair or unjust to require death as a payment for sin? Why or why not.

➤ Check out what Romans 3:23–26 says. Do these verses change your answer?

Jesus was faced with the same temptations that you and I have to face. In fact, He was even tempted by Satan. The Bible says that Jesus resisted temptation in every situation He faced. **Jesus lived a perfect life, a life without sin.**

➤ Why is it important to know that Jesus lived a perfect life?

Like the sacrifice in the Old Testament had to be perfect—without blemish—Jesus is the perfect sacrifice for us because He was without sin.

➤ Jesus' sacrifice provides forgiveness for our sins. What else does Jesus' sacrifice provide for us?

The way to have a restored relationship with God

➤ Jesus sacrificed His life for all people for all time. What kind of sacrifices can we make that would please God?

Our bodies, our lives, our praise, our actions, and our attitudes.

For some help, check out these verses: Romans 12:1 and Hebrews 13:15–16.

Prayer

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for being our perfect sacrifice. Thank you for providing a way for our sins to be forgiven. As we *Uncover the Truth about God*, help us to understand the amazing sacrifice You gave to us. Help us live what we have learned today. Amen.

Unwind

Today we have discovered that Jesus is the perfect solution to our problem of sin. Let's take some time to solve another problem.

Have the students lay down in a circle with their feet touching in the middle. Balance a large mixing bowl on their feet. Pour a little bit of water in their bowl.



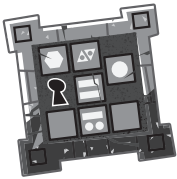
Jesus

Challenge them to take off their shoes without spilling the water and without touching the bowl with their hands. Allow them to try it several times or until they get it right.

You had a problem. You had to take off your shoes without spilling the water. Was it easy to take off your shoes without getting wet?

Some of the preteens will not succeed. Let your comments reflect the reality of what your group experiences.

You came up with a good solution. God has provided the perfect solution to our problem of sin. His solution is Jesus.



Challenge

This week, we are going to experience sacrificial living. Your challenge is to give up one thing. It can be a favorite TV show, a video game, a favorite snack, or anything else that will be hard to live without.

Every time you think about the thing you are giving up, take a moment to thank Jesus for His ultimate sacrifice.

Think about what you'll give up. Write it down in your book and have a friend sign it to verify that he or she knows what your sacrifice for the week is.

Next week we're going to see how each of you did.

Explore

Romans 3:23 says, "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard" (p. 1113 *Live*).

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (p. 1115 *Live*).

Every time you are tempted to eat or do whatever you have sacrificed, say these verses out loud. By the end of the week you'll have them memorized.



For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

5. Salvation

Because God loves us, He sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins.

Main Points

To accept this gift of forgiveness, we must confess that we're sinners.

To accept this gift of forgiveness, we must believe in Jesus.

To accept this gift of forgiveness, we must commit our lives to God.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Acts 3:19; Romans 3:21–26; and Ephesians 5:1–2.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), pen or pencil (one per student), puzzles, small piece of candy or reward, reclosable baggies, sharpened pencils, water, and balloons.

Connect

What did you give up last week? How did it feel to experience sacrificial living?

Be sure to tell the students what you gave up and how it made you feel.

How does it make you feel when you think of Jesus' sacrifice for you?

Most of us are better at receiving gifts than making sacrifices. What is the best gift you've received?

Share your favorite gift and allow for responses.

How does it make you feel when you receive a gift?

Jesus has offered us the best gift ever—forgiveness for our sins. Today we are going to *Explore* together and uncover how to accept this amazing gift.

plan

ask

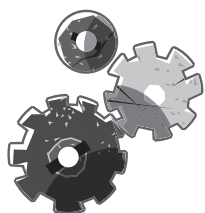
Salvation

Warm Up

Divide the preteens into teams. Give each team a puzzle that they can quickly solve. Before class remove one puzzle piece from each puzzle.

Each team will have a puzzle to put together. Any team that completes that puzzle in the next five minutes will receive a reward.

Give them five minutes to solve the puzzle. When they realize that they are missing a piece, don't do or say anything unless they ask you for help. If a team asks for help, give them the missing piece. Try and do it secretly so that other teams do not see. After the five minutes are up, give a reward to that teams that finished the puzzle.



Engage

You worked together well to solve the puzzles. Each group faced a similar problem. The only way to complete the puzzle and receive a reward was to ask for help. Salvation is a lot like the game we just played. We all have sin in our lives and the only way to get rid of our sin is to ask for help. When we seek God's help, He will give us forgiveness from sins.

say

Because God loves us, He sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins.

I Can Know It Is True

1. To accept this gift of forgiveness, we must confess that we're sinners. Admitting that you have sinned is more than just saying you're sorry. It's asking God to forgive you for the sins you've committed and then, with God's help, to turn away and not do them again. See what the Bible says about finding God's forgiveness when we admit our sins in Romans 3:23; Acts 3:19; and 1 John 1:8–9.
2. To accept this gift of forgiveness, we must believe in Jesus. Believing in Jesus is more than just simply believing Jesus existed on earth. We must believe that Jesus is God's son; He lived a perfect life; He died for our sins; and He was raised from the dead three days later. Finally, we must believe Jesus is the only way we can have a relationship with God. We can read about the importance of believing in Jesus in John 3:16 and Galatians 3:22.
3. To accept this gift of forgiveness, we must commit our lives to God. We need to strive to become more like Christ. This means we must put God first and obey His Word, the Bible. We also need to treat others the way Jesus would, with love and respect. We need to make choices that would please God. This sounds like a big task. Thankfully, God promises His help along the way. See what the Bible says about becoming more Christ-like in Ephesians 4:21–23 and 5:1–2.

Check It Out

John 14:6 says, “Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me’” (p. 1063, *Live*).

➤ Why is it important for us to believe that Jesus is the only way to have a relationship with God?

The world says there are lots of ways to God, but the Bible, God’s truth, says there is only one way—through Jesus.

Romans 3:22 says, “We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are” (p. 1113, *Live*).

➤ Is it reassuring to know that anyone who believes can find forgiveness? Why or why not?

Allow preteens to talk about why they like this idea or not.

Because God loves you, He sent Jesus to pay the price for your sins. Whenever you’re ready to accept God’s gift of forgiveness, all you have to do is talk to Him and admit that you’ve sinned, believe in what Jesus has done for you, and then commit your life to God.

Relate

There’s a difference between knowing about Jesus and believing in Jesus. When we believe in something we show it with our actions.

Show them the reclosable baggie filled with water. Hold the bag over a preteen’s head and ask if he or she believes you won’t get them wet as you do a trick. Now bring out the sharpened pencils.

Does anybody believe I will not get *(insert name of preteen)* wet?

Do you still believe I will not get you wet?

Shove the pencil through both sides of the baggie. Leave the pencil in the baggie once it has penetrated both sides so it does not leak. Do this multiple times over their head with different pencils.

When you believe in Jesus and put your faith in Him, you will show it with your actions. Just like *(insert name of preteen)* showed that they believed I wouldn’t get them wet.

Preteens may try the experiment if time allows.

Salvation



Question

We know that God made a way for us to restore our relationship with Him by sending Jesus to pay the price for our sins. How does this prove God's love for us?

He was willing to send His only son Jesus to earth to live, and then to allow Jesus—the perfect sacrifice—to suffer and die on a cross for our sins.

➤ We all love receiving gifts. Do you think accepting God's gift of forgiveness is as easy as accepting a birthday gift? Why or why not?

No, accepting God's gift of salvation requires admitting our sins, accepting Jesus, and giving up what we want for what God wants for us.

➤ Many times we call this process of asking for forgiveness *becoming saved*. Why do you think we call it this?

Allow time for responses.

➤ What are some other terms that you've heard?

➤ Do these terms make sense or are they confusing?

➤ Have you accepted the gift of forgiveness? If yes, who are some people that helped you make this decision?

➤ If not, who are some people you could go to if you had questions about finding God's forgiveness?

If you haven't accepted this gift of forgiveness and you would like to, today is a great day to do it. Talk to me, your parent, your pastor, or another Christian adult that you trust. Ask him or her to guide you in prayer as you ask God to forgive you.

Make a definite opportunity for the preteens to respond. Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit working in their lives.

pray

Prayer

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for Your gift of forgiveness. Thank you that we can accept that gift and have eternal life with You. Please help us accept Your gift. Help us to confess that we're sinners, to believe in You, and to commit our lives to You. Amen.

Unwind

When we believe in Jesus and commit our lives to Him, we receive eternal life. Let's play a game that reminds us that we can't receive eternal life and hit the mark on our own. We need Jesus to help us hit the target.

Give each child a balloon. Have them blow up their balloon and pinch the end. Tape a paper target to the wall on the other side of the room. While standing across the room from the target, give the students a chance to try to hit the target with their balloon. Allow each student to try as time allows.

Challenge

This week the challenge is to journal about your journey to salvation.

Write about how you came to admit your sins, believe in Jesus, and commit your life to God.

If you have not accepted Jesus, journal about what is holding you back.

When you are done with your journal, share what you have written with a parent or caregiver, or an adult that you trust.

Explore

John 14:6 says, "Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me'" (p. 1063, *Live*).

Say this verse each morning and evening, sealing it in your heart and mind.

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



6. Baptism

Baptism is an outward representation of what has happened on the inside of you when you accepted Jesus as your Savior.

Main Points

Baptism symbolizes Jesus washing away our sins.

Baptism symbolizes Jesus' death and resurrection.

Baptism is a public statement of our faith.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Romans 6:3–11 and Colossians 2:11–12.

Items needed: *Live Bible* (one for each student), Ivory soap bar (must be Ivory brand), microwave, six paper bags, and six random items to put in paper bags.

ask

Connect

How did it feel to journal about your journey to salvation?

Encourage responses.

What was one significant event that helped you decide to accept Jesus' gift of salvation?

Share an event that happened in your life.

Who is one important person that has helped you discover Jesus?

Can you tell if someone has put his or her faith in Jesus?

How can you show people that you have put your faith in Jesus?

One way people show others their faith in Jesus is through baptism. Let's *Explore* what baptism is all about.

Warm Up

Show the preteens a bar of soap.

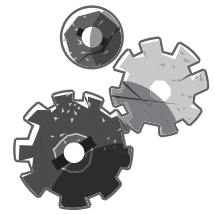
What is this? Right. It's a bar of soap! Soap comes in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and scents and is used to clean a variety of things. There is liquid soap, bar soap, and soaps carved into fancy designs. There is body soap, dish soap, and laundry soap. No matter what it looks like or smells like, we all use soap to help us clean things. The sole purpose of soap is to wash away dirt and germs.

Engage

Just as soap appears in many forms, baptism may be performed in a variety of ways. Some baptisms take place inside a church, while others take place outside in a lake or pool. Some people give their entire testimony before being baptized and others repeat a few words or phrases. Sometimes people are fully immersed, meaning they go completely under the water. Others have water poured or sprinkled on their heads. People of all ages ranging from children to the elderly may be baptized.

Even though baptisms don't all look the same, baptism has one main purpose.

Baptism is an outward sign of what has happened on the inside of you when you accepted Jesus as your Savior.



I Can Know It Is True

1. Baptism symbolizes Jesus washing away our sins. Salvation is a lot like taking a bath. When you take a bath, you use soap to wash away all the germs and dirt that has collected on your body. When you ask Jesus to forgive you for all your sins, He removes them completely. He washes them away, and you become pure and clean in God's eyes. Baptism helps others to see the change that Jesus has made on the inside. We read how Jesus washes our sins away in Psalm 51:7 and 1 Peter 3:21.
2. Baptism symbolizes Jesus' death and resurrection. We know that Jesus died for our sins and was buried in a tomb. However, three days later He rose from the dead. Not only did Jesus die to pay the price for our sins, but He also conquered death. Baptism is a representation of Jesus' death and His resurrection. Discover how baptism symbolizes Jesus' death and resurrection in Romans 6:3–11.
3. Baptism is a public statement of our faith. When people have a favorite sports team, they like to wear jerseys or clothes that represent that team. They wear their team's colors proudly. Baptism is similar to wearing your favorite team's apparel. Once we have accepted Jesus as our forever friend we don't want to keep this news to ourselves. Baptism shows other people that we love God and have made the decision to follow Him. See what the Bible says in Acts 22:15–16 and Galatians 3:27.

Baptism

read

Check It Out

Titus 3:4–5 says, “But—‘When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit’” (p. 1207, *Live*).

This verse reminds us that we could not find salvation through our own good works but only through the mercy of God.

➤ How can baptism be a way of giving back to God for all the mercy He has shown us?

It’s an active testimony, showing others God’s mercy in our life.

Colossians 2:12 says, “For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead” (p. 1180, *Live*).

➤ How does baptism visually represent the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

When we are baptized we go under the water like Jesus went under the ground, then we are raised out of the water like He was raised to life.

Relate

When we are baptized we publicly declare that Jesus has washed away our sins. We are showing everyone an example of what has happened on the inside. Let’s have a little fun today with this bar of soap. What do you think the inside of this soap looks like? Instead of cutting the bar in half to see the inside, let’s blow it up!

Place your Ivory bar of soap on a plate and put it in the microwave. Have the preteens gather around and microwave the soap for two minutes. Know that the bar of soap will explode—be prepared for the clean up!

That was really cool! We use soap to wash away our dirt, but God does something greater when we accept Jesus as our Savior.



Baptism is our way of showing everyone that God has washed away our sins.

Question

After all you have learned, what do you think are the requirements for baptism?

Baptism gives your family and friends the opportunity to see on the outside the decision you made on the inside when you accepted Jesus as your Savior. It’s a time of sharing and celebration.

➤ Who are some people that you would want to attend your baptism?

List five to ten people you would invite.

➤ People are usually given the opportunity to share a few words before they are baptized. Why do you think people are given this opportunity?

So they can verbally share exactly what God has done for them through Jesus.

➤ You can read about the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3. Why do you think Jesus took the time to be baptized?

It served as a fulfillment of the Scripture; it showed His humility; God used it as an opportunity to testify who Jesus was; and it serves as an example for us.

When Jesus was baptized He set an example for us. How can your baptism set an example for the people around you?

My friends and family will see my commitment and know that they too can make the same commitment.

➤ Are you ready to be baptized? If yes, explain why you would like to be baptized.

If no, list one or two questions you still have about baptism.

Prayer

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for washing away our sins. Thank you for giving us a way to publicly declare our faith in You. Help us realize how great Your sacrifice is. Help us listen to Your voice. Amen.

Unwind

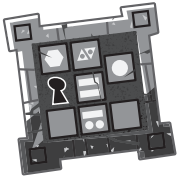
I have six paper bags with a different object inside each bag. Unfortunately, we cannot see the inside of each bag, because they are stapled shut. Your job is to feel or smell the bag and guess what is inside. Record the bag number and your guess on a piece of paper.

Spread the bags around the room and allow the preteens sufficient time to examine each bag. After they have recorded six guesses, open the bags to show them the objects on the inside.

Just as I had to show you what was on the inside of the bags for you to really know, baptism can show everyone what has happened on the inside of you.



Baptism



Challenge

As you *Explore* this week, your challenge is to fill in the “What God Has Done for Me!” section in your book. After completing this, decide if you are ready for baptism.

Take time to pray and talk with your parents or caregivers and pastor.

If you are ready to be baptized, we will plan a service for your baptism.

If you are not ready, take some time to write down what is keeping you from taking that step.

Explore

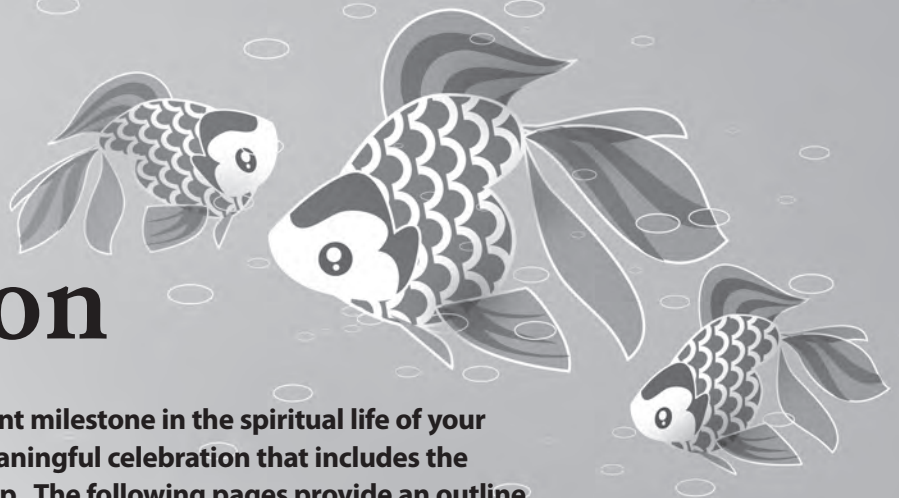
Titus 3:4–5 says, “But—‘When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit’” (p. 1207, *Live*).

Learn these verses so you can share them at your baptism!



For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

Baptism Celebration



The baptism celebration is a significant milestone in the spiritual life of your preteens. It is crucial to make it a meaningful celebration that includes the preteen's family and church fellowship. The following pages provide an outline of preparation for the baptism celebration, a sample celebration ceremony, and ideas on making the day memorable.

Preparation for the Celebration

1. Have a personal interview with each preteen. Include their parents or caregivers. Review what they have written in their "What God Has Done for Me!" section of their books. Ask them if they've accepted God's free gift of salvation and committed to live their lives for Him. Discuss any questions they or their parents or caregivers have about baptism.
2. For the preteens who have indicated they are not ready for baptism, ask why and seek to answer their questions. Don't pressure anyone to participate.
3. For the preteens who haven't accepted God's gift of salvation, pray for them and encourage them to keep reading His word. These students will need continued support and follow-through.
4. If you have a question of readiness on any of the preteens, meet with the pastor and their parents or caregivers.
5. Meet with the pastor to discuss the details of the baptism ceremony:
 - a. When it will take place?
 - b. Who will participate?
 - c. Who will be baptized?
 - d. What will be said and done?
 - e. What will be the format and expectation for the preteens and their parents or caregivers?
 - f. How will the entire church participate in the celebration?
6. Meet with the preteens who are ready for baptism and their parents or caregivers.
7. Explain the details of the baptism ceremony and how it will be a celebration. Go over the specific order of the ceremony. If the preteens will be given an opportunity to share their testimonies, review what each wrote in "What God Has Done for Me!" Help them decide what to say. Make sure all the preteens, as well as their parents or caregivers, are comfortable with the

Baptism Celebration

celebration. Show them the location of the baptism ceremony and how they will be baptized. They will want to know:

- a. What should they wear?
 - b. Where should they stand?
 - c. When should they come forward and where do they go afterward?
 - d. What do their parents or caregivers do?
 - e. What will they be expected to say?
 - f. Who should they invite? (You can design invitations to share with friends and families.)
8. Partner each preteen with a senior adult prayer partner who will commit to pray for that preteen at least once a month. Provide a picture of the preteen to the senior adult with their favorite memory verse or a personal note.
 9. Create a keepsake for them. A keepsake is important for the preteens to have a tangible reminder of this milestone in their spiritual journey. The size or cost is not as important as the memory it represents.

Ideas can include:

- A washcloth decorated with the date, their name, and the events—that they can keep to remember their baptism. During the service the pastor can use their washcloth to put over their nose and mouth so they do not inhale any water.
- The students can decorate small white towels with the date, their name, the event, and a symbol of what baptism means to them. These towels can be handed to them by their parents immediately following their baptism.
- A video recording of the preteens' baptism. These can include words of encouragement from their pastor, teacher, parents or caregiver, and friends. It can also include them reading their testimony.
- A picture of the preteen being baptized with the date. The picture can also be of the group of those who were baptized together or the preteen with their senior prayer partner.

The Celebration (A Sample Ceremony)

- Have the students who are going to be baptized present themselves to the church fellowship by coming forward.
- Give the students an opportunity to share their testimony. This may be done live or their testimonies shared via video from an earlier recording.
- Invite the prayer partners who have committed to pray for the preteens to pray for them before or after their baptism.
- Parents or caregivers may be included in the baptism ceremony by helping their child into the water, helping them out of the water, greeting them with their keepsake towel and a hug as they exit, or standing in support during their child's baptism.

The following is suggested wording from the ceremony.

Dear, friends, in keeping with the example of Jesus, you have presented yourselves this day that you might receive the sacrament of baptism. Baptism is not itself the door to salvation, but rather is an outward sign of the new birth which God has wrought in your heart. It proclaims to all the world that you have taken Christ Jesus as the Lord of your lives, and that it is your purpose always to obey Him. In order that we may hear your testimony of what God has done for you, and that we may know that you understand the significance of the step you are taking, we want to ask you these questions:

Do you believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? That Jesus Christ the Son suffered in your place on the cross, that He died but rose again, that He now sits at the Father's right hand until He returns to judge all people at the last day? And do you believe in the Holy Scriptures as the inspired Word of God? That by the grace of God every person has the ability and responsibility to choose between right and wrong, and that those who repent of their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are justified by faith?

Answer: *All this I steadfastly believe.*

Do you intend by this act to testify to all the world that you are a Christian and that you will be a loyal follower of Christ?

Answer: *I do.*

(Then the minister shall ask each candidate to state their name, and shall immerse the candidate in water, or as desired, sprinkle or pour water, saying:)

_____, *I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*(Then the minister shall pray.)**

Following the Celebration

- Provide an opportunity for the entire church fellowship to congratulate the preteens for their commitment of faith.
- Host a church pitch-in or dessert reception as part of the celebration.
- Provide the students with a certificate that includes the date of the baptism and a card congratulating them on their baptism.
- Take pictures of the whole group and each of the preteens with their prayer partner. Display the pictures and story on a church bulletin board, in the church newsletter, or on the church Website.

Note

**"Baptism of Believers" in *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church*, (Indianapolis, Ind.: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2008), 362.

book 2

Discover Your Place in God's Plan

Leader's Guide



explore

In this book students will learn—

- How to say *No* to temptation.
- How prayer and Bible study make you stronger.
- How you can live a holy life—loving God and others.
- What it means to worship God.
- How awesome it is to be on God's team.

You are on an amazing journey of faith—let's *Explore* it together!



1. The Trinity

God is three in one.

Main Points

God is the creator of all things and is our Heavenly Father.

Jesus is God's Son. He is our Savior and wants to be our forever friend.

The Holy Spirit is our guide. He helps us choose what is right and gives us comfort when life is hard.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Genesis 1:1; John 17; 1 Corinthians 2:10–12; and Colossians 1:15–20.

Items needed: *Live Bible* (one for each student), bottles of water (one for each student), bag of ice, griddle, tongs, and play dough.

Connect

What does it mean to explore something?

A few possible answers can be: to look at, to search, or to try to find something.

Can you share a time you went exploring for something or had to explore to find an answer?

Remind your students that researching a paper or looking for the perfect toy can be exploring.

We are all exploring life together. We have discovered about God, the Bible, sin, and Jesus. We've looked at salvation and explored baptism.

For the next few weeks we'll continue to *Explore* our faith together. Today we are going to discover the Trinity.

plan

ask

The Trinity

Warm Up

At the opening of class, take a long drink of cold, bottled water.

Who would like a nice, cold drink of pure and clean water?

Does anyone know what water is made of?

Give opportunity for responses. Students may know—H₂O.

Water is made of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen.

Hold up bottle of water.

This H₂O is currently a liquid, but H₂O can also be a solid.

Hold up the bag of ice.

What else can H₂O be?

Allow for responses—steam.

That's right, with a little heat H₂O becomes steam.

Engage

It's funny how H₂O can appear three different ways—as water, ice, and steam. Each one is different and yet alike. They are all H₂O.

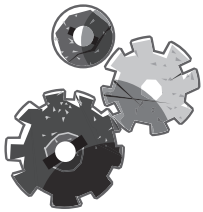
God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are kind of like the H₂O; they're each different but still one. They are three persons, but one God. That's what we mean by the word *Trinity*.

say

I Can Know It Is True

1. God the Father is the Creator of all things and is our Heavenly Father. We can read what the Bible says about Him in Genesis 1:1 and Isaiah 40:28–29.
2. Jesus is God's Son. He is our Savior and wants to be our forever friend. We can read what the Bible says about Jesus in Colossians 1:15–20 and John 1:29.
3. The Holy Spirit is our guide. He helps us choose what is right and provides comfort when life is hard. We can read what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 2:10–12 and John 16:13.

God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are different and yet all three are one; they are all God. It's hard to understand how three can be separate and yet the same, but remember the H₂O.



God is our Creator and Heavenly Father. Jesus is our Savior and forever friend. The Holy Spirit is our guide and comforter. We call the three together the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



Check It Out

Second Corinthians 13:14 says, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (p. 1154, *Live*).

Matthew 28:19 says, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (p. 982, *Live*).

Ephesians 2:18 says, “Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us” (p. 1165, *Live*).

- Where else can we see reference to all the persons of the Trinity?
- Check out Luke 3:21–22 (p. 1012, *Live*). Which persons of the Trinity are mentioned and what are they doing?

Relate

Let’s have some fun with H₂O.

Be sure to instruct the preteens on safety precautions: only use hot pads when touching items that will be warm or hot, and never touch the griddle directly. Make sure the griddle is in a secure, safe, and sturdy position before operating. Turn the griddle to high or 400 degrees. Once the griddle is warmed, give each preteen a hot pad, set of tongs, and an ice cube.

We are going to have a race with our H₂O. Let’s see which team can make their H₂O go from ice, to water, to steam the quickest.

On cue, have the preteens drop the ice cubes on the griddle. The first ice cube to melt wins the race. To avoid injury, emphasize the importance of not touching the griddle during any point of the race.

God is three in one; similar to how H₂O is three in one.

Question

It’s hard to understand how H₂O can be liquid, ice, or steam, but still the same. The Trinity is a hard concept to understand, but we need to believe it in our hearts. To believe something you don’t understand is called *faith*.



Ephesians 1:18 says, “I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand . . .” (p. 1164, *Live*).

The Trinity

- What are your thoughts about God being three in one?

Share your own thoughts and let preteens share theirs. Emphasize that it's OK to admit that they don't understand it—faith is believing what you cannot understand.

- Can you see in your own life the work of the Trinity?

Allow time for personal responses to each of the following questions. Encourage the preteens to share by offering your own personal experience.

- How have you interacted with God the Father?
- What does Jesus the Savior mean to you?
- Have you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit guiding or directing you?

Sometimes life is hard. You feel lonely, scared, angry, or frustrated. It's nice to know you're not alone. You have three on your side: a Heavenly Father who loves you and uniquely created you, a Savior who wants to be your forever friend and will never leave you alone, and a Holy Spirit to show you the way and help you figure out what you're supposed to do and how you're supposed to live!

- What is something that really scares you?

Share your own fear and allow time for their responses.

- Do you ever feel lonely? Why?

Encourage responses.

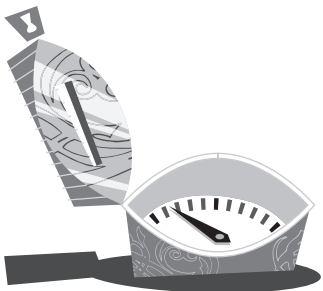
- When was the last time you were really angry? What happened?

Encourage responses.

When you became a Christian, you gained a new relationship with the Father, a forever friend in Jesus, and a constant companion in the Holy Spirit.

All three are with you on this journey into faith. All three love you, and all three will help you grow and become a new, improved you!

When you feel lonely, scared, angry, or frustrated, think three in one: the Trinity.





Prayer

Dear God,

How amazing that You want to be my forever friend, that You created me, and that You are my helper! I'm so glad to have You—all three of You—on this exploration of faith. Amen.

Unwind

Let's see how well we do at three coming together to make one!

Divide the class into groups of three. Give each team member a chunk of play dough.

Turn your backs on each other and, when I say to go, design your own play dough sculpture. Then when I say to stop, turn around and put the three together.

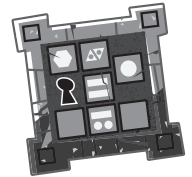
Give preteens a limited time to make their own structure and just a moment to put them all together.

How did you do? Let's see how well the three groups came together to make one thing!

Challenge

This week your challenge is to discover several ways you can see your Father the Creator, know Jesus is your Savior, and feel the Holy Spirit guide you.

Write them down in your own book and be prepared to share some of them next week.



Explore

Ephesians 2:18 says, "Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us" (p. 1165, *Live*).

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



2. Temptation

We will all be tempted by Satan, but we don't have to give in.

Main Points

Temptation is different from sin.

Temptation may look good but it's not.

You can resist temptation.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read James 1:13–15; 2 Corinthians 11:14; Ephesians 6:10–18; and 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Items needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), gift bag, “No Peeking” tag, sour candy, salt, and marbles.

ask

Connect

How easy or difficult was it last week to discover God in your life?

Answers will vary.

What is one way you saw God the Father as the Creator?

Encourage participation by providing your own example.

How did you feel the Holy Spirit guide you?

Again, encourage participation by providing your own example.

The Holy Spirit guides you to do what is right, but have you ever had the urge or temptation to do something you knew wasn't right?

Share something you've been tempted to do—like eat a piece of cake before supper. Allow preteens to share things they've been tempted to do.

How did you respond to that temptation?

Give time for responses and provide your own response from your temptation illustration.

Do you think it's wrong to be tempted?

Take a vote or show of hands, but don't attempt to answer what is right or wrong.

Let's *Explore* temptation and see what God's Word says!

Warm Up

Before class, take a decorative gift bag and put a tag on it that says "No peeking." Make sure the tag is big enough to get the preteens' attention. Place the bag where everyone can see it. If the preteens ask about the bag just reply "No peeking." Before you begin the Warm Up, make up an excuse you can use to leave the room for a few minutes. When you return, ask the following questions:

How many of you wanted to peek inside this bag to figure out what was inside?

What kept you from looking inside the bag?

Did you find it harder to keep from looking inside the bag while I was out of the room? Why or why not?

Engage

We will all be tempted by Satan at one point or another, but we don't have to give in. Life would be easy if the biggest temptation we had to face was simply not looking in a bag, but we all face temptations that are harder to resist than that. Since we will definitely face temptation, let's *Explore* what temptation is and how we can overcome.

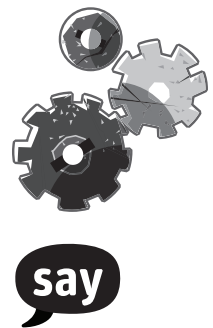
I Can Know It Is True

1. Temptation is different from sin. We all face situations where we have to choose between what's right and what's wrong.

Refer to some of their temptation examples from the beginning of the lesson.

Sometimes, we find ourselves wanting to make the wrong choice. We call this being tempted. Being tempted is not a sin as long as we make the right choice. However, temptation can lead to sin if we choose to do what we know is wrong.

It's important to make godly choices when we're tempted, otherwise our temptations can lead to sin. See what the Bible says about temptation and sin in James 1:13–15.



Temptation

2. Temptation may look good, but it's not. Sometimes it might be hard to make the right decision when we're tempted because Satan tries to make the wrong choice look better than the right choice.

Satan lies and tells us it will not hurt us or others to do something wrong. He might say things like: "No one will know what you have done" or "No one will get hurt" or "It can't be wrong if everyone else is doing it."

The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8, "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." (p. 1239, *Live*). We can also read what the Bible says about Satan and his plans in 1 Peter 5:8 and 2 Corinthians 11:14.

3. You can resist temptation. In Luke 4, Jesus provides an example of how to resist temptation. Jesus quotes God's Word and relies on God's truths instead of Satan's lies. Just like Jesus, we can resist temptation.

Praying, quoting Scripture, and talking to a trusted adult or friend are a few things that we can do that will help us resist temptation. The Holy Spirit will help us know what is right and give us the courage to resist temptation. Temptation can be hard to resist, but thankfully God promises to help us out. Discover what the Bible says about resisting temptation in Matthew 26:41 and Ephesians 6:10–18.

Ephesians 6:10–18 is a powerful passage. Take the time to walk through all of the pieces of the armor with your students, outlining all of the defenses that are ours to resist temptation.

We will all be tempted by Satan, but we don't have to give in. When we seek God's truth and rely on Him for help we can overcome any temptation.

read

Check It Out

First Corinthians 10:13 says, "The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure" (p. 1135, *Live*).

➤ What does this verse teach us about temptation and God?

*Everyone is tempted. We can resist any temptation we face because God does not allow us to be tempted more than we can handle. God always provides a way for us to say "no" to the things we are tempted to do. Emphasize to the preteens that even though God limits the temptations we face, He is never the one tempting us according to James 1:13 (p. 1228, *Live*).*

James 4:7 says, "So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (p. 1231, *Live*).

➤ What does humility have to do with resisting the devil?

To resist the devil and all of his schemes, we must be willing to admit we can not do it on our own. We need God's help and wisdom.

➤ How can this verse help you the next time you are facing temptation?

It can remind you that with God's help you can say "no" to Satan and then he will leave you alone.

Relate

Before class begins brush off any sugar that might be on the sour candy you brought. Next, pour salt on the candy to make it appear unaltered. Put the candy back in its packaging. Another way of doing this might be to run the candy under water to get the sugar off. Then put the wet candy in a plastic bag and add salt. Shake the bag so that that salt attaches to the wet candy. Allow it to dry and then put it back in the original packaging.

Who likes to eat sour candy?

Show the preteens the candy and let them get excited about eating it.

I'm going to put a piece of candy in front of you, but you cannot eat it until I say you can.

Put the candy in front of them. Don't let them touch or taste it. Count to three and let them eat it at the same time. Allow time for their reactions.

This candy looked really good, but it wasn't. Just like that candy, **temptation makes sin look good, but it's really not.**

Question

➤ Choose one temptation people you know face and make a list of the lies that Satan might use to make the wrong decision sound good.

As a group you can work through one of the examples given earlier in the lesson. Then allow time for each preteen to reflect and respond on their own in their books.

➤ Now make a list of possible consequences someone might face if they choose to sin in that situation.



Temptation

Again, work through an example together and then give preteens an opportunity to respond individually in their own books.

Taking the time to think through the lies Satan tells us and the consequences of sinning will help us resist temptation.

➤ In Matthew 4 (p. 950, *Live*), we read about how Jesus was tempted by Satan. How does knowing that Jesus faced and resisted temptation help us in our own lives?

Hebrews 2:18 (p. 1215, Live) tells us that Jesus provided us with an example of how to resist temptation. Since Jesus faced and resisted temptation, we can feel comfortable going to Him and asking for help.

➤ When Jesus faced temptation, He quoted Scripture. How would quoting Scripture help you resist temptation?

Quoting Scripture reminds us of the truth so that we can better refute or counter the lies that Satan tells us. Quoting Scripture also focuses our minds and hearts on God—the true source of power against temptation.

➤ List three things that you have been tempted to do.

Students can respond together or work through in their own books.

➤ Are there any verses that we read today that will help you resist these temptations?

➤ What are two other things we can do to help us resist temptation?

Some suggestions are pray, read the Bible, and tell others about the temptations you are facing so they can help. You can also put distance between you and what you are being tempted to do. Lastly, think about the possible consequences. Consider how your sin might hurt you or those around you.

Even though facing temptation is not a sin, we often find ourselves feeling guilty about the things we are tempted to do. Why is that?

James 1:14 (p. 1228, Live) tells us our temptations often reveal the weak areas of our lives. Satan wants us to feel guilty when we are tempted in hopes we do not ask God or people we trust for help.

Everyone faces temptation. How can we help our friends when they are facing temptation?



Pray for them. Remind them of what the Bible says. Talk with them about the possible consequences of their actions. Help hold them accountable by frequently asking them if they are making godly choices.



Prayer

Dear Father,

Thank you for Your promise that we will never be tempted beyond what we can handle. Thank you for Scripture we can use as a weapon against temptation. Forgive us for the times when we were tempted and sinned. Help us this week as we use Your Word to resist temptation. Amen.

Unwind

We are going to play a game that reminds us to resist and run from temptation.

Hand each preteen a marble and mark out a large playing area on the floor. Designate one preteen to be the temptation marble. Begin by having each lay their marble in the middle of the playing area. Each player except the temptation marble takes a turn flicking his or her marble away from the center. The temptation marble then gets two flicks to try and hit another marble. After the temptation marble plays, the players take another turn flicking their marbles away from the temptation. If a marble is hit by the temptation marble, it also becomes a temptation marble and goes after the others. The last marble to be hit wins.

Good job at running from temptation. **Remember that God gives us the power to resist temptation in life.**

Challenge

Your challenge is to write out Hebrews 2:18: "Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested."



Write it on a sticky note and post it to your refrigerator, bathroom mirror, desk, and in your school notebook. Put it in several places that you will see throughout the week.

When you are tempted to sin, quote the verse.

Pick one person you can share this verse with and tell them what it means to you. Keep a record of when you were tempted and said this verse.

Explore

Ephesians 6:10–11 says, "A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil" (p. 1169, *Live*).

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



3. Bible Study and Prayer

We can grow closer to God through prayer and Scripture reading.

Main Points

We learn about God through reading the Bible.

We talk to God through prayer.

Our faith is strengthened when we study the Bible and pray regularly.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Proverbs 30:5; Philippians 4:6–7; and 2 Timothy 3:15–17.

Items needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), M&M's, large marshmallows, microwave, paper cups, masking tape, and ping-pong balls.

ask

Connect

Would someone like to start by sharing the verse from your challenge last week?

Repeat Hebrews 2:18 together as a group.

How did knowing about temptation help you resist it this week?

Allow time for responses.

Will anyone share about a time you were tempted this week and were able to resist temptation?

Be prepared to share about your week.

Part of the challenge was to share this verse with a friend. Did any of you get to do that? Who did you choose and why?

Some of you chose your parent, sibling, or teacher to share the verse with.

Make your statement reflect the reality of what the preteens shared.

Others of you chose a friend, maybe your best friend. Think of your closest friend. What are some activities you do with that friend?

If you met someone new and wanted to get to know them, how would you?

Today we are going to *Explore* two very important disciplines we can do as Christians to help us get to know God. They are reading the Bible and prayer.

Warm Up

Have each preteen take a handful of M&M's. Instruct them to share one fact about themselves for each piece of candy that they took.

For each red piece, share a fact about your family.

For each blue piece, share something you like.

For each orange piece, share a dislike.

For each yellow piece, share a hobby.

For each green piece, share a nickname.

For each brown piece, share a fact of your choice.

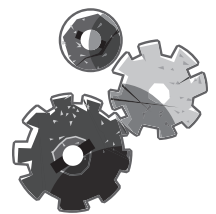
Engage

How many of you learned something new about someone else during the last activity?

Allow for responses and share your own newly learned insights.

We can grow closer to our friends by finding out more about them. The same thing goes for our relationship with God. The more we learn about God, the closer we grow to Him.

We can grow closer to God through prayer and Scripture reading.



Bible Study and Prayer

say

I Can Know It Is True

1. We learn about God through reading the Bible. If you want to get to know people better, you take the time to learn about their likes, dislikes, hobbies, and family. If you want to get to know God better, you need to take the time to learn about who He is, what pleases Him, and how to have a friendship with Him. You can learn all of these things by reading the Bible. See what the Bible says about God in Psalm 33 (with emphasis on verse 4) and God's Word in Hebrews 4:12.
2. We talk to God through prayer. Communication is an important part of friendship. Communication includes both talking and listening. When we talk to our friends, we call it having a conversation. When we talk to God, we call it *prayer*. The wonderful thing about having a friendship with God is that we can talk to Him anytime, anywhere, and about anything. God hears and answers all of our prayers. Check out what the Bible says about prayer in Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2; and James 5:13–16.
3. Our faith is strengthened when we study the Bible and pray regularly. The more we pray and read the Bible, the more we will be willing to trust and lean on God. As we read His Word and learn more of Him, our faith is strengthened; and as we pray, our relationship with Him becomes closer. Discover how our faith can be strengthened by reading the Bible and praying in Philippians 4:6–7 and 2 Timothy 3:15–17.

By faithfully studying the Bible and talking with God, we can discover how Jesus is the best friend we will ever have. We will understand that He loves us unconditionally and desires for us to be with Him forever.

read

Check It Out

First Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Never stop praying" (p. 1187, *Live*).

➤ What does this verse mean to you?

God knows that we can't spend every minute in prayer, but He does want us to pray about everything we face and to always go to Him first when we are faced with decisions.

First Chronicles 16:11 says, "Search for the LORD and for his strength; continually seek him" (p. 409, *Live*).

➤ How could your life be different if you leaned on God for strength instead of yourself?

We would make better choices, be able to resist temptation easier, and would be able to have the peace of God in every situation.

Relate

Pull a large marshmallow out of the bag.

This marshmallow is going to help us remember that reading the Bible and prayer helps us grow in our faith.

How do you think we can make this marshmallow grow?

Let the preteens make some guesses.

Those are great ideas. I know one way we can make this marshmallow grow. We're going to nuke it in the microwave!

Lead the students to a microwave. Place the marshmallow on a microwave-safe plate and place it in the microwave. Microwave the marshmallow for twenty seconds and watch as the marshmallow grows significantly bigger.

The microwave helped the marshmallow to grow just like prayer and reading the Bible help our faith in God to grow.

Question

➤ Why is it important to grow closer to God?

We will better know how to live according to His plan. We will want to please Him by making right choices. We will be more willing to rely on Him.

➤ What does it mean to study the Bible?

Studying the Bible is more than just reading it. We must take time to understand what it says and find out how we can apply it to our lives.

Check out Matthew 6:5–8 (p. 952, *Live*). What do these verses teach us about prayer?

These verses teach us not to show off when we pray. Prayer is between us and God, and God knows all of our needs.

➤ The Bible says that God answers all of our prayers. What are three answers God can give us when we make a prayer request?

Yes, no, and wait.

God answers all of our prayers. However, He does not always answer them in the way we want Him to. When we don't get the answer we want, it is important to remember that God's plans for our lives are bigger and better than ours.



Bible Study and Prayer

Scripture reading and prayer are two ways we can grow closer to God. List three other ways we can grow closer to God.

We can also grow closer to God by going to church, serving others, memorizing Scripture, tithing, worshiping God through music, etc.

➤ Studying the Bible and spending time in prayer are important. Which one do you struggle with most and how can you make it a more important part of your life?

Discuss how it's important to set a specific time aside each day for Bible study and prayer. We must be intentional in setting out when, where, and how we'll do these. Just like any habit, the more consistently we do it, the more routine it will become.

pray

Prayer

Dear Father,

We give You praise today for giving us Your Word. Speak to us through the Bible this week. Thank you that we can speak to You through prayer. Help us grow closer to You as we explore the power of prayer and reading the Bible. Amen.

Unwind

The more Bible-reading and praying we do, the stronger our faith becomes. We can stand through tough times when we have a strong faith in God.

Let's play a game that will remind us of that.

Break the preteens into two or three groups. Give each group a stack of paper cups and a roll of masking tape.

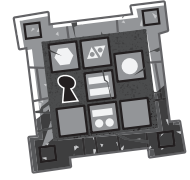
Let's see who can build the strongest tower in four minutes.

Instruct them that they cannot tape the cups to the floor. After four minutes allow the teams to try and knock over the other team's towers by throwing ping-pong balls at them.

We made strong towers out of cups and tape. Reading the Bible and talking to God will help us build a strong faith in God.

Challenge

This week I challenge you to keep a prayer journal. Read the Scripture provided each day and write down a prayer to God. Your prayer can be short or long. The important part is to make prayer a habit every day this week.



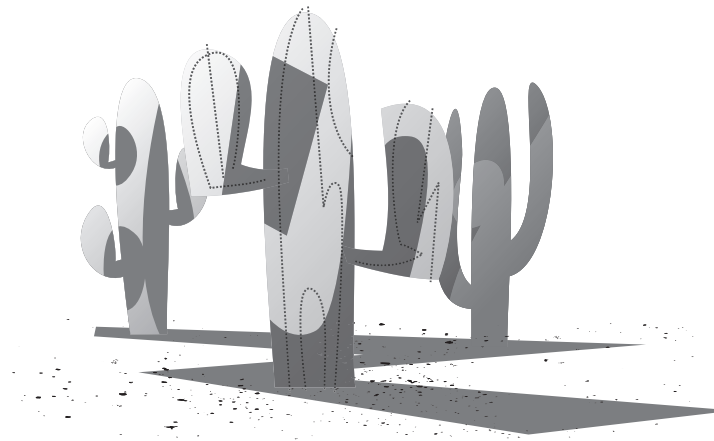
The daily verses are written in the challenge section of your book.

Explore

Philippians 4:6–7 says, “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus” (p. 1175–6, *Live*).



For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



4. Holy Living

God wants us to live holy lives.

Main Points

We can live a holy life by loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

We can live a holy life by loving our neighbors as ourselves.

We can live a holy life by following Jesus' example.



Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Matthew 22:34–40; 1 Peter 2:4–12; and Romans 12:1.

Items needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), scraps of paper, small prizes, bubble solution, shallow bowls, food coloring, straws, and paper.



Connect

How did you do with your prayer journal last week?

Encourage honest answers and offer encouragement to continue to keep a prayer journal.

What was the hardest part about keeping a prayer journal last week?

Would anyone like to share a praise that came out of your prayers last week?

Did any of you do a perfect job with the journal?

Provide praise for all who made a real attempt at their journals, even if they weren't perfect.

When you think of *perfect* what comes to mind?

Encourage responses and share your own thoughts to get conversation going.

Is there anything you can do perfectly?

Let the preteens share their success stories: make a perfect bed, quote a poem or Scripture verse perfectly, or do a perfect back stroke.

Warm Up

Give each preteen five pieces of scrap paper and instruct them to crumble them up.

Each of you is going to get a chance to toss your papers into the wastebasket. Let's see who can make the most baskets—let's see if anyone can be perfect!

Try your best because you might get a prize.

Have them stand about ten feet away from the wastebasket. Give each of them a chance to toss the papers. As they toss their papers keep track of how many baskets they make.

OK, so who was perfect? Any one of you get a perfect score of five for five?

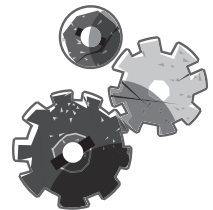
Who do you think I should give a prize to—the person who made five out of five baskets, the person who made the most baskets, or everyone who tried their best?

Give everyone that participated a prize.

Being perfect isn't always easy or possible.

Engage

In the Bible, we read that we are to be holy. First Peter 1:16 says, "For the Scriptures say, 'You must be holy because I am holy'" (p. 1234, *Live*).



God wants us to live holy lives. How is that possible?

Allow preteens time to share what they already know. Listen for their ideas and thoughts on holiness to help you know how to direct the conversation for the rest of the lesson.

Most people think that to live a holy life means to be perfect in every way. God knows that we will never be perfect in every way. You won't always get a perfect score on every test. You won't always make the goal or basket. You won't always say the right thing or remember to do everything your mother told you!

So, is living a holy life even possible? Absolutely!

Holiness is perfect loving—loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself. Holiness is Christ-likeness—being like Jesus!

Holy Living

say

I Can Know It Is True

1. We can live a holy life by loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Once we have a relationship with God, He wants us to live differently than we did before. Instead of making choices based on what we want to do, He wants us to make choices that will please and honor Him. The Holy Spirit helps us love God perfectly and put Him first in our lives. When we do that we will make godly choices.

When we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength we can live a life that is holy and pleasing to Him. We can read about living a holy life by loving God in Matthew 22:37; Ephesians 4:17–32; and 1 Peter 1:14–16.

2. We can live a holy life by loving our neighbors as ourselves. God wants us to show others His love through our thoughts, actions, and words. We can do this by treating people the way we would want to be treated. It's not always easy to show people love, especially to those people who are mean to us or behave in a way that is hurtful. God asks us to love even those who are unlovable—loving the person even though we don't love what they do!

Spreading the love of God by loving our neighbors as ourselves is an important part of holy living. On our own, we'll never be able to love perfectly, but with the help of the Holy Spirit we can! We can read about living a holy life by loving others in Matthew 22:38–39; 5:43–48; and 1 Peter 2:9.

3. We can live a holy life by following Jesus' example. Jesus lived a perfect life. He always gave His best to God and chose to do God's will even when life got hard. Even though He was tempted, Jesus never sinned. We can live a holy life without sin by following His example and the help of the Holy Spirit.

If we follow Jesus' example, we can live a holy life. Read about how following Jesus example can lead to holy living in 2 Peter 1:3–11 and 1 John 3:4–10.

The Bible says that when we find forgiveness for our sins through Jesus' sacrifice we become pure and holy in God's eyes. However, holiness does not end there. God wants us to live holy lives. We can do this by loving God with all we have, loving others as ourselves, and following Jesus' example. Guess what? **You can be perfect—with the help of the Holy Spirit you can love God and others perfectly!**

Check It Out

Leviticus 20:7 says, “So set yourselves apart to be holy, for I am the LORD your God” (p. 120, *Live*).

➤ What do you think it means to “set yourselves apart to be holy”?

To be set apart means to live your life differently than you did before you had a relationship with God. It means to set yourselves apart from your sin.

Romans 12:1 says, “And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him” (p. 1121, *Live*).

➤ How can you be a living and holy sacrifice for God?

Encourage responses by giving specific personal examples.

Relate

We can live a holy life by following Jesus’ example. When others look at us, they should see Jesus’ holiness reflected in our lives.

For each preteen, fill a shallow bowl half full with bubble mixture. Allow the preteens to add a few drops of food coloring to the bowl and mix with one end of the straw. Have them blow through the straw with one end placed in the bubble mixture. Have fun making mounds of bubbles and different shapes. Next, place a piece of paper over the mounds of bubbles for a couple seconds. Remove the paper and allow time for it to dry. You have now made a reflection of your bubble fun.

Just like your paper reflects the fun you had with the bubbles, your life should reflect the holiness of Jesus.



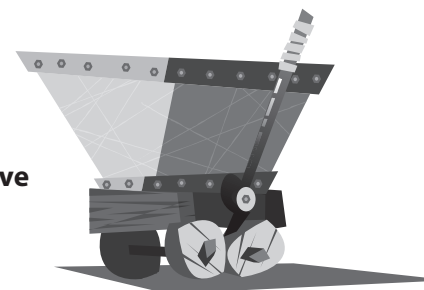
Question

God wants us to live holy lives. First Peter 1:15 says, “But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy” (p. 1234, *Live*).

➤ Why is it important to live a holy life?

God commands us to. It helps us grow closer to God. In our obedience, we show others the love of God. We open ourselves up to whatever God has for us. We become a reflection of who God is.

Loving God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength can help you live a holy life.



Holy Living

- How does loving God with all of your heart and soul lead to holy living?

You will put God first and you will want to make choices that please Him.

Philippians 4:8 says, “And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise” (p. 1176, *Live*).

- What kinds of things are you filling your mind with? Think about the last movie you watched or video game you played. How many of the adjectives in this verse could you use to describe that movie or game?

This verse (Phil. 4:8) is a great example of what it looks like to love God with all your mind. God knows that the things you think about and fill your mind with affect how you live your life.

- What does loving God with all your strength look like?

When you love God with all of your strength, you will do whatever God asks of you no matter how difficult the task. You will also serve Him by serving others.

- How can our holiness show others God’s love?

When we live holy lives we become a reflection of who God is and how much He loves us. When we live holy lives, people notice we are different and want to know why. Treating people with love and kindness opens doors for us to talk to them about who God is and how to have a relationship with Him.

We can live a holy life by following Jesus’ example.

- In what areas of your life do you need to be more like Jesus?

Examples: friendships, family, school, self-image, decision making, and priorities.



Prayer

Dear Jesus,

We praise You for being holy. Thank you for living the perfect life here on earth as an example for us. Help us love You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Help us love everyone around us. Help us reflect Your holiness in our lives. Amen.

Unwind

We are going to play a game that will remind us to follow Jesus' example of holiness.

Have the preteens pair up with a partner. Have one preteen in each pair do a goofy action. The partner has to copy the action as best as possible.

Now that we've practiced, we are going to have a competition. Each pair is going to show the class their goofy imitation. The funniest and best copier is the winner.

Give every pair a chance to show off their skills. Have them switch roles and play again.

Challenge

This week read Matthew 6:1–4 which says,

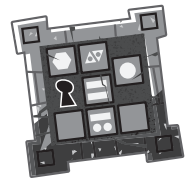
Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Read the passage at least four times, underlining anything that stands out. Write down what the verses mean and different ways you can put those verses into action.

Explore

1 Peter 2:9 says, "... for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light" (p. 1235, *Live*).

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



5. Worship

Worship is our way of showing God we love Him.

Main Points

Worship is more than music.

We worship God publicly (corporately).

We worship God in private (individually).

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Hebrews 10:23–25; Romans 12:1–2; and Psalm 100.

Items needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), box, decorative wrapping paper, glass with a stem (one per student), and water.

ask

Connect

What were some of the ways you thought of that will help you live out Matthew 6:1–4?

Encourage each preteen to list one or two ideas.

Is it harder to “love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength” or “love others as yourself?” Why?

Allow time for discussion on this question.

One way to show love for God is through worship. When you think of the word *worship*, what activity comes to mind?

Most preteens will say music, but allow for their responses.

What are some of the songs we sing during worship that show God our love? Can you say some of the phrases?

Give preteens an opportunity to sing or recite phrases to some common worship songs. Share examples from your church’s worship songs to get them started.

Warm Up

Before class wrap a box in decorative wrapping paper.

What are some ways that you can show other people you love them?

Allow for responses. Then show the preteens the gift box.

One way you can show other people you love them is by giving them gifts.

What is the best gift you have ever received?

Allow for responses.

The person who gave you that gift probably took time to think about what gift you would really like.

God showed His love for us by giving us the most important gift of all, Jesus Christ. We can give God a gift too—we can give Him our praise and adoration. This is what worship really is.

Engage

Worship is our way of showing God we love Him. Worship is a gift that we can give to God. Worship is an expression of our love and appreciation for who God is and all that He has done in our lives.

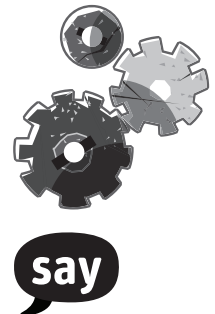
I Can Know It Is True

1. Worship is more than music. When people talk about worship, they most often refer to the music they sing at church. However, worship is more than singing. Worship is our way of showing God we love Him. Any word, thought, or action can be considered worship at any time and any place as long as it is done in a way that pleases and brings honor to God. See what worship is all about in 1 Chronicles 16:29; 28:9; and Psalm 95:1–7.

John 4:23 says, “But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way.”

2. We worship God publicly (corporately) by going to church. During the service at church, we worship through prayer, Scripture reading, music, Bible learning, serving, and fellowship.

Public worship is more than just sitting in your seats. It requires you to participate in every aspect of service. We can read about public worship in Hebrews 10:23–25.



Worship

3. We worship God in private (individually). One way you can worship God in private is by honoring God with your life. God has given each of us unique gifts and abilities. We can worship God with these gifts and abilities by doing our best, giving God the credit, and using them to serve Him and others. Our lives should be an expression of our love for God.

We can read about worshipping God in Romans 12:1–2. **Worship is our way of showing God we love Him. Make worship a way of living by giving God the best gift you can offer Him—your life.**

read

Check It Out

Psalm 89:15 says, “Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in the light of your presence, LORD” (p. 584, *Live*).

- What affect does your attitude have on the way you worship?

We must enter into worship with our hearts and minds focused on God, expecting His presence. He is not pleased when we worship out of obligation or insincerity. God wants us to be truthful and worship Him with a willing spirit. True worship is about God and not about us.

Psalm 100:1–2 says, “Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth! Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.” (p. 589, *Live*).

- What are ways other than singing that we can worship the Lord?

Serving others, sharing our testimonies or stories of God’s faithfulness, bringing our tithes and offerings, sharing our gifts and talents in service, etc.

Relate

Let’s experiment with an instrument that will help us make a joyful noise to Him.

Hand each preteen a glass with a stem. Fill the glasses half full of water. Have the preteens moisten their middle fingers. Using the wet finger, rub them around the rim of the glass at a medium pace. Continue this process until you hear the glass hum. It might take a couple of tries to hear the music. Once everyone has learned how to make music, allow the students to experiment with the amount of water in the glass.

Worship is our way of showing God we love Him. There are a variety of ways we can worship. What matters is our heart, attitude, and focus.



Question

➤ What does worship look like in your life?

Exodus 34:14 says, "You must worship no other gods, for the LORD, whose very name is Jealous, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you" (p. 89, *Live*).

Anytime we place a person or an object above our relationship with God, that item or person becomes our god.

➤ What are some objects that we might put above God?

Examples: video games, television, clothes, and computers.

➤ Who are some people that preteens might place above their relationship with God?

Examples: friends, boy- or girlfriends, role models, television or music stars, and family.

Worship is our way of showing God we love Him. It's easy to worship God when everything in our lives seems to be going well. But when life doesn't seem to be going our way, it's usually harder to worship God.

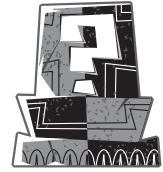
➤ Why is it important to worship God even when life gets tough?

We are commanded to worship God no matter what. Worship focuses our hearts and minds on God and helps us to stop focusing on ourselves. Worship reminds us that God is in control, and we don't need to worry. When we worship God in the difficult times, we grow closer to God. Worshiping God during difficult times is one way to witness to those who don't have a relationship with God.

We can worship God in public by going to church. Take a moment and reflect on why you go to church. Is it so you can see your friends or because your parents make you? Or, is the real reason so you can spend time showing God you love Him?

➤ Worship isn't something we do only on Sundays. Worship is a lifestyle. Make a list of five ways you can worship God in your everyday life.

Think about all the things God has done for you. As an act of worship, write a short thank you note to God for all He's done for you.



Worship



Prayer

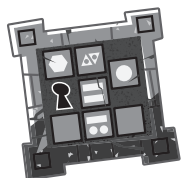
Dear Jesus,

Thank you for loving us so much that You gave up Your life as a sacrifice for our sins. Thank you for giving us an opportunity to worship You with our lives. Help us show You our love this week. Amen.

Unwind

Whether we are by ourselves or with other believers, our lives are to be a constant act of worship. To remember that we should worship God continually, we are going to see who can do the following activities the longest without stopping: stand on one foot, sing one note without taking a breath, spin around in one place, and hop on one foot.

Aren't you glad that worship is easier than that was? The Holy Spirit helps us live a life of worship.



Challenge

This week your challenge is to choose one specific way to worship God. Be as creative as you want. You will do this everyday and record in your book how it's affected you.

Help the preteens discover the best plan of worship for them. Talk through the possibilities and then have each one make the commitment by writing it in their books.

Explore

Psalms 100 says,

Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth! Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation (p. 589, *Live*).



For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

6. Membership

God desires for us to belong to a community of faith.

Main Points

God wants us to be a part of His team, the church.

We each have a part to play on God's team.

Being on God's team comes with responsibilities and benefits.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Hebrews 2:10–11; 1 Peter 1:3–4; and Romans 2:4–5.

Items needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), team jersey, paper plates, square ice cubes, coarse salt, blank t-shirts, and markers or fabric paint.

Connect

What were some ways you chose to worship God last week?

Encourage the preteens to share how they worshiped God.

How did your worship experience affect you?

Take time to confirm how worship brings us joy and draws us closer to God.

When we worship, we can feel or sense God's presence. Knowing you are not alone on this journey of faith is a wonderful feeling.

Have any of you ever been on a team?

Let them talk about the different kinds of teams they've been on. Remind them it's alright if they have never been on a team before but point out that not all teams are athletic—there are academic, musical, cheer, and many more.

plan

ask

Membership

Warm Up

Hold up a jersey or item with your favorite team logo or name.

This is my favorite team. I love this team because *(fill in your reason)*. I think it would be absolutely awesome to be on this team. The best part of being on this team would be *(fill in your answer)*.

What do you think is the best part of being on a team?

Let the preteens respond. Make note of some of the key words they use and apply them directly to the next phase.

Those are all great teams you have been on. Being on a team has great benefits, but the best team to be on is God's team and the benefits are absolutely amazing!

Engage

God desires for us to belong to a community of faith. God doesn't want us to live life alone. God wants us to journey through our faith together!



I Can Know It Is True

1. God wants us to be a part of His team—the Church. As soon as you began your friendship with God, you became a part of His team. Making a commitment of faith in God through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is a personal commitment. But our salvation makes us a member of God's family—His team. Our life of faith is meant to be shared with other believers. When you're on a sports team, you practice together, play together, and share victories and losses together. As a Christian you are to spend time growing stronger with other Christians. We call this group of other Christians a community of faith, or a local church. This church, *(insert your church name)*, is your local community of faith. Our spiritual formation or growth happens best when we are committed to a community of faith. We can read about being a part of God's team in Ephesians 1:5 and Acts 2:42–47.

Look at the different things this community of faith did together and the clear outcome in verse 47.

2. We each have a part to play on God's team. For a team to succeed, each player must play their part—the part they are best suited for. God's team works the same way. God doesn't just want you to sit on the bench or cheer from the sidelines. God wants you to be an active member of His team—the Church. God wants you to participate, serve, and give. God has gifted every person on His team with specific gifts, abilities, and passions. God wants each of us to use our unique gifts to serve and grow His church.

We can read about the importance of playing our part in 1 Corinthians 12:7; Acts 2:44; and Ephesians 4:16.

3. Being on God's team comes with responsibilities and benefits. Most teams require you to show up for practices, support your teammates, and always give your best during game time. Being on God's team also comes with responsibilities. Being on God's team requires commitment, service, contribution, and a dedication to love and support the other members of God's team.

Being on God's team also has benefits. One of the benefits of being on God's team is that we get to experience life with other believers. We also have the benefit of knowing that there are people who love us and are there to support us as we grow in our relationship with God. The biggest benefit of being on God's team is that we get to spend eternity with God and our teammates. We can read about the responsibilities and benefits of being on God's team in Acts 2:42; Galatians 6:2, 10; and 1 Peter 1:3–4.

God desires for us to belong to a community of faith because He knows that we need His church and His church needs us.



Check It Out

Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them" (p. 969, *Live*).

➤ According to this verse, God is always here when we get together with other believers. Do you think knowing this might encourage some people to change how they behave when they get together? Why or why not?

John 13:35 says, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples" (p. 1062, *Live*).

➤ How does our love for each other prove to the world that we are on God's team?

God has instructed us to show our love for each other through kindness, compassion, generosity, and through carrying each other's burdens. God has also instructed us to love each other despite of our differences and faults. When we do what our "coach" has instructed us to do, people can tell we are on the same team.

Relate

No matter what country you're from, what language you speak, or how you look, if you are a Christian you have a special bond with other Christians.

Let's do an experiment to remind us we're connected to God's team.

Allow the preteens to pair up. Give each pair a plate and a few ice cubes. Challenge them to see which group can stack the most ice cubes.

Membership

It was hard to stack these ice cubes. They need something to bond them together.

Next instruct the preteens to put one ice cube down and sprinkle salt on top of it. Place an ice cube on top of the first and watch them stick together. Continue building a tower by sprinkling salt on each ice cube.

The salt helped connect the ice cubes together just like the Holy Spirit connects Christians together on God's team.



Question

God desires for us to belong to a community of faith. What are the dangers of trying to live a godly life on your own?

When you try to live a godly life on your own, you won't benefit from the gifts of other believers. And you won't have anyone to help keep you accountable when you struggle. It can also be lonely trying to live life without the support of fellow believers.

➤ God wants us to play an active role on His team. Why is it important for us to do more than just sit the bench?

You grow deeper in your faith when you "play" rather than sit on the bench.

God gave each member of His team unique gifts and abilities. He did this so that way we would need to depend on Him and each other to be an effective team. What are some of your unique gifts and abilities? If you are unsure about what your gifts or talents might be, check out 1 Corinthians 12:7–27 (p. 1137, *Live*).

➤ How can you use them to serve this church?

One of the benefits of being on God's team is that other people will be there to help you grow closer to God. List three people who have helped you in your faith journey. How can you express your appreciation for them?

➤ We all have days when we just want to feel like we belong. How can being a member of your church help you feel special, loved, and needed?

Being a member of your local church is a privilege and honor. It comes with both responsibilities and benefits. It's up to you to make the choice. Do you want to sit on the bench or get in the game?



Prayer

Dear Jesus,

We praise You for providing us a way to be on Your team. Thank you for giving each of us a part to play on Your team. Help us discover our gifts and learn how to use them to glorify You. Amen.

Unwind

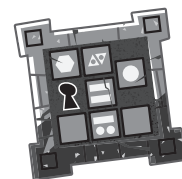
It's a special opportunity to be able to become a member of a local church. It's even more special that we're able to be on God's team. We're going to make jerseys that say we are part of God's team. If you decide to become a student member of this church, you can wear your jersey to the membership service.

Hand out a t-shirt to each student, along with paints or markers. Allow the students to decorate their t-shirts however they like. Make sure they put something about being part of God's team on the t-shirt.

Challenge

Your challenge this week is to decide if you would like to become a student member of this church. To make the best decision for you, follow these steps:

1. Pray about this decision.
2. Talk to your parents or caregivers about it.
3. Fill out the application in your book with your parents or caregivers.
4. Meet with your leader or your pastor.
5. Make a commitment to attend the membership class with your parents and the celebration service.



If you decide now is not the time for you to join this community of faith through student membership, your challenge is to write a thank-you note to someone in the church who has played a part in your spiritual journey.

Explore

First Peter 1:3–4 says,

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.



For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

Student Membership Application

I, _____, would like to be considered for student membership to my local community of faith.

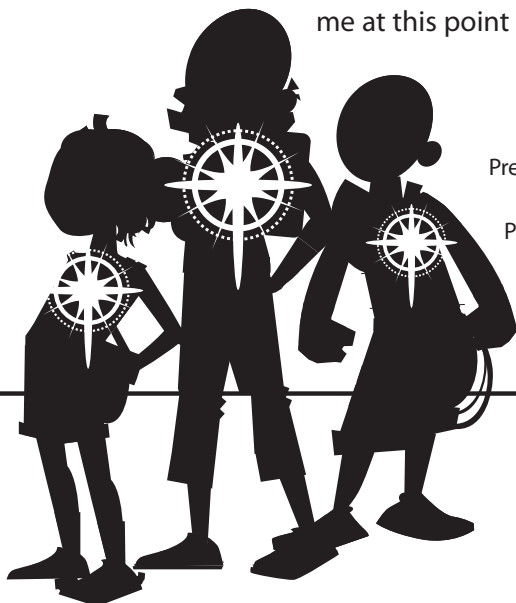
I confirm that Jesus Christ is my personal Lord and Savior. The following is my personal story of faith:

I have publically demonstrated my commitment to Jesus Christ through baptism. The following describes my baptism experience:

I have thoughtfully prayed about this decision. I understand the responsibilities and benefits of student membership. As I understand, my responsibilities include:

The benefits of local church membership include:

I have talked to my parents or caregivers and together we have decided this is the best decision for me at this point in my faith journey.



Preteen's Signature _____

Parent's Signature _____

Date _____

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Student Membership Celebration

The student membership celebration is a significant milestone in the spiritual life of your preteens. It is crucial to make it a meaningful celebration that includes the preteen's family and entire church fellowship. The following pages provide an outline of preparation for the celebration, a sample celebration ceremony, and ideas on making the day memorable.

Preparation for the Celebration

1. Have individual interviews with the preteens. Review what they have written in their church membership application. Review their testimony and reflections on their baptism celebration. Review their response to the responsibilities and benefits of church membership, making sure they understand both fully, as well as any specifics that relate to your local church.
2. For the preteens who indicate they're not ready for church membership, encourage them to write a thank-you note to a significant church member. Continue to pray and lead them.
3. If you have questions about the readiness of any of the preteens, meet with the pastor and their parents or caregivers. Discuss your concerns to determine the preteen's readiness.
4. Meet with your pastor to discuss the details of the membership celebration:
 - a. When it will take place?
 - b. Who will participate?
 - c. Which preteens will be welcomed into membership?
 - d. What will be said and done?
 - e. What will be the format and expectation for the preteens and their parents or caregivers?
 - f. How the entire church will participate in the celebration?
5. Meet with the preteens who are ready for membership and their parents or caregivers.
6. Explain the details of the membership ceremony and how it will be a celebration. Go over the specific order of the ceremony. If the preteens will be given an opportunity to share, review in advance what they will say. Make sure all the preteens and parents or caregivers are comfortable with the celebration. They will want to know:
 - a. What should they wear?
 - b. Where should they stand?

Student Membership Celebration

- c. When should they come forward and where do they go afterward?
 - d. What do their parents or caregivers do?
 - e. What will they be expected to say?
 - f. Who should they invite? (You can design invitations to share with friends and families.)
7. Create a keepsake for the preteens. A keepsake is important for them to have as a tangible reminder of this milestone in their spiritual journey. The size or cost is not as important as the memory it represents. Ideas can include:
- A video recording of the celebration. These can include words of encouragement from their pastor, teacher, and friends.
 - A picture of the preteens with their new “team” of other student members and pastoral leadership.
 - A team jersey—this can be the t-shirt the preteens designed during the final class, or a shirt designed to show their membership to this community of faith.
 - A Bible with the date and occasion listed in the front.
 - A devotional book and prayer journal.

Before the Ceremony

1. Before the ceremony, make sure each preteen has met with the pastor to talk about membership. Go over the responsibilities and benefits of being a member of the church. Review any guidelines the students must follow as a member.
2. Present the names of the preteens who are applying to become a student member to the local board of administration. Each preteen must be voted on and approved by the local board of administration before becoming a student member of the church.
3. Practice what the preteens will say when they are asked why they want to become a member. Try to make it short, to the point, and biblical.

The Ceremony

Have the preteens who are going to become a member present themselves to the congregation by coming forward. Give each preteen a chance to share why they want to become a member of this church.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–14 says, “The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part” (p. 1137, *Live*).

It is important to be a part of God’s team—the Church. Even at a young age it is important to realize that you have a role in God’s body.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:27 which says, "All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it." Children are no more or less important than adults in the body of Christ. That is why we offer them membership today.

Minister: *The Church desires to embrace within its care and nurture those who are converted to Christ early in life and who desire to know more about Jesus and His will for themselves. These have come for reception as student members so they may be disciplined by the Church and may, at the proper time, assume a greater place of responsibility and leadership in the Church. To these we address these questions.*

Minister: *Does the Lord now forgive your sins?*

Candidate: *Yes, He does.*

Minister: *Is it your purpose that you will grow in your knowledge of Jesus Christ and His will for you, to study daily in private devotions and regularly at the church, so you will mature in your faith and be prepared to serve as the Lord may direct you?*

Candidate: *Yes, it is.**

Have the local board of administration come forward and lay their hands on the preteens. Say a word of prayer for each preteen. Once accepted into membership, have the congregation offer the hand of fellowship to them.

Following the Celebration

Provide an opportunity for the entire church fellowship to congratulate the preteens for taking such a bold step. Have church leadership welcome each preteen into the fellowship of faith. Provide a refreshment fellowship, pitch-in dinner, or luncheon for the new members and their families following the celebration service.

Allow the preteens to put the date they became a member on the team jerseys they made in class. They might ask the other preteens who became members that day to sign their shirts.

Give each preteen a certificate with the date and proof of membership. Celebrate with your preteens on their decision.

Note

*"Reception of Student Members" in *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church*, (Indianapolis, Ind.: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2008), 368.

Leader Notes

Leader Notes

Leader Notes

Leader Notes

