

A CELEBRATE RECOVERY® RESOURCE

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JOHNNY BAKER  
WITH RICK LAWRENCE

# theLanding™

CelebrateRecovery® for Students

LEADER GUIDE 2



**Pastor John Baker** is the founder of Celebrate Recovery®, a ministry born out of the heart of Saddleback Church in 1991. Since then more than 11,000 individuals have gone through this Christ-centered recovery program at Saddleback. The Celebrate Recovery® program is now used in thousands of churches worldwide. Over 700,000 people have completed the program.

John is a nationally known speaker and trainer who helps churches start Celebrate Recovery® ministries. In addition to writing the *Celebrate Recovery Curriculum*, he's the general editor of the *Celebrate Recovery Bible*. John's most recent book is *Life's Healing Choices*. Since the beginning of Celebrate Recovery®, Pastor John has attempted to reach out to children in hurting homes. He's the co-author of *Celebration Station™*, Celebrate Recovery®'s program for children, and now the co-author of *The Landing™*. He's very excited about teenagers having a curriculum of their own.

John and his wife, Cheryl, have been married four decades and have served together in Celebrate Recovery® since 1991. They have two adult children, Laura and Johnny. Laura and Brian were recently married, and Johnny and his wife, Jeni, are the proud parents of John and Cheryl's three grandchildren, Maggie, Chloe, and Jimmy.

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He's married to Beverly Rose and has a 12-year-old daughter named Lucy Rose and a 7-year-old daughter named Emma Grace.

*I'd like to dedicate The Landing to my wife Cheryl—without her dedication and perseverance, this project would never have happened. And to the thousands and thousands of kids who hope to find the answer to their hurts before they become hang-ups and habits.*

- John Baker

*I would like to dedicate The Landing to my wife Jeni, and our three kids, Maggie, Chloe, and Jimmy. I'd also like to thank Eddie, Doug, Ted, Habib, and many others who were there for me as youth workers. Your investments of time, love, and listening were instrumental in giving me a strong base of faith. Thanks for teaching me about Jesus both in your example and by your words.*

- Johnny Baker

*To my dear, dear daughters Lucy Rose and Emma Grace—I already see the healing love of Jesus “covering the multitude of sins” that you've had to bear in your lives, and your passion for giving grace to others inspires and challenges me.*

- Rick Lawrence

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A CELEBRATE RECOVERY® RESOURCE  
LEADER GUIDE 2  
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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a grand adventure—an exciting and surprising and life-changing journey, in partnership with God. The Landing is a unique experience in at least a couple of ways.

First, it's structured as an ongoing 52-week program—based on the beatitudes where Jesus laid out principles for happiness in the sermon on the mount—for teenagers who are struggling to live their lives in a healthy, God-honoring way. Maybe they come from a dysfunctional home or have faced crises in their life. Maybe they simply need help developing patterns of wise choices, or they wrestle with an addiction of some kind. Whatever their life story, they know they need something more than a typical Sunday school class or youth group meeting. Or maybe they don't know this, but the people who love them do. The Landing is a safe, healing place where teenagers can live a freer, healthier, and more God-centered life.

Second, The Landing is not a lecture-style resource. It's designed to get teenagers talking about and exploring new ways of thinking and doing. They won't just be listening to someone speak—instead, they'll be talking to each other and to your leaders in a fully engaging environment that includes simple experiences that will help them "own" what they're learning. In most classes or small group studies, the leader controls pretty much everything about the direction of the lesson, and the

teenagers just follow along. With The Landing, the leader provides strong leadership and overarching direction, and encourages the students to participate and engage in the discussion. This style of teaching helps everyone feel the satisfaction of playing a key role in the journey.

We believe that true transformation comes when you get closer to Jesus. We feel so strongly about this, we're going to write that sentence again:

*We believe that true transformation comes when you get closer to Jesus.*

The aim of The Landing is to help hurting teenagers get closer to Jesus as they learn key principles during a journey toward a better life—to move their focus on Jesus from the fringes of daily life to the bull's-eye of everyday life.

Finally, we want to remind you that you're about to partner with God to change the life trajectory of the people who participate in The Landing. This really will happen. People will get closer to Jesus, and they will learn about their hurts, hang-ups, and habits that have derailed them. And many of them will be changed by this experience forever. Thanks for having the courage and the determination to be a part of the nuclear moments that are about to take place. Along with the participants in the study, you'll not only end up worshiping Jesus at a deeper level, you'll also give people a pathway to freedom in their lives.

## **BOOT CAMP FOR LEADING THE LANDING**

This yearlong experience probably differs from most studies you've led. Even if that's not the case, we've learned some vital insights over the years for leading study times that involve a lot of interactions, debriefing, and feedback. Instead of a lecture or fill-in-the-blank style—strategies that have questionable long-term impact on teenagers—we use music, video, high-octane discussions, and experiences to get at the core truths we're learning. This is a really fun, amazing way to lead people into deeper learning.

Let's explore what makes this series different and what you can expect as the leader.

## **THE LEADER'S ROLE**

In a typical small group or youth group study, a leader talks almost the entire time. Sometimes, a couple of discussion questions get tossed out, but they're often a side dish to the real meat of the study.

In The Landing, the leader talks, but the participants talk, too. A lot. If you're leading this series, you'll feel more like a ringmaster than a lecturer. You'll offer strong leadership in a context where many people participate and add to the content of the study.

Allow us to explain why that's such a great thing. First, research shows that teenagers learn best by doing. In fact, the people who learn the most in any class are

the teachers—because they first need to ingest what they're teaching before they teach it. So what happens when teenagers get immersed in experiences and talk to each other (and you) about what they're learning while they're learning it? Well, real learning takes place.

If you're a curious person who likes good conversation and who knows how to ask follow-up questions, you'll thrive in this learning environment. If you don't think you have any of these qualities, don't worry. We've crafted instructions for these sessions in a way that allows anyone to lead them. You simply need to see your role as a strong leader who has a lot to offer, but who wants to hear the experiences and opinions of others as well.

Of course, the most important aspect of leading this study is to let it transform you first. If you've experienced Celebrate Recovery® firsthand—this content is based on that dynamic resource—you know the life-changing power that this material has. If you haven't been through Celebrate Recovery®, allow this material to transform you as you prepare to teach it to students. As you prepare to lead, you need to pursue the questions and insights first. In essence, that's what being a leader means—going first. Preparation, prayer, and planning are essential. In these lessons, the leader provides important insights. Right now, these insights are all in our voice. You could say them verbatim, just as we've written them for you. But of course, you can filter everything through who you are. You do want to make sure to understand and own these insights—by the time you lead each lesson, you'll

have explored it for yourself first and let it impact you. Throughout the lessons, we've placed the words you need to say in bold preceded by the words SAY or ASK. This allows them to stand out, and you can easily scan for what you need to say.

One more important role for you, the leader, is to help teenagers celebrate and enjoy the changes God is making in their lives as they progress through this material. The subject matter can feel heavy at times so you'll need to create an environment that allows students to feel safe, and at the same time celebrate the better choices they will be making and the victory they are finding in Jesus.

There are a few key things you can do to make the group safe for everyone. As you prepare for your lessons, ask God to point out anything you can share from your experience. Students will gain so much from your willingness to be open and honest. In fact, you may find that in order to get the discussion started you may want to share first. We've included some guidelines, which will be discussed later in the section titled Group Guidelines, that will help you and your students in answering the small group questions.

Next, as this is an ongoing 52-week program that does not close or require sign-ups, you may have some students that begin attending after you've already completed several of the lessons. It is important that these students feel safe and included here in The

Landing as well. You may want to designate some leaders or more mature students to come alongside the newcomers to help them along. In addition, you may decide to modify some of the questions to suit a younger audience, such as junior high students.

## THE STUDENT JOURNAL

Each student in your class will need a Student Journal. These Student Journals are an integral part of the experience for your teenagers. The journals have material in them that complements the lessons they're going through without duplicating content. It's reading that will really help teenagers consider, process, and deepen what they're learning. Each Student Journal segment ends with a series of questions that are tied to the questions they discussed in their small groups. The journals also serve as a notebook for each participant. We've included lots of room for taking notes; keeping meaningful reminders, quotes, or Scripture references from the lessons; writing personal insights; and answering questions. Encourage participants to use the journals regularly.

These journals are intended for your students' eyes only. They should be encouraged to keep these journals in a safe place. Knowing that neither you, nor anyone else, will be reading these journals will allow the students to freely express themselves and write things they may not yet feel comfortable sharing in a group setting. Working through a journal yourself will help you better understand what your teenagers may be feeling throughout this journey.

## MILESTONE MARKERS

We have provided key tags as a way to celebrate each teenager's journey through this program. These key tags are designed to celebrate significant milestones in your teenagers' participation in The Landing—Day 1, Week 2, Month 1, Month 2, Month 3, Month 6, Month 9, and Year 1. All of these tags are available at [group.com](http://group.com) or [simplyyouthministry.com](http://simplyyouthministry.com).

These key tags are a great visual reminder for your students to celebrate the journey and to keep focused on the changes they are making. After Closing Time, right before Connect Time, while they are still gathered together, distribute the key chains by asking the students, "Who is here for the first time?" Then proceed through the rest of the marker lengths.

## WORSHIP TIME

Nearly every lesson features a Worship Time near the start of your gathering. Usually there's an activity or a conversation that precedes a time of singing some favorite worship songs or listening to songs on a CD or from your MP3 player. If you have a worship band comprised of teenagers this can be an opportunity for them to participate and lead. Or you may have a leader who plays an instrument who could lead during this time.

Sometimes we suggest playing soft and unobtrusive instrumental music as a background during discussion or experience times as well.

## VIDEOS

Included in your kit are 4 DVDs (corresponding with each Leader Guide) with video clips for one of the two lessons under every topic. The instructions are easy to follow, and the video clip always precedes your small group time, which features discussion of the clip.

Be sure to preview, cue up the clips, set the volume, and test your electronics before people arrive for the session. If you're fiddling with equipment while people arrive, you basically greet them with your backside. At best, this means you're distracted as you talk with them.

## EXPERIENCES

Many of the sessions in this series include experiences that participants will do and you'll then "debrief." By "experiences," we mean activities that encourage everyone to participate. These might be fun, meditative, or mildly uncomfortable. But the goal is to lead people into activities where they feel fully engaged.

"Debriefing" is just another way of saying that you will artfully engage participants with good initial questions about the experience, followed by good follow-up questions. You help the people in your group build bridges from unforgettable experiences to unforgettable truths. When you succeed, you can truly say two things: You've "taught," and the participants have "learned."

These experiences aren't just fringe illustrations or funky gimmicks. Research shows that students learn

more deeply through direct experiences than any other teaching approach. You might be tempted to think lightly of these experiences, or diminish them, or cut them out if you're pressed for time. **But resist that temptation!** We know not just from research but from personal experience teaching this way, that good experiences—debriefed well by a leader—hold unmatched power to capture and change people.

We urge you to pay close attention to the details of these experiences so you can easily give instructions to participants. Preparation and planning are essential. We provide clear and specific direction on how to set up, lead, and debrief these experiences. A leader can ruin a great experience by leaving out a crucial principle, giving fuzzy directions, or not grasping the makeup of the experience itself. Even more, you'll torpedo a powerful experience if you "hedge your bets" by apologizing for or diminishing an experience in your setup for it. If you doubt that people will get much out of the experience, suspend your disbelief and just decide to believe people will do what you ask them to do. We can tell you, they will. And they'll remember the experiences years from now. However, do not be discouraged if a student chooses to not participate at first in these experiences. Your confidence that a student will eventually participate in a safe environment is crucial.

We'll talk a little more about what to cut and not cut from each session if, for some reason, time is tight. But our general rule of thumb is never cut an experience.

Instead, cut down on what you say. As much as we want to just tell people what we think they should know, a good experience will teach people a lesson they'll never forget. Keep in mind that the experiences in this journey aren't just "illustrations" or "object lessons"—they're the very meat of the study. So, more than any other aspect of this series, make sure you understand and are ready to lead the experiences.

## SUPPLIES

Because the lessons contain hands-on, interactive experiences, you'll need to gather supplies before each week's meeting. Don't wait until the last minute to look at the list of items you'll need—preparation and planning are essential. We've done our best to recommend items that can be found in a typical youth room or church facility. Encourage other leaders to pitch in and help bring or acquire supplies, especially if you don't have a budget for these supplies. Whenever possible, don't buy—just bring or borrow. If you have a particularly large group of teenagers going through The Landing, you may want to pick and choose which experiences you do with everyone and perhaps leave a couple of experiences as demonstrations with a few volunteers.

In some cases, we've offered suggestions on alternative supplies for activities. These recommendations can help you save money or time in gathering supplies. Throughout this curriculum, you're welcome to substitute supplies that reduce expenses or time but continue to give teenagers a hands-on, interactive learning experience.

Here are a few notes on frequently needed supplies:

- » **Paper:** Keep a lot of this handy. We ask students to write their thoughts or answer questions a lot. Teenagers can use their copies of the Student Journal, but for the ones who don't have or forget to bring their copies, keep a healthy supply of paper.
- » **3X5 cards:** You'll use these a LOT! We encourage you to purchase them in large quantities before starting The Landing.
- » **Pens and pencils:** Your teenagers will do a lot of writing, and we generally assume that most young people don't carry pens and pencils with them to church or small group gatherings. Keep this supply well stocked.
- » **TV/DVD player:** As mentioned earlier, this kit includes a DVD with a video clip for one of the two lessons under every topic. If you have a projector system in your meeting room, go ahead and use it—don't feel constrained to use a TV.
- » **Bibles:** In many of the lessons you'll be asking for students to read verses from the Bible. While some of your students may bring their own Bibles with them, and you may want to encourage them to do so, it's a good idea to have a few extra Bibles on hand. You don't have to buy any special Bible for this, just bring any Bibles you have and ask the other adult leaders to do the same. We've used a variety of Bible translations in this curriculum, but you'll see that the New International Version is most prevalent. If your youth ministry or congregation has a preferred translation, you're welcome to use it throughout your lessons.

» We've included a CD-ROM in this kit. It's full of handouts that you can use in The Landing, including small group questions, handouts for students, and **AN IMPORTANT NOTE FOR ALL LEADERS TO READ AND UNDERSTAND**. Look through the CD-ROM's contents as you're preparing for the first lesson to gain a sense of all the tools you'll find there.

## DISCUSSIONS

At the heart of this series, you'll need to make a commitment to spark great discussions. As with any great discussion, you won't always be sure which way a conversation will go. You might be tempted to impose your will or your agenda on every discussion, but (for the most part) it's good to resist that temptation. Your goal should be to get every person contributing to the life and content of the sessions.

Sometimes teenagers want to follow rabbit trails—directions that stray from your plan and threaten to hijack the carefully crafted teaching thread. Often, it's OK to follow rabbit trails—as long as the trail leads toward the overarching goal of the lesson. Occasionally, a participant might take over and force the study in a different, and potentially unsafe, direction. When you sense you're getting bogged down in an unhelpful rabbit trail, stop walking down it and return to the main path.

Sometimes a student will give an answer that is confusing or irrelevant. You'll want to try hard not to place value judgments on how people answer.

The goal behind all this strategy is to make your group a safe and inviting place for people to add their voice to the conversation. Throughout The Landing, you'll switch between many kinds of interactions: partners, trios, small group, and whole-group discussions. If you believe a partner- or trio-focused discussion topic would work better for your teenagers in a larger group, then use it in that setting. The primary purpose for the variety of group sizes is to encourage everyone to participate and speak. Not all teenagers will engage as actively in the larger groups, but they'll be more willing to answer and share their views with just one or two peers.

Each lesson's small group time includes an opportunity for you to bring other safe, mature adult leaders into the journey with your teenagers. We've labeled these individuals as "conversation leaders," and their role is to facilitate that part of the lesson. We encourage you to provide these leaders with their questions in advance. If you find that you don't have enough adult leaders to serve in this role, empower your teenagers to ask the questions.

## WHAT TO CUT...AND NOT

Because of the learning approach we use in this series, you might need to cut part of a session because of time. That's OK, because coverage isn't the goal of these studies. Instead, focus on deeper learning and transformation. You can feel OK about occasionally letting a conversation go on a little longer if needed. We've designed these lessons to last two hours from start to finish.

A few general guidelines about cutting stuff: Aim to cut from the middle of the session if you're tight on time, rather than the beginning or the end. Never cut an experience in favor of leader-talk. If you must choose between participants discovering a truth in discussion with others and you simply telling them the truth, opt for option A. Let others own what they're learning. You might be tempted to cut discussions short for the sake of time. If you do, you'll have a lot of frustrated people on your hands—people who simply don't have enough time to talk about the great question you asked them to pursue. These frustrated people then have a hurdle to overcome if they're going to return to the study the next week. So, cut and condense what you have to say in favor of retaining what others have to say. Don't worry, you'll still have many opportunities to guide, influence, and frame the discussions.

## **SMALL GROUP DYNAMICS**

One of the most important parts of The Landing is the small group time. It is imperative that these groups are safe! Students will be opening up about their lives and answering questions that require personal and thoughtful answers. For this reason, there are two main factors to keep in mind when splitting your large group into small groups. First, all of the small groups in The Landing must be gender based. Boys with boys and a male leader, and girls with girls and a female leader. No exceptions. Also, as The Landing is a place for junior high as well as senior high students, you may have a wide range of ages each week. If possible, try to have the small groups be as close in age as possible, keeping in mind to always

keep them gender specific. As we mentioned earlier, at different points of the lessons your students will be in groups of either pairs or trios. During these times allow students to partner with whomever they feel most comfortable.

## **SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES**

To make sure The Landing is a safe place for students—where they can share their hurts, hang-ups, and habits—we've included five important guidelines (pp. 17-18). These guidelines are simple and straight forward, but we know they may be new to you. These guidelines are a part of every Celebrate Recovery® resource, including Celebration Station and now, here, with The Landing. By following and modeling these guidelines, and ensuring that the students in your discussion groups do as well, you'll be making The Landing a place where they can share honestly and openly. These five guidelines are integral to the success of these kinds of discussion groups.

Students need a place where they can share and not feel judged. We've done our best to make sure there aren't any questions that have "right" and "wrong" answers. The questions are designed to get students thinking and sharing. As a conversation leader you may feel from time to time the urge to shape a student's answer. Resist that temptation! Remember that these guidelines aren't just for the students, but they're for you too.

For example, Guideline 2 states, "Please avoid all cross talk." Here are some examples of cross talk:

- » Two people having a discussion that excludes the rest of the group
- » Agreeing or disagreeing with someone's sharing
- » Asking a question about something shared

Cross talk makes a group unsafe. Students may be opening up about events and emotions for the first time ever. If they are told they should not feel a certain way, the group is no longer safe for them. If they are challenged or questioned, even just to clarify, the group may no longer feel safe for them.

As the leader you will have to model and even enforce these guidelines. When students see that each discussion will be held with these guidelines in mind, and that you follow them, too, their sharing will be deeper because they feel safe.

## SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

### 1. FOCUS ON YOUR OWN THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS WHEN SHARING WITH THE GROUP.

We want to be sure everyone has time to share, so please limit your sharing to three to five minutes. If you focus on your own thoughts and feelings, you're less likely to "wander" and discuss unrelated topics. As the group leader, I may let you know when you've shared for too long, but if you focus on what matters most, you'll likely stay within the time boundaries.

### 2. PLEASE AVOID ALL CROSS TALK.

We want each person to be free to express feelings and thoughts without interruptions. Here are some examples of "cross talk." Two individuals engage in conversation while excluding everyone else. A group member interrupts or inappropriately laughs when another person shares. Or a group member says, "I can relate to you because..." or "I can't relate to you because...." Please be respectful toward the other members of our group, because I know you want everyone to be respectful when it's your turn to share.

### 3. WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER.

Sometimes in our group settings, we hear about other people's challenges, and we want to offer

solutions to fix their problems. We may have the right intention, and we may want to share the wisdom we're gaining from being in this awesome program. But the other person may not be ready or want to hear or understand. You will protect each other by simply supporting one another and not trying to "fix" one another.

#### **4. VALUE AND PROTECT ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY.**

It hurts to discover that information someone has shared here is being discussed outside of the small group time. Some of us struggle with trust issues because we've been hurt by other people. We all need to know that this is a safe place to share. What is shared in our group stays in our group. The only exception is if someone threatens to injure himself/herself or others.

#### **5. AVOID OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE; IT HAS NO PLACE IN A CHRIST-CENTERED GROUP.**

I'd encourage everyone in this group to follow this biblical thought, found in Ephesians 4:29—*Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.*

# **COMMUNITY**

lesson fifteen

# COMMUNITY

lesson fifteen

## PRINCIPLE 4:

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).

"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40 NIV).

## SCHEDULE

- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- 🎵 WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- 📘 TEACHING TIME (40 minutes)
- 👥 SMALL GROUPS (30 minutes)
- ⌚ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)
- » 3X5 cards—one per teenager, plus additional cards for one of the stations
- » Pens or pencils
- » Bibles
- » A whiteboard or newsprint or butcher paper affixed to a wall—plus four additional sheets for one of the stations
- » Markers
- » Printouts from website ([www.rejesus.co.uk/the\\_story/saint/index.html](http://www.rejesus.co.uk/the_story/saint/index.html))
- » Envelopes
- » Two or three hand-held mirrors
- » Color markers—one per teenager, unless you have a large group; kids can share

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time
- » Set up the four stations for the Teaching Time

## CONNECT TIME

**SUPPLIES:** 3X5 cards (one per teenager) and pens or pencils.

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

This is the opening “connect” activity that you’re doing once every month. Have teenagers get in a circle. Give them each a 3X5 card and something to write with (if they don’t already have a pen or pencil). Ask them to write one creative question on their card that’s designed to discover what their friends in the group think, feel, and believe. For example: “If they were to make a movie about your life, which actor/actress would play you and why?” Or “What’s the strangest thing you’ve ever eaten?”

Ask teenagers to pass the cards to you, then quickly select five question-cards based on which ones you think would be most interesting to answer. Then ask a teenager to volunteer to sit in a chair in the middle of your circle—the “Hot Seat.” One by one, ask the Hot Seat person the five questions.

Encourage the remaining kids in the circle to ask at least two follow-up questions (total) after every answer from the Hot Seat person.



**SAY:** Jesus said so many surprising things that have been recorded in the Bible—one of them is about friendship.

Read aloud John 15:15: “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

**ASK:**

- » What are some differences between a servant and a friend?

**SAY:** Let’s worship Jesus for calling us friends, not servants.

Then lead kids in three familiar worship songs. If you have a youth band, invite the group to lead your teenagers in worship. Otherwise, play the songs from a CD and encourage kids to sing along—or simply play the music as everyone sits and thinks about the words of the songs.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week’s beatitude: “Happy are the pure in heart” (Matthew 5:8 GNT).



## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, whiteboard or newsprint or butcher paper affixed to a wall and markers. Additionally, gather supplies and set up four stations according to the instructions at the end of this lesson. Set up the stations

before your gathering; ask your conversation leaders and other adults to arrive early to help with setup.

Have your teenagers form trios to discuss these questions.

**ASK:**

- » Who was your best friend as a child?
- » What made that person a good friend?

Direct everyone to sit in a large circle, then **SAY:** Childhood friendships are often simple: loyal, trusting, and fun. As we get older, our relationships become complicated. It’s tough to open up to people. Unhealthy cliques form. We judge others and we get judged. We’re tempted to hide our true selves. Our efforts to be honest about life with ourselves and with others are made so much harder when our friendships don’t go very deep.

Within our Christian community, some of our relationships are shallow. And that’s a big problem, especially for those of us here at The Landing who are walking the challenging path toward freedom. Read aloud Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 and Proverbs 27:17.

**SAY:** What God wants for us—and what we truly long for and what we truly need—is deep and enduring friendships. That’s why the phrase “one another” is used in the New Testament more than 50 times! Explain that as Paul wraps up his letter to the Christians

living in Rome—the book of Romans in the Bible—he takes time to talk about his friendships.

Read aloud Romans 16:1-24, and then **ASK:**

- » What are all the ways Paul describes his friends in this passage?

List your teenagers' answers on a whiteboard or newsprint or butcher paper affixed to a wall. Keep prompting them to find new ideas until they've thoroughly scoured the passage.

Read the list aloud, and then have teenagers form pairs and discuss these questions.

**ASK:**

- » Which of Paul's descriptions of deep friendships stands out to you most?
- » What do these descriptions tell you about what Paul's relationships were like?
- » What do all these descriptions have in common?

Gather back together and **SAY:** Paul changed the world for Jesus after he left behind his previous life of bad choices and destruction—but he didn't do it alone! Paul was part of a tight-knit community of Christian friends—people who inspired him, supported him, worked alongside him, and kept him accountable to the new life Jesus had given him.

Tell kids they'll have 20 minutes to explore the role of

Christian community in their lives by participating in four stations set up around the room. They can visit the stations in any order they'd like.

**Station 1:** Set out inspiring stories of Christians from the website [www.rejesus.co.uk/the\\_story/saint/index.html](http://www.rejesus.co.uk/the_story/saint/index.html) (look under the heading "Lives Modules," click on the person you're interested in, then click on the "story" link for that person). Post these instructions (available on the CD-ROM): *Look through these materials and find a person whose story interests you. Read a bit; then find a partner and tell them about the person you learned about and how his or her example inspires you.*

**Station 2:** Post these instructions (available on the CD-ROM): *Think about your relationships with others in this group. Are these relationships shallow, surfacy, or contrived? How will you take them to a deeper level? Pray about your desire to deepen your friendships in this group. Then think of a specific step you'll take to change things.*

**Station 3:** Set out 3X5 cards, envelopes, and pens. Post these instructions (available on the CD-ROM): *Reflect on your own personal journey of faith—who has been an example, encourager, or inspiration to you? Write a card to that person, expressing your appreciation. Commit to give the card to that person.*

**Station 4:** Hang up the newsprint or butcher paper sheet of descriptions (or set up the whiteboard) from Romans 16:1-24 and set out two or three handheld mirrors. Post these instructions (available on the CD-ROM):

*Look at the descriptions of Paul's friends; then look at yourself in the mirror. Do those descriptions fit you? Do you live in such a way that other Christians would think of you the way Paul thought of his friends? Pray, asking God to make you an inspiring, encouraging example to others who have committed to The Landing.*

When time's up, ask teenagers to share about any personal commitments they've made.



## SMALL GROUPS

Prior to beginning your small group, read the Small Group Guidelines on pp. 17-18 with your teenagers. Remember, as a leader you are to model these guidelines for your group as you lead the discussion.

Break your larger group into small groups of three or more, with a conversation leader in each one. To prime the pump for discussion, have the leaders begin the small group time by describing how friendships—or a particular friendship—have helped them in their journey out of the jungle and into the life God has for them. Then have groups each discuss these questions (available on the CD-ROM).

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

### ASK:

- » What's the hardest thing about finding and keeping good friendships?
- » Why are so many friendships in the Christian community so shallow?
- » How have your own friendships helped you in your journey toward the life God has for you?
- » How have your friendships actually hindered you?
- » Why would God create us to need the friendships of others, instead of making us self-sufficient?

Close this time with a silent prayer that offers God thanks for the friendships in their lives and asks God for help in developing deeper friendships that help you on the journey toward the life he has for you.



## CLOSING

**SUPPLIES:** four large pieces of newsprint or butcher paper, and color markers—one per teenager, unless you have a large group; kids can share.

Tape four large pieces of newsprint or butcher paper to a wall (you might want to tape two together, one on top of the other, to make sure the markers don't bleed through

to your wall). Put a small pile of color markers on the floor under each piece of newsprint. Title the pieces of newsprint this way:

- » #1—"Close Friendships Are..."
- » #2—"I Thank God for Friendships Because..."
- » #3—"I Want to Be a Better Friend By..."
- » #4—"I Need Good Friendships Because..."

Invite your teenagers to finish the sentence on each piece of newsprint or butcher paper by drawing or writing on the paper.

After a few minutes, gather so that you can all look at the pieces of newsprint at the same time.

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the group. That's OK; encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;

Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will; So that I  
may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Don't forget to remind your students to spend time with their journals this week, reflecting on what God is teaching them during this journey.

## CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders can hang out and connect. Consider having some healthy options for those who may use food as a way of coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

# COMMUNITY

lesson sixteen

# COMMUNITY

lesson sixteen

## PRINCIPLE 4:

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).*

*"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40 NIV).*

## SCHEDULE

- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- ❖ WORSHIP (10 minutes)
- ❖ TEACHING TIME (25 minutes)
- ❖ VIDEO TIME (5 minutes)
- ❖ SMALL GROUPS (45 minutes)
- ❖ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)
- » TV and DVD player
- » The Landing DVD 2
- » Nametags—one per teenager (can be replaced with 3X5 cards or slips of paper)
- » Bibles
- » Smooth stones—one per teenager (if necessary, substitute with something else kids can write on and carry around for a week, such as a slip of cardstock paper or small piece of wood or piece of an inexpensive puzzle)
- » Permanent markers

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time
- » Print copies of the *Huiothesia* handout (available on the CD-ROM)—one for every two kids in your group

## CONNECT TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Nametags and pens. You could substitute 3X5 cards or slips of paper for the nametags, if necessary.

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

Give each teenager a blank nametag and a pen. Tell them the goal is to have their first names written on their nametags by the end of your Connect Time. If you have a small group of students, you tell them the goal is to have their first and last names written on the nametags.

Assign each kid a number between 1 and 8 and explain that each number will have a rule that must be followed. For example, if you are assigned the number 1, you will only be allowed to draw vertical lines.

Explain that the kids will mingle with each other to help write their names by implementing the rule that goes with the number they've been assigned. Again, for example, the kid with number 1 will move among the group only drawing vertical lines.

1. You can only draw vertical lines. (For example, the letters "b," "d," "h," and "k" all have vertical parts that you can draw.)
2. You can only draw horizontal lines, but you can't cross "t's." (For example, the letters "e," "f," and "z" all have horizontal parts that you can draw.)
3. You can only dot "i's."
4. You can only cross "t's."
5. You can only draw curves, not circles or lines. (For example, the letters "c," "e," "j," and "r" all have curved parts that you can draw.)
6. You can only draw angled lines. (For example, the letters "k," "v," "w," and "y" all have angled parts that you can draw.)

7. You can only draw circles. You may not draw partial circles—only complete circles. (For example, the letters “a,” “g,” “o,” and “p” all have circular parts that you can draw.)
8. You can only draw capital letters. You can draw only one capital letter for each person.

After all your teenagers have finished nametags, **SAY:** **You know, each of you were given a unique ability to help complete a name. In the same way, we are each uniquely gifted by God to “give what we have to give” to each other—to help each other on our journey toward the life God has for us.**

## 🎵 WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, lead your teenagers in a listening experience.

Have them sit in a circle with a pile of Bibles in the middle, then **SAY:** I’d like you to get a little space between yourself and the people next to you, but stay in a circle. (Pause) Now I’m going to have you ask God a question. When we ask God things we don’t normally get an audible response, but we do sense things or see things in our mind’s eye—and some of us even feel prompted to look up a Bible passage. Whatever it is, just be open to God’s leading and his voice. So, let’s first silence our own thoughts. (Pause) Now ask God: What do I have to give?

After a few minutes of silent listening, lead kids in three familiar worship songs. If you have a youth band, invite the group to lead your teenagers in worship. Otherwise, play the songs from a CD and encourage kids to sing along—or simply play the music as everyone sits and thinks about the words of the songs.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week’s beatitude: “Happy are the pure in heart” (Matthew 5:8 GNT).



## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, pens or pencils, and copies of the *Huiotnesia* handout (available on the CD-ROM).

**SAY:** As we’ve mentioned before, we’re on this journey on the road to healthier, freer lives. The reason we call this gathering The Landing is that this journey is like coming home to a place where you are loved and where you can be who God created you to be. This journey is for everyone who feels stuck in life—trapped by their hurts, hang-ups, and habits, or their circumstances, or their addictions. It’s also a place for people who haven’t faced those intense battles but want greater wisdom on leading a healthy life filled with freedom. The principles that we talk about are based on the beatitudes, where Jesus laid out principles for happiness in the sermon on the mount.

**ASK:**

- » In real life, how do you really know that you belong?
- » How do you know when you don't belong?
- » What makes a person feel like they belong to a family?
- » What makes an adopted child feel like they belong to a family?

Have kids find a partner, and give each pair a *Huióthesia* handout. Give them five or 10 minutes to discuss the passages on the handout.

Then **ASK** the group:

- » What does it mean to be adopted by God?
- » How is it like adoption into a family? How is it different?
- » What are the blessings and advantages of adoption?

**SAY:** The true nature of our connection to God is that we are his adopted sons and daughters. That's not just a nice thought; according to the Bible it's our reality. And as adopted sons and daughters, that makes us—truly—brothers and sisters of each other. And brothers and sisters, as we know, go to bat for you when no one else will. They love you when you're unlovable. They get in your face when you're messing up. They walk with you through life's difficulties and challenges, instead of standing on the sidelines.

When we live in close community with brothers and sisters, they can spot our old, dysfunctional, self-defeating patterns beginning to surface and point them out to us quickly. They can confront us with truth and love about our hurts, hang-ups, and habits without loading us up with shame or guilt. Ecclesiastes 7:5 tells us that, "It is better to be criticized by a wise man than to be praised by a fool!" The trouble with most of us is that we'd rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism. The qualities we're hoping God will develop in us, so that we can be a help to each other on our journey, include:

- » Does his walk match his talk?
- » Does she have a growing relationship with Jesus Christ?
- » Does he express the desire to help others who are traveling the same road?
- » Does she show compassion, care, and hope but not pity?
- » Is he a good listener?
- » Is she strong enough to confront your denial or procrastination?
- » Does he offer suggestions?
- » Can she share her own current struggles with others?

We'll talk about each of these eight qualities at greater length in our small groups. But first, let's watch a short video about the brother-to-brother relationship between Barnabas and John Mark, and how that relationship changed both of their lives.

## VIDEO TIME

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video "John Mark and Barnabas" from DVD 2 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 2:19 long.

## SMALL GROUPS

Prior to beginning your small group, read through the following Small Group Guidelines with your teenagers.

- 1. Focus on your own thoughts and feelings when sharing with the group.**
- 2. Please avoid ALL cross talk.**
- 3. We are here to support one another.**
- 4. Value and protect anonymity and confidentiality.**
- 5. Avoid offensive language; it has no place in a Christ-centered group.**

Remember, as a leader you are to model these guidelines for your group as you lead the discussion.

After the whole group has watched the video, split into your small groups, with a conversation leader in each one. This particular small group time will be longer than normal, because there are more questions to discuss. Have your conversation leaders ask these questions (available on the CD-ROM) about the video, with the

intent to draw out personal stories from the kids in the group.

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

### ASK:

- » What's something you saw that illustrated a truth about the way "adopted brothers" help and serve each other? Explain.
- » Talk about someone you know whose "walk matches his or her talk"—how do you know it does?
- » What are the indicators of a growing relationship with Jesus Christ?
- » Has someone helped you on your journey toward freedom and a close relationship with God? If so, tell us about it.
- » What's the difference between compassion and pity?
- » How do you know when you're talking to a good listener—what "cues" do you pick up that the person is listening well?
- » When have you confronted a friend's or family member's issues? What happened? What is the value of confrontation in our relationships?
- » What does it mean to offer suggestions to others who are struggling to stay on the road to God's best for them?
- » Why are some people able to share about their struggles, while others hide them?

At the end of this discussion, close in prayer, thanking God for adopting us as sons and daughters.

## CLOSING

**SUPPLIES:** a smooth stone for each person and permanent markers. If necessary, substitute with something else kids can write on and carry around for a week, such as a slip of cardstock paper or small piece of wood or piece of an inexpensive puzzle.

Gather kids and have them sit in a circle. Give each person a stone (or other item) and a marker. Have kids each write on their stone the name of the person on their right. Then pile the stones in the center of the circle and ask kids to close their eyes. Then, with their eyes still closed, have them each reach out and grab a stone. (Make sure no one has chosen a stone with his or her own name on it.)

**SAY:** For the rest of this week, carry this stone to remind you to pray for the person named on it. Starting tomorrow, if you meet a person from our group, trade stones and pray for the person on your new stone. Keep praying for the person named as long as you have the stone.

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the

group. That's OK; encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.  
  
Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
  
If I surrender to your will; So that I  
may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Don't forget to remind your students to spend time with their journals this week, reflecting on what God is teaching them during this journey.



## CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders can hang out and connect. Consider having some healthy options for those who may use food as a way of coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

# INVENTORY

lesson seventeen

# INVENTORY

lesson seventeen

## PRINCIPLE 4:

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).

"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40 NIV).

## SCHEDULE

- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- ❖ WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- ❖ TEACHING TIME (40 minutes)
- ❖ SMALL GROUPS (30 minutes)
- ❖ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time
- » Make sure your meeting room has plenty of items teenagers can choose from during the Connect Time activity

## CONNECT TIME

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

Form a circle, then **SAY:** Think back to when you were in kindergarten or even younger. What's the first thing you remember? Is it a fun vacation or outing? Were you riding your tricycle with a friend or eating a favorite treat? Or was it something sad, like getting in trouble for something you didn't do? Before we each tell our memory, take two minutes to search the room for a symbol to represent that memory. For example, a person could choose a book to represent an early memory of a grandparent reading a bedtime story.

After two minutes, gather back in a circle and share your memories and symbols.

**SAY:** Memories are funny things, aren't they? We can forget the big moments but remember tiny details of random days. We can forget the good stuff but remember the bad stuff. We can even use our memories to construct for ourselves a past we can actually live with. But, of course, that won't help us find the life God always meant for us to live. That journey starts with a courageous commitment to face our past.

## WORSHIP

**SAY:** If you're here for the first time, we've been working the past four months to get to this part of our journey together. We are going to start taking an honest look at our lives—and our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. Whether you've been coming to The Landing since the beginning, or if this is your first time, we're all the same—our first instinct is to protect ourselves. But God's invitation is for us to be honest before him because we can trust him.

Have your teenagers stand in a circle with a little more than an arm's width between each of them. Ask them to close their eyes.

**SAY:** As you keep your eyes closed, can you feel how vulnerable and unprotected you are with your eyes closed? A lot of you probably feel extremely uncomfortable doing this right now. You'd never be this vulnerable around someone who means to harm

you. And God means no harm to you. God loves you and understands that it takes a lot of courage to be vulnerable with him, because we've been hurt. So right now, spend just a moment silently talking to God about what you're feeling.

After a minute or so, lead kids in three familiar worship songs. If you have a youth band, invite the group to lead your teenagers in worship. Otherwise, play the songs from a CD and encourage kids to sing along—or simply play the music as everyone sits and thinks about the words of the songs.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week's beatitude: "*Happy are the pure in heart*" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).



## TEACHING TIME

**SAY:** Today at The Landing we're going to introduce a life-changing exercise that we call your "Personal Inventory." Your Personal Inventory needs to be written on paper. Writing will help you organize your thoughts and focus on recalling past events that you may have buried. It will help you deal with your hurts, hang-ups, and habits. At next week's meeting, we'll actually start this exercise. Today, we're going to explore what you'll be doing and give you time to ask questions and talk about every aspect of it. Remember, you are

not going through this alone—you're a part of a family here, and Jesus is our friend, Lord, and leader.

Ephesians 4:31 tells us to "get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." The five-column inventory sheets in your Student Journal were developed to help you with this. It's called *Taking an Honest and Spiritual Inventory*, and it starts on page 77. Remember, you're going to keep the inventory sheets in a place "for your eyes only." Today, as I mentioned, we're going to talk about each of the areas in the inventory and answer any questions you have. Next week we'll actually write our inventories and then talk about them. Let's take a look at each of the columns.

### COLUMN 1: "THE PERSON"

**SAY:** In this column, you'll list the people in your past that you are angry with, that have hurt you, or that you fear. Go as far back as you can.

Share with your teenagers a personal account of some of the people and things in your own life that you have harbored resentments toward.

### ASK:

- » What questions or concerns do you have about the work you'll do in this column?

### **COLUMN 2: “THE CAUSE”**

**SAY:** In this column you’re going to list the specific actions that someone did to hurt you. What did the person do to cause you resentment and/or fear? An example would be the alcoholic father who’s emotionally unavailable for you, or a friend who attempts to control and dominate your life. Writing about these things might be painful for you, but that’s why you’re doing it in the midst of a loving, engaged community of brothers and sisters here at The Landing. These friends will be there to walk with you through the pain. Of course, Jesus will be with you, too. God promises in Isaiah 41:10: “Fear not, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed. I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.”

Share with your teenagers a personal account of some of the wounds you have received from others.

#### **ASK:**

- » What questions or concerns do you have about the work you’ll do in this column?

### **COLUMN 3: “THE EFFECT”**

**SAY:** In this column you’ll write how a specific hurtful action affected your life both in the past and in the present. For example, in Column 2, if you wrote about a friend who attempts to control and dominate your life, the effect may be that you’re doing something you know is wrong to gain their approval.

Share with your teenagers a personal account of how your wounding has impacted your life, both in the past and present.

#### **ASK:**

- » What questions or concerns do you have about the work you’ll do in this column?

### **COLUMN 4: “THE DAMAGE”**

**SAY:** In this column you’ll explore just what that damage looks like in three particular areas: Social (have you suffered from broken relationships, slander, or gossip?), Security (has your physical safety been threatened, or have you moved often?), and Sexual (have you been a victim in abusive relationships, or has intimacy or trust been damaged or broken?).

No matter how you’ve been hurt, no matter how lost you may feel in life, God wants to comfort you and restore you. Remember what God promises in Ezekiel 34:16 (GNT): “I will look for those that are lost, I will bring back those that wander off, bandage those that are hurt, and heal those that are sick.”

Share with your teenagers a personal account of the damage represented by your wounds.

#### **ASK:**

- » What questions or concerns do you have about the work you’ll do in this column?

#### **COLUMN 5: “MY PART”**

**SAY:** In Lamentations 3:40 the prophet Jeremiah says: “Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.” He doesn’t say, “Let us examine *their* ways.” Now you need to honestly determine the part of the anger, hurt, or pain that you are responsible for. Ask God to show you *your* part in a broken or damaged relationship, a distant parent, or maybe a failure at school. In addition, in this column you’ll list all the people whom you have hurt, and how you’ve hurt them. In Psalm 139:23 (GNT) King David tells us: “Examine me, O God and know my mind; test me, and discover if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way.”

Remember, if you’ve been abused by a parent, family member, friend, or anyone else, you can find great freedom in this part of the inventory. You’ll discover that you had NO responsibility for that situation. You can simply write the words “NONE” or “NOT GUILTY” in Column 5.

Share with your teenagers a personal account of your own responsibility in a damaged relationship or hurtful circumstance.

#### **ASK:**

- » What questions or concerns do you have about the work you’ll do in this column?

**SAY:** Although we’ve spent the majority of our time focusing on the negative things in your life, it’s important that you’re aware of the positive things that have happened as well, including healed relationships, changes you’ve made since coming to The Landing, and so on. Take some time to note these positive things in Column 6 of your Inventory worksheets.

Now let’s move to your small groups, where you can talk further about these steps.



#### **SMALL GROUPS**

Prior to beginning your small group, read through the following Small Group Guidelines with your teenagers.

1. Focus on your own thoughts and feelings when sharing with the group.
2. Please avoid ALL cross talk.
3. We are here to support one another.
4. Value and protect anonymity and confidentiality.
5. Avoid offensive language; it has no place in a Christ-centered group.

Remember, as a leader you are to model these guidelines for your group as you lead the discussion.

Break your larger group into small groups of three or more, with a conversation leader in each one. To

 **CLOSING**

prime the pump for discussion, have the leaders begin the small group time by briefly describing their own experience in moving through these Inventory steps. Then have groups each discuss these questions (available on the CD-ROM).

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

**ASK:**

- » Who is a person that you're angry with, who has hurt you, or that you're afraid of? If you're comfortable sharing, explain.
- » What are the specific hurtful actions that have damaged you? Explain.
- » What have been the effects of those hurts in your life?
- » What damage have those hurts caused in your life?
- » Were you an accomplice in your own hurt, in any way? If so, how? If not, why not?
- » What changes have you made since you first started coming to The Landing? If you're new to the group, what changes do you hope to make?

The leader of the group should close this time with a prayer that offers God thanks for the friendships in their lives and asks God for help in developing deeper friendships that help you on the journey toward the life he has for you.

**SAY:** There are a few tools to help you prepare your inventory. Let's go over them one-by-one:

1. Read Isaiah 1:18 (TLB): "Come, let's talk this over!" says the Lord; "no matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool!"
2. Keep your inventory balanced. It's very important to list both the good stuff and the bad stuff. As God reveals the good things that you've done in the past, or are doing in the present, list those things in Column 6 of your Inventory worksheet. Read Philippians 1:6 (NIV): "... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
3. Be open about asking for help from your community of brothers and sisters.
4. Pray for God's help and courage as you prepare to do this.

**SAY:** Please come prepared to begin writing some of these things next week—a time that promises to change your life.

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the

group. That's OK; encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will; So that I  
may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Don't forget to remind your students to spend time with their journals this week, reflecting on what God is teaching them during this journey.

## ••• CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders can hang out and connect. Consider having some healthy options for those who may use food as a way of coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

# INVENTORY

lesson eighteen

# INVENTORY

lesson eighteen

## PRINCIPLE 4:

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).*

*"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40 NIV).*

## SCHEDULE

- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- ❖ WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- ❖ TEACHING TIME (40 minutes)
- ❖ SMALL GROUPS (30 minutes)
- ❖ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)
- » CD with instrumental music (optional)
- » Pens or pencils

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time
- » Make sure your meeting room has plenty of items teenagers can choose from during the Connect Time activity
- » Bring an object or select something from your meeting room for the Worship Time transition

## CONNECT TIME

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

Ask your teenagers to form trios based on whether they're "pack rats" or "throw-it-out types." Then ask them to talk about the one thing they own that they'd never throw out, and why.

After a couple of minutes of discussion, explain that Jesus taught profound spiritual truths by telling stories about everyday objects—stories that we call "parables." For example, Jesus compared God's kingdom to a

mustard seed to explain how something that begins small can grow to a great size.

Tell kids you'd like them to do the same thing by choosing and using objects available in your meeting room—it could be something they brought with them, or something already in the room—to each tell their group a hard time they've experienced in life. For example, someone might choose a driver's license and talk about the time she got in a car accident. Someone else might talk choose a song on his iPod that reminds him of a broken relationship. Encourage listeners to ask questions to learn as much about the speakers as they can.

## WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, bring an object or find one in the room that represents some aspect of healing or restoration in your own life. For example, you could show a photo of your spouse and briefly talk about how God has brought healing in your relationship. Or you could show a dollar bill and briefly talk about how God has redeemed your relationship to money.

**SAY:** Remember our guiding Scripture passage for this principle in our journey: "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40). There's nothing sweeter in life than "returning to the Lord"—when we experience his intervention in the midst of our hurts, hang-ups, and

habits we feel his love and care for us. Let's spend a few minutes worshiping Jesus for the way he brings healing to our lives.

Then lead kids in three familiar worship songs. If you have a youth band, invite the group to lead your teenagers in worship. Otherwise, play the songs from a CD and encourage kids to sing along—or simply play the music as everyone sits and thinks about the words of the songs.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week's beatitude: "*Happy are the pure in heart*" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).

## TEACHING TIME

Play some soft instrumental music in the background for this teaching time. Ask your teenagers to find a place in the room where they feel comfortable and have enough personal space to feel like they can write honestly. Distribute pens or pencils, if necessary. Tell them you'll be walking the room as they write, available to answer questions whenever they have them.

**SAY:** Today at The Landing we'll begin writing our "Personal Inventory." Again, you'll do this by writing in each of the five columns that begin on page 77 in your Student Journal. You'll have about seven minutes to write in each column area—I'll give you a warning

about a minute before you need to stop writing and move to the next column. For some of you, this exercise will take 15 minutes. For others, it may take you a few hours to complete, and you'll need to finish on your own. Either way, we encourage you to dig deep as you write about these experiences. And don't forget, write down the good stuff, too!

Remember that last week I reminded you of what Ephesians 4:31 tells us: God asks us to "get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." Let's read Isaiah 1:18 (TLB): "Come, let's talk this over!" says the Lord; "no matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool!" Remember to keep your inventory balanced—list both the good stuff and the bad stuff. As God reveals the good things that you've done in the past or are doing in the present, list those things in Column 6 of your Inventory worksheet.

Let's pray for God's help and courage as you prepare to do this. (Pray) Now let's all turn to page 77 (also available on the CD-ROM to print out for those that forgot or don't have their own journal) in your Student Journal and get started on your Inventory.

### **COLUMN 1: "THE PERSON"**

**SAY:** In this column, you'll list the people in your past that you are angry with, have hurt you, or that you fear. Go as far back as you can. And remember to list

*all* the people and things that you are angry with, that have hurt you, or that you fear. You may begin...

After six minutes give kids their one-minute warning.  
After seven minutes ask them to stop writing and turn their attention to you.

#### **COLUMN 2: “THE CAUSE”**

**SAY:** In this column you’re going to list the specific actions that someone did to hurt you. What did the person do to cause you anger, hurt, or fear? Maybe you have a sibling who’s bullied or abused you. Maybe you have a parent who abandoned you. I know writing about these things will be painful for you, but remember that we love you and are here for you. You may begin...

After six minutes give kids their one-minute warning.  
After seven minutes ask them to stop writing and turn their attention to you.

#### **COLUMN 3: “THE EFFECT”**

**SAY:** In this column you’ll write how a specific hurtful action affected your life both in the past and in the present. For example, in Column 2, if you wrote about a friend who attempts to control and dominate your life, the effect may be that you’re doing something you know is wrong to gain their approval. You may begin...

After six minutes give kids their one-minute warning.  
After seven minutes ask them to stop writing and turn their attention to you.

#### **COLUMN 4: “THE DAMAGE”**

**SAY:** In this column you’ll explore just what that damage looks like in three particular areas: Social (have you suffered from broken relationships, slander, or gossip?), Security (has your physical safety been threatened, or have you moved often?), and Sexual (have you been a victim in abusive relationships, or has intimacy or trust been damaged or broken?). This is going to take some real thought on your part, so don’t hesitate to ask me for help if you need it. You may begin...

After six minutes give kids their one-minute warning.  
After seven minutes ask them to stop writing and turn their attention to you.

#### **COLUMN 5: “MY PART”**

**SAY:** In this column you need to honestly determine the part of the anger, hurt, or fear that you may be responsible for. Ask God to show you your part in a broken or damaged relationship, a distant parent, or maybe a failure at school. In addition, you’ll list all the people whom you have hurt and how you’ve hurt them. Remember, if you’ve been abused by a parent, family member, friend, or anyone else, you can find great freedom in this part of the inventory. You’ll discover that you had NO responsibility for that

situation. You can simply write the words “NONE” or “NOT GUILTY” in Column 5. You may begin...

After six minutes give kids their one-minute warning.  
After seven minutes ask them to stop writing and turn their attention to you.

**SAY:** We’re not done talking through our inventories. We’ll keep adding to them in the weeks to come, so make sure you continue to bring those with you. And remember, make sure to keep your thoughts in a safe place where only your eyes will see it. If you didn’t get a chance to finish your inventory, take some time this week to finish it. Now let’s move to your small groups, where you can talk further about what you’ve written.

## SMALL GROUPS

Prior to beginning your small group, read through the following Small Group Guidelines with your teenagers.

- 1. Focus on your own thoughts and feelings when sharing with the group.**
- 2. Please avoid ALL cross talk.**
- 3. We are here to support one another.**
- 4. Value and protect anonymity and confidentiality.**
- 5. Avoid offensive language; it has no place in a Christ-centered group.**

Remember, as a leader you are to model these guidelines for your group as you lead the discussion.

Break your larger group into small groups of three or more, with a conversation leader in each one. Have groups each discuss these questions (available on the CD-ROM).

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

### **ASK:**

- » What was hard about this exercise? Explain.
- » What felt good about this exercise? Explain.
- » What’s one thing you learned about yourself in this exercise? Explain.
- » How did you sense God’s presence and comfort during this exercise? Explain.
- » What impact do you expect this exercise to have on your life? Explain.

Close this time with a prayer that offers God thanks for giving us the courage to be honest with ourselves and with others.

## CLOSING

Don’t forget to remind your students to spend time with their journals this week, reflecting on what God is teaching them during this journey.

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some

teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the group. That's OK; encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.  
  
Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
  
Not as I would have it;  
  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will; So that I  
may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

# SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

## lesson nineteen

### ••• CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders can hang out and connect. Consider having some healthy options for those who may use food as a way of coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

# SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

lesson nineteen

## PRINCIPLE 4:

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).*

*"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40 NIV).*

## SCHEDULE

- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- ❖ WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- ❖ TEACHING TIME (40 minutes)
- ❖ SMALL GROUPS (30 minutes)
- ❖ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)
- » 3X5 cards—two per teenager
- » Pens or pencils
- » A whiteboard OR a sheet of newsprint or butcher paper (affixed to the wall)
- » Marker
- » Two pieces of 6-foot-long rope, string, or clothesline
- » Two pairs of scissors
- » Candle and match
- » Saltshaker
- » Paper
- » Copies of handout with quotes

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time
- » Make one piece of rope, string, or clothesline about 6 inches shorter than the other
- » Write the scoring guidelines on a whiteboard, or on newsprint or butcher paper affixed to a wall
- » Photocopy or print out copies of the handout with quotes (available on the CD-ROM)

**SUPPLIES:** Pens or pencils, and 3X5 cards—one per teenager.

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

This is the opening “connect” activity that you’re doing once every month. Have teenagers get in a circle. Give them each a 3X5 card and something to write with (if they don’t already have a pen or pencil). Ask them to write one creative question on their card that’s designed to discover what their friends in the group think, feel, and believe. For example: “If you could pick any career to pursue, what would you do?” Or “Who’s your favorite cartoon character, and why?”

Ask teenagers to pass the cards to you, then quickly select five question-cards based on which ones you think would be most interesting to answer. Then ask a teenager to volunteer to sit in a chair in the middle of your circle—the “Hot Seat.” One by one, ask the Hot Seat person the five questions.

Encourage the remaining kids in the circle to ask at least two follow-up questions (total) after every answer from the Hot Seat person.

## WORSHIP

**SAY:** Most of us don't like to take a hard look ourselves for the same reason we don't like to open an e-mail or read a text that we know contains bad news. But King David had the courage to show himself to God. In Psalm 139, he said: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test my thoughts. Point out anything you find in me that makes you sad, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." When God "searches our heart," he helps free us from the prison of our sin. It's a demonstration of kindness.

Let's worship God for his kindness, right now.

Then lead kids in three familiar worship songs. If you have a youth band, invite the group to lead your teenagers in worship. Otherwise, play the songs from a CD and encourage kids to sing along—or simply play the music as everyone sits and thinks about the words of the songs.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week's beatitude: "*Happy are the pure in heart*" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).



## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** a whiteboard or a sheet of newsprint or butcher paper affixed to the wall; a marker; two pieces

of 6-foot-long rope, string, or clothesline; two pairs of scissors; candle; match; saltshaker; paper; and copies of the handout with quotes.

Before your group meets, make one rope about 6 inches shorter than the other. Write the following guidelines on a whiteboard or newsprint or butcher paper affixed to a wall: Scoring: 100 points = shorter by less than a foot; 50 points = longer by any measurement; 0 points = shorter by more than a foot; Getting even = end of contest; everybody wins.

**SAY:** Now we're going to put a new twist on the Personal Inventory we've been building. Over the next three weeks we'll explore eight areas of life, asking ourselves some hard questions about the choices we make in each area. Let's start with the first area—Relationships.

Form two teams. If you have a large group, you may need to form several two-team competitions. Give each team a length of rope and a pair of scissors. Tell teams they're going to compete by trying to outsmart the opposing team. There will be five rounds of play. In each round, teams will each have one minute to decide how much of their rope to cut off. Then teams will each cut their rope. The ropes will then be compared, and teams will be awarded points.

Refer to the scoring chart. **SAY:** The goal of this contest is to get even—I mean, to make your ropes

the same length. Having a longer piece than the other team gives you 50 points, but having a piece less than six inches shorter than the other team gives you 100 points. Be careful—cutting your rope too short results in 0 points. If at any time the two ropes measure exactly the same in any round, the contest is over and everybody wins. If the ropes are never even, the team with the most points wins.

After five rounds of comparing the two ropes' lengths or when ropes are even, declare the winners.

**ASK:**

- » On your team, were you trying to win the game outright or were you trying to make it so both teams won? Explain.
- » As the game progressed, how did your feelings toward the other team change? Explain.
- » Have you ever tried to literally get even with someone? What happened?
- » Does getting even usually end the “competition” with everybody feeling like a winner? Why or why not?

**SAY:** Here's a true story: A high school baseball team loses a playoff game, and after the game one of the players attacks an opposing player with a bat. A major brawl ensues as the two coaches get involved, and one lands in the hospital with severe injuries. Or a salesclerk in Chicago mistakenly allows a teenager to buy a collector's baseball card worth thousands of dollars for only \$12. The teenager refuses to return

the card. So the store manager vows, “I'll get even.” Revenge is a big business—just check out the list of bestselling video games.

Read aloud Matthew 5:9-12, 21-22, 38-48 and have your students take out their personal inventories. Then tell kids to silently think about the following questions. Pause between each question:

- » When have you gotten unreasonably angry at someone? (Pause)
- » What do these passages say to you about the idea of getting back at someone who hurts you? (Pause)
- » What's most surprising about Jesus' view of enemies?

**SAY:** Jesus is radical in his expectations—instead of getting even with our enemies, he commands us to love them and to pray for them. In Matthew 6:12-14 (TLB) Jesus tells us to pray, “Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. Don't bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.” I want you to think right now about the people who've hurt you—the people you hold a grudge against, or are jealous of, or would like to get even with. Right now, if their names aren't already there, write their names in Column 1 of your Inventory Worksheet on page 77 of your Student Journal. (Pause)

Now think about the people you've hurt—the people who'd like to get even with you or who hold a grudge against you. Right now, if their names aren't already there, write their names in Column 5 of your Inventory Worksheet on page 79 of your Student Journal.

(Pause)

Now let's transition to the next area we'll focus on—let's look at what's important to you.

Have kids form a circle. Place a lit candle and a saltshaker in the middle of the circle. Then darken the lights in the room. Ask them to think about the importance of light and salt as you read aloud Matthew 5:13-16.

#### ASK:

- » How does this passage challenge you?

**SAY:** Jesus calls the people who've committed to follow him "salt and light." Let's brainstorm together every possible meaning and symbolism we can think of for salt and light, and what it may have to do with being a follower of Jesus.

Fuel the conversation by asking your teenagers to think of how salt and light would've been viewed in a society without electrical lighting and without refrigeration as we know it. Salt served as a preservative, and light was much more noticeable in the dark because there weren't street lamps and neon signs everywhere.

#### ASK:

- » How was Jesus "light" when he was on earth?
- » How was he "salt"?
- » How might others experience you as salt or light?

**SAY:** We do what is important to us. Others see our priorities by our actions, not our words. Matthew 6:33 tells us what will happen if we make God our number-one priority—when we live as salt and light in the world: "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."

The next area of our spiritual inventory we'll examine is our attitudes. Ephesians 4:31 says, "Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults. No more hateful feelings of any sort."

Read aloud Luke 17:11-19 as kids follow along.

Then **SAY:** Leprosy was seen as God's punishment. This disease "begins with specks on the eyelids and on the palms, gradually spreading over the body, bleaching the hair white, crusting the affected parts with white scales, and causing terrible sores and swellings. From the skin the disease eats inward to the bones, rotting the whole body piecemeal" (Easton's Bible Dictionary).

In Christ's day lepers could not live in a walled town, though they sometimes were allowed to live in an open village. Wherever lepers traveled, they were required to tear their outer garments as a sign of deep grief, to go bareheaded, and to cover their beards—all symbols that communicated their virtual "death." Also, they were supposed to warn passers-by to keep away from them by calling out, "Unclean! Unclean!" They could not speak face to face with others or accept a greeting, since this typically involved an embrace. Leprosy was, in short, a horrible disease in every way you can imagine—and it was incurable. But Jesus cured it anyway.

**ASK:**

- » Jesus praised the man who came back for his faith, even though the man simply came back to thank him—what's the connection between faith and thanks?
- » All 10 lepers were physically healed, so what does Jesus mean when he says, "your faith has made you well"?

**SAY:** The King James Version of the Bible uses the word "whole" instead of "well."

**ASK:**

- » What's the difference between wellness and wholeness?
- » How do you think the leper's thankfulness made him whole?

Give kids each a handout with these quotes (available on the CD-ROM). Read aloud each of these quotes:

- » "Of all the attitudes we can acquire, surely the attitude of gratitude is the most important and by far the most life-changing."—Zig Ziglar
- » "If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'thank you,' it will be enough."—Meister Eckhart
- » "Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some."—Charles Dickens
- » "One of life's gifts is that each of us, no matter how tired and downtrodden, finds reasons for thankfulness."—J. Robert Maskin
- » "Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others."—Cicero

**ASK:**

- » Of all the quotes, which one hits you the most? Explain.
- » Which one is the hardest to embrace? Explain.

After kids respond, give them each a sheet of paper and

**SAY:** There are fewer habits better than the habit of thankfulness. Think about the challenges and hard things you've had to face in life. Now think about how God's grace and mercy came to you during those times—write as many reasons to thank God in the midst of those struggles as you can.

After a few minutes, close with a “popcorn” prayer—tell kids to quickly throw out some of the things they’re thankful for, one after another.

## SMALL GROUPS

Prior to beginning your small group, read through the following Small Group Guidelines with your teenagers.

- 1. Focus on your own thoughts and feelings when sharing with the group.**
- 2. Please avoid ALL cross talk.**
- 3. We are here to support one another.**
- 4. Value and protect anonymity and confidentiality.**
- 5. Avoid offensive language; it has no place in a Christ-centered group.**

Remember, as a leader you are to model these guidelines for your group as you lead the discussion.

Break your larger group into small groups of three or more, with a conversation leader in each one. To prime the pump for discussion, have the leaders begin the small group time by describing how they have overcome a hurt, or reordered their priorities, or experienced a change of attitude in their life. Then have groups each discuss these questions (available on the CD-ROM).

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

### ASK:

- » Who has hurt you in life, and how has that hurt impacted the way you see them?
- » Who have you hurt, and how has that hurt impacted your relationship?
- » As you’ve grown in your relationship with God, how have your priorities in life changed? How have they stayed the same?
- » When you think of your current priorities, what do you feel good about? What do you feel bad about?
- » In what circumstances is it hard for you to maintain a good attitude? Explain.
- » What’s one way your attitude has changed as you’ve grown closer to God? Explain.

Close this time with a prayer that offers God thanks for the friendships in their lives and asks God for help in developing deeper friendships that help you on the journey toward the life he has for you.

## CLOSING

**SUPPLIES:** pens or pencils, and 3X5 cards—one per teenager.

Distribute 3X5 cards and pens or pencils to your kids. Read these three sentences to your teenagers; you may need to read them two or three times to give

kids enough time to choose which one they want to complete. Remind them that these are for their eyes only.

- » #1—"Lord, I've been hurt, but I'm ready to release this to you..."
- » #2—"Lord, I'm ready to make this a priority in my life..."
- » #3—"Lord, I invite you to change my attitude in this way..."

Ask your teenagers to pick one of the unfinished sentences and write it on the 3X5 card. Then ask them to finish the sentence by writing a commitment on the card.

After a few minutes, gather together. Encourage the teenagers to look at their card frequently throughout the week. Encourage them to put the card in their journal.

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the group. That's OK; encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;

Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will; So that I  
may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Don't forget to remind your students to spend time with their journals this week, reflecting on what God is teaching them during this journey.

## CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders can hang out and connect. Consider having some healthy options for those who may use food as a way of coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

# SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

lesson twenty

# SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

lesson twenty

## PRINCIPLE 4:

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).*

*"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40 NIV).*

## SCHEDULE

- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- ❖ WORSHIP (10 minutes)
- ❖ TEACHING TIME (25 minutes)
- ❖ VIDEO TIME (5 minutes)
- ❖ SMALL GROUPS (45 minutes)
- ❖ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)
- » TV and DVD player
- » The Landing DVD 2
- » Flashlight
- » Plastic cups with water—one per teenager
- » Small plastic bags with dirt—one per teenager (not needed if you can meet outside for a few minutes during the Teaching Time); if your supplies or time are limited, have two or three teenagers share a small plastic bag of dirt
- » Large pitcher of water
- » Pens or pencils
- » Paper
- » Bucket

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time



## CONNECT TIME

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

**SAY:** The Spiritual Inventory we've been working on forces us to think about what we have and haven't done in our lives, and it's meant that some things

we've always kept hidden are now "in the light." I hope you're feeling, more and more, a sense of freedom as you live, more and more, in the light. Today in The Landing we'll continue our Inventory by considering our integrity and what we're filling our minds with.

## WORSHIP

**SUPPLIES:** flashlight.

Have kids stay in their circle of chairs from the Connect Time. Turn off all the lights in your meeting room, and make it as dark as possible by closing curtains or blinds, if necessary. Go around the circle randomly, turning on your flashlight a few feet from a young person's face and shining it right into their face, then turning it off and moving to another person. Repeat this until you've either done it with most kids in your group or have done it for everyone ...in the group. (It really depends on the size and comfort level of your group—it's a risky thing to do with a teenager who just joined your group or a kid with limited church background. In these cases, you might want to shine the light on two kids at a time.)

Then, in the darkness, with the flashlight pointed at your face or at the ceiling, **ASK:**

- » We always refer to the "light" as a good thing, but what's hard about being in the light?

- » How is living in the light fundamentally different than living in the darkness? How is the light a gift to us from God?

After your teenagers have had a chance to respond, lead kids in three familiar worship songs. If you have a youth band, invite the group to lead your teenagers in worship. Otherwise, play the songs from a CD and encourage kids to sing along—or simply play the music as everyone sits and thinks about the words of the songs.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week's beatitude: "*Happy are the pure in heart*" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).

## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** a plastic cup of water and dirt for each teenager, pens or pencils, and paper.

Have your teenagers form trios, then **SAY:** You're in trouble. You forgot the biology homework assignment due this morning. Your teacher demands an explanation. You begin by saying, "I was going to do my homework this weekend, but..." In your trios, come up with a convincing explanation. You can be as elaborate or simple as you wish. You have two minutes, and then you'll report to the entire group. Go.

After two minutes, have trios report back on their explanations. Then **ASK:**

- » What strategy did most of you use to come up with explanations?
- » Why do we use that strategy so often?

**SAY:** The truth is, it's very tempting to resort to telling lies, isn't it? In fact, so many of us are used to telling "white lies" that we often forget we're lying! When we're under pressure, few (or none) of us simply confess and ask for forgiveness. That's human nature—and exactly what King David did in the Bible. The consequences of his broken integrity grew worse the more he lied—it's the same in our lives. Integrity means we stay committed to what's true and right, all the time. It also can be defined as "the state of being whole, entire, or undiminished." Let's see how David violated his integrity.

Gather your teenagers outside at a spot that has dirt. If you can't meet outside for this activity and teaching, collect some dirt before your meeting and put it in small plastic bags. Give kids each one cup of water (and a small bag of dirt if you're unable to do this activity outside; kids also could share bags of dirt). As you read aloud the Scripture passages listed below, in order, tell them to place some dirt in their cup of water each time they hear David do something to cover up his sin by sacrificing his integrity.

- » 2 Samuel 11:2-5
- » 2 Samuel 11:6-13

- » 2 Samuel 11:14-18
- » 2 Samuel 11:26-27

**ASK:**

- » What are all the ways this dirt has impacted your water?
- » The water would be hard to drink with all this dirt in it—how is that like the impact that sacrificing our integrity has on our life?
- » What would you have to do to make this water drinkable again?

Read aloud 2 Samuel 12:11-13, then **ASK:**

- » What did David do to restore his integrity?
- » Why do we typically turn to asking forgiveness as a “last resort” rather than a first response?

**SAY:** We’re like David. We sacrifice our integrity to protect ourselves or get something we want—but we only “muddy our waters” when we do that. Healing and forgiveness and restoration—clean water—come only when we admit what we’ve done and make better choices. That’s how we experience freedom from our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. Colossians 3:9 says: “Do not lie to each other. You have left your old sinful life and the things you did before.” (If you’re meeting outside for this part of the Teaching Time, ask your kids to spread out so they can find a comfortable spot to write for a few minutes.) In your Student Journal on p. 92, I’d like you to write about any times in your life when you were dishonest, stole something, or lived

a “double life”—speaking and acting one way in one environment, but acting like a different person in other environments. Take some time right now to write in your Student Journal—and remember, this Inventory process won’t always be easy. If you don’t have a journal or forgot yours, we have some paper and pens that you can use.

After your teenagers have had five minutes or so to write, **SAY:** One way we start on the “slippery slope” that leads to us sacrificing our integrity is to pay little attention to what we’re feeding our mind. Romans 12:2 gives us clear direction regarding our minds: “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

If you conducted this part of the Teaching Time outside, ask your teenagers to return to your meeting room.

Then **SAY:** We can get stuck in old ways of “copying the behavior and customs of this world,” as Paul says in Romans. Paul is telling us we need to stop thinking just like we did before we began a relationship with Jesus. In your Student Journal, on page 92, write about ways you’ve continued to “conform to the patterns of this world” or give in to peer pressure—ways you’ve continued to fill your mind with things that are contrary to God’s truth.

 **SMALL GROUPS**

After a few minutes, **SAY:** As you continue to work on your Spiritual Inventory, remember two things. First, in Isaiah 1:18 God says, “No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow.” Second—I can’t say it enough—keep your Inventory balanced. Remember to list the ways you’ve been able to step out of your denial into God’s truth. Let’s close in prayer: Father God, thank you for each person here today. Thank you for giving them the courage to continue this difficult journey through their Spiritual Inventory. Give them the desire and strength they need to persevere. Encourage them and light their way with your truth. In the strong name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Let’s look at a movie clip that illustrates what it’s like to stay stuck in our old patterns of thinking, which can feed our hurts, hang-ups, and habits.

 **VIDEO TIME**

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video “Never Been Unloved” from DVD 2 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 3:47 long.

Prior to beginning your small group, read through the following Small Group Guidelines with your teenagers.

1. Focus on your own thoughts and feelings when sharing with the group.
2. Please avoid ALL cross talk.
3. We are here to support one another.
4. Value and protect anonymity and confidentiality.
5. Avoid offensive language; it has no place in a Christ-centered group.

Remember, as a leader you are to model these guidelines for your group as you lead the discussion.

After the whole group has watched the video, split into your small groups, with a conversation leader in each one. Have your conversation leaders ask these questions (available on the CD-ROM) about the video, with the intent to draw out personal stories from the kids in the group.

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

**ASK:**

- » As you watched the video, which “confession(s)” connected with you the most? Explain.

- » What are some things about your life that have made it hard to believe that God truly loves you?
- » When you think about your life, what are some ways have you sacrificed your integrity?
- » How well have you guarded your mind in the past? Explain.
- » As you have shifted away from the things that “muddy up” your mind and focused more on God’s truths, how has your life been impacted?

At the end of this discussion, close in prayer.

## CLOSING

**SUPPLIES:** a large pitcher of water and a bucket.

Gather kids and have them sit in a circle with their cups of muddy water from earlier. Put the bucket in the middle of the circle.

**SAY:** Though it's impossible to “clean ourselves up” and make our “water” pure again on our own, nothing is impossible for God.

Grab one of the cups of muddy water from one of the teenagers. Hold your cup of muddy water over the bucket, then tip it as you pour clean water from the pitcher into the dirty cup, washing away the mud and filling it with clean water.

As you do this, **SAY:** Just like this cup has the ability to be clean again, we too have the opportunity to receive the mercy of Jesus, and be made clean again.

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the group. That's OK; encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will; So that I  
may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Don't forget to remind your students to spend time with their journals this week, reflecting on what God is teaching them during this journey.



## CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders can hang out and connect. Consider having some healthy options for those who may use food as a way of coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

# SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

lesson twenty-one

## **SPIRITUAL INVENTORY** lesson twenty-one

### **PRINCIPLE 4:**

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

### **SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:**

*"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).*

*"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40 NIV).*

### **SCHEDULE**

- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- ❖ WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- ❖ TEACHING TIME (40 minutes)
- ❖ SMALL GROUPS (30 minutes)
- ❖ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)
- » Paper-wrapped drinking straws—one per teenager
- » Copies of the game Twister (one for every four or five teenagers); if you can find only one copy, the activity will still work
- » A handful of small, everyday items

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time
- » Make sure your meeting room has plenty of random items teenagers can choose from during the Teaching Time activity
- » Contact students in your group and families in your congregation to borrow copies of Twister; if you can only find one copy, the activity will still work
- » Scatter small, everyday items around the room

## ••• CONNECT TIME •••

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

You'll need at least one paper-wrapped drinking straw for every teenager in your group. Pass them out to your kids. Tell them to put the straws in their mouths and, without using their hands, gently bite the mid-section

of the paper-wrapped straws. Then challenge kids to unwrap their straws—completely—still using only their mouths. The facial expressions are hilarious.

When everyone's finished, form pairs and have them discuss these questions.

### ASK:

- » What thoughts and feelings did you have while you were trying to unwrap your straw?
- » What helped you keep going?
- » What made you want to give up?
- » What's one area of your life right now where you feel frustrated—even tempted to give up? Explain.

## ♪ WORSHIP

To transition into your worship time, **SAY:** It's easy to feel frustrated and even hopeless when you're in the middle of your Spiritual Inventory. We may feel hopeless because we believe the myth that our growth and freedom depend on our ability to work ourselves into a better place in our lives. But that's not what God is asking us to do. All God asks us to do is to submit to him and be obedient to him.

Ask your teenagers to close their eyes, then **SAY:** Think about the word "submit"—what does that word actually mean? When we submit to God, we

worship him. So, with your eyes closed for the next two minutes, think of aspects of your life you'd like to submit to God, and tell him about each one.

After a couple of minutes, lead kids in three familiar worship songs. If you have a youth band, invite the group to lead your teenagers in worship. Otherwise, play the songs from a CD and encourage kids to sing along—or simply play the music as everyone sits and thinks about the words of the songs.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week's beatitude: "*Happy are the pure in heart*" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).

## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** You'll need to gather, ahead of time, enough Twister games for your group to play—that means one game for every four or five kids in your group. Make sure you label each box so you get the games back to the right people at the end.

**SAY:** Today we'll finish our Spiritual Inventory, which is fueled by our prayer taken from Psalm 139: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test my thoughts. Point out anything you find in me that makes you sad, and lead me along the path of everlasting life" (Psalm 139:23-24, TLB). Of course, this process has involved asking ourselves some hard questions about our lives

and our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. We've taken a hard look at our relationships to others, our priorities, our attitudes, our integrity, and what we take into our minds. Today we'll start by assessing how we've treated our physical body and then transition into our relationship with our family and our church.

Tell your teenagers they're going on a kind of scavenger hunt. Ask them to fan out around your meeting area and collect at least one item that could be considered obscure, unnoticed, or an everyday item that ordinarily they wouldn't pay attention to.

After a minute or so, gather back together, sit in a circle, and **ASK:**

- » Who owns the item you're holding? Think about it before you answer—who really owns this object?

Go around the circle, encouraging each teenager to answer for the object(s) he or she is holding, and explain their rationale. Then **SAY:** Sometimes it's easy to identify an object's owner, but sometimes it's almost impossible.

**ASK:**

- » What are some things that would be nearly impossible to identify "owners" for?

After you've had a few responses, **ASK:**

- » Now, what about our own bodies? Like a lot of other things, it's not always obvious who's the owner of our bodies. So, who owns your body?

After you've had a few responses, **SAY:** The Apostle Paul says this: "Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home of the Holy Spirit God gave you, and that he lives within you? Your own body does not belong to you. For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, TLB).

**SAY:** It's clear that we've not always treated our bodies with respect—particularly if we've become trapped by our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. We've forgotten who "owns" us, and we haven't always been very good caretakers of what God "owns." It's also true that we've treated our families with disrespect at times.

**ASK:**

- » How have I mistreated anyone in my family? How can I make amends?
- » In my family, who have I treated poorly? How can I make amends?

Set out the Twister games around the room. After 10 minutes or so, tell kids they're going to take a break from writing and play a game of Twister. Have four or five

teenagers gather around each game, give some quick instructions for those who haven't played before, and have them play for five minutes.

**VARIATION:** If you only have one copy of Twister, you can still use this activity. Simply ask for four or five young people to participate for a couple of minutes, and then rotate other teenagers into the game while everyone else watches.

Then gather everyone together and **ASK:**

- » What are all of the body parts you used as you played this game? Push them to think "outside of the box" and not just include the obvious answers.

Read aloud Romans 12:4-5, then **SAY:** Through the Apostle Paul, God tells us something very important about who he created us to be. He says, "You are the body of Christ." Without even realizing it, you used hundreds of different body parts in perfect harmony together while you played Twister. This is God's picture of how the church—our Christian community—is supposed to work. Everyone giving what they have to give.

Read aloud Romans 12:4-5 (again); 1 Corinthians 12:12-26; and Ephesians 1:22-23. Then **ASK:**

- » What words or phrases stand out to you?
- » Do these descriptions match the way most people think about church? Explain.
- » How does it compare to your own experience?

 **SMALL GROUPS**

- » Can an individual Christian decide whether or not to be a part of the body of Christ? Explain.

**SAY:** Just as we sometimes mistreat our physical body, we also can mistreat our church “body.” I’d like you to close our teaching time by journaling your answers to these questions in your Student Journal, on page 96:

- » In what ways have you shown your commitment to your church or youth group in the past?
- » How have you been critical of your church or youth group, and what have you done to address your criticisms?
- » How have you encouraged or discouraged friends and family to get involved in church or youth group?
- » How have your friends and family encouraged or discouraged you to get involved in church or youth group?

After five minutes or so, **SAY:** We’ve made it all the way through the eight areas of your Spiritual Inventory. Once again, listen to God speak in Isaiah 1:18: “No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow.”

Prior to beginning your small group, read through the following Small Group Guidelines with your teenagers.

1. Focus on your own thoughts and feelings when sharing with the group.
2. Please avoid ALL cross talk.
3. We are here to support one another.
4. Value and protect anonymity and confidentiality.
5. Avoid offensive language; it has no place in a Christ-centered group.

Remember, as a leader you are to model these guidelines for your group as you lead the discussion.

Break your larger group into small groups of three or more, with a conversation leader in each one. To prime the pump for discussion, have the leaders begin the small group time by describing how friendships—or a particular friendship—helped them in their journey out of the jungle and into the life God has for them. Then have groups each discuss these questions (available on the CD-ROM).

Please note, some of the questions below may also appear in the Student Journal, so encourage kids to share what they might have written in their journals. Of course, if they don’t feel comfortable sharing, that’s OK, too.

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

**ASK:**

- » In what ways have you mistreated your body?
- » What activities or habits have caused harm to your physical health?
- » How have you mistreated anyone in your family? How can you make amends?
- » In your family, who have you treated poorly? How can you make amends?
- » In what ways have you shown your commitment to your church or youth group in the past?
- » How have you been critical of your church or youth group, and what have you done to address your criticisms?
- » How have you encouraged or discouraged friends and family to get involved in church or youth group?

Close this time in prayer.



## CLOSING

Read aloud Matthew 10:29-31 (NCV): “Two sparrows cost only a penny, but not even one of them can die without your Father’s knowing it. God even knows how many hairs are on your head. So don’t be afraid. You are worth much more than many sparrows.”

Then have your teenagers pair up with someone. Ask them each to make the “OK” sign with their thumb and forefinger making the shape of an “O” and the other three fingers extended out.

**SAY:** Each of you will have now have a chance to “count the hairs” contained by the circle you’re making with your thumb and forefinger. I’d like you to put your circle on the head of your partner, and then attempt to count the number of hairs inside that circle. See what you each come up with.

After a few minutes, ask kids to report back on their hair-counting exercise. Then **ASK:**

- » After doing this, what new understanding or meaning can you draw from the Scripture passage that tells us God knows how many hairs are on our heads?
- » What is Jesus trying to say to you when he says he’s numbered all the hairs on your head?
- » How do you know, for sure, that God sees you as a treasure?

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the group. That’s OK; encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will; So that I  
may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Don't forget to remind your students to spend time  
with their journals this week, reflecting on what God  
is teaching them during this journey.

## ••• CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders  
can hang out and connect. Consider having some  
healthy options for those who may use food as a way of  
coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few  
board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

# CELEBRATION

lesson twenty-two

## CELEBRATION

It's important to stop and celebrate with your teenagers! Use this week to do something fun with your group. Not only will your teenagers feel a sense of accomplishment, it's also a great opportunity to create community and friendships amongst your group.

Here are a few suggestions of ways to celebrate:

- » **Movie Night:** Bring some snacks, pizza, soda, water, and other supplies and enjoy an appropriate movie together. To stay on the safe side, bring a rated G or PG movie to show your group. You know your students and your church better than we do, so make sure whatever you bring is appropriate for your setting.
- » **Sporting Event:** This will require some planning ahead of time. If you have an amateur, college, or professional sports team nearby, plan on taking your group to one of their games.
- » **Game Night:** Encourage teenagers to bring their favorite games with them. Again, make sure that the games they choose to bring are appropriate for your setting.
- » **Family Fun Park:** If you have a local family fun park with miniature golf, bowling, or laser tag nearby, consider taking your kids there to celebrate. Playing together is just another way to continue to build trust and relationships.

Of course, you're not limited to these options. You know your teenagers better than we do, so do something that will be fun and memorable for them.

# PRAYER STATION

lesson twenty-three

# **PRAYER STATIONS** lesson twenty-three

## **PRINCIPLE 4:**

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## **SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:**

*"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).*

*"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40 NIV).*

## **SCHEDULE**

- ❖❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- ❖ PRAYER STATIONS (90 minutes)
- ❖❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)
- » Large sealed jar
- » One jelly bean (or M&M, nut, button, rock)
- » Sign for jar
- » Slips of paper—one for every two teenagers
- » Pencils
- » Bibles
- » A guest book
- » A few pens
- » Small table
- » Colorful markers
- » Large sheet of newsprint or butcher paper
- » A Magic Eye poster or picture from online
- » Large mirror
- » Dry-erase markers

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time
- » Set up the various Prayer Stations

## CONNECT TIME

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

**SUPPLIES:** slips of paper, pencils, and a large sealed jar with one jelly bean (or M&M, or nut, or button, or rock) in it. Label the jar with a sign that reads: "Guess how many jelly beans in the jar. Best answer (not necessarily the correct answer) wins."

Have kids form pairs by asking each person to partner with someone he or she doesn't know well. Don't give kids any additional information—just hand out paper and pencils and tell pairs to read the label on the jar, arrive at their answer, and write it on their paper. Have kids read aloud their answers and then vote for their favorite entry. Remember, your instructions called for the BEST answer, not necessarily the CORRECT answer.

After the game, introduce the change in schedule and give an overview of what these Prayer Stations are all about.



## PRAYER STATIONS

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, guest book, pens, small table, colorful markers, large sheet of newsprint or butcher paper, Magic Eye poster or picture from online, large mirror, and dry-erase markers. Set up the stations before your gathering; ask your conversation leaders and other adults to arrive early to help with setup. You also might ask other leaders to bring supplies because of the volume of stuff you need for the stations.

In this special Prayer Stations gathering, you'll follow a radically different schedule than a normal meeting time.

This Prayer Station gathering is focused on helping your teenagers get comfortable finding and following God's direct guidance in their lives. You'll use the story of Philip interacting with the Ethiopian in Acts 8 as the foundation.

**SAY:** As we've mentioned before, we're on this journey on the road to healthier, freer lives. The reason we call this gathering The Landing is that this journey is like coming home to a place where you are loved and where you can be who God created you to be. This journey is for everyone who feels stuck in life—trapped by their hurts, hang-ups, and habits, or their circumstances, or their addictions. It's also a place for people who haven't faced those intense battles but want greater wisdom on leading a healthy life filled with freedom. The principles that we talk about are based on the beatitudes, where Jesus laid out principles for happiness in the sermon on the mount.

Invite teenagers to each privately read the account of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40. When they're done, have kids form trios and ask them to discuss these questions.

**ASK:**

- » How would you sum up what God did in the story?
- » Based on this story, how would you describe Philip's faith? Why?

- » How would a person develop the kind of faith Philip had?

Explain that the trios are going to explore how Philip's story relates to their lives today. Have trios take about 15 minutes at each station, then ask them to move on to the next station (they can go to them in any order).

**STATION 1: FOLLOW GOD'S LEAD**

**SUPPLIES:** You'll need a guest book and a few pens set up on a small table.

**Printed Instructions (available on the CD-ROM):**

God's angel spoke to Philip, and God's Spirit told him to go to a specific place and do certain things (see Acts 8:26, 29). These seem to be clear directives—but is this typical of how it happens today?

Often, Christians say that God "told" them or "led" them to do something. Discuss with your trio:

- » What do you think people mean when they say that?
- » How is it like or unlike Philip's situation in Acts?

How does God's Spirit speak to us today? God's Spirit can speak to us through his "still, small voice," through Scripture, through experiences, through prayer, through the words of Christian friends, and even through our thoughts or feelings.

Reread Acts 8:26-29, and then share with your group a time when you felt God nudging you to do or say

something. Ask each other follow-up questions. Explore each other's stories until you can't think of any more questions. Before leaving the station, sign the guest book with a very short description of how God "spoke" to you.

### **STATION 2: IN YOUR PATH**

**SUPPLIES:** You'll need colorful markers and a large sheet of newsprint or butcher paper affixed to the wall. If your meeting area has a whiteboard and dry-erase markers, you could use these as a substitute.

#### **Printed Instructions (available on the CD-ROM):**

God placed Philip directly on the same path of the Ethiopian man (8:26-29)—this was no accident. It was part of God's plan.

With your trio, discuss these questions:

- » Who has God put in your path to lead you closer to him?
- » How have those people impacted your relationship with God, and with others?
- » When have you been like Philip—when God put you in the path of others who needed a positive change in their life, or who needed help understanding God's love and God's plan for their life? Explain.

On the wall in front of you, use markers to sketch, cartoon-style, drawings of two or three of the people who God has placed "on your path" in everyday life—people who need God's love and mercy. Next to each

one write one word that describes what that person needs the most.

### **STATION 3: GOD IS AT WORK**

**SUPPLIES:** You'll need a Magic Eye poster (with a hidden 3-D image) or you can print out an online Magic Eye picture (just use Google to search "Magic Eye Poster").

#### **Printed Instructions (available on the CD-ROM):**

Look at the picture until you're able to clearly see the "hidden" image.

Read Acts 8:30-34 again. Philip didn't start from scratch with the Ethiopian; God was already at work in this man's life! The Ethiopian was already seeking out spiritual truth. God is at work in people's lives today, too—God is drawing people to him (see John 6:44). But can you see it? Are you able to spot the ways that God is at work in the lives of non-Christians you know?

Discuss these questions with your trio:

- » What are some ways you can see evidence in people's lives that they're searching for God and for meaning?
- » When you think back, how was God working in your life before you committed yourself to him?
- » How does God communicate his presence and love for even those people who don't believe in him?
- » If God had a job description—a short overview of what his "work" is all about—what would it be?

#### **STATION 4: BE PREPARED**

**SUPPLIES:** You'll need a large mirror and dry-erase markers.

##### **Printed Instructions (available on the CD-ROM):**

Read Acts 8:30-35 again.

Faith is not just a matter of being available—it's a matter of making yourself available. Philip did more than just listen for God; he was diligent in his pursuit of God prior to this specific assignment. He knew how to interpret and explain the Isaiah passage to the Ethiopian; this shows us that Philip was prepared. He'd already been studying Scripture, expecting God to move through him.

As a trio, sit in front of the mirror and look at your reflection as you silently ask God this question, over and over:

- » God, how are you preparing me to enter into others' stories with your love and grace?

**SAY:** When you sense God responding—either with a word or a picture or a Scripture passage or anything else—use a marker to write what you've sensed on the mirror.

After all of you have had a chance to write, discuss these questions as a trio:

- » How do you understand or interpret God's response to you?
- » What can you do, in faith, to respond to that prompting?

After you've discussed these questions, use a dry-erase eraser to wipe off what you wrote on the mirror, trusting that God will bring to completion what he's revealed to you.

After about 60 minutes, have everybody gather back together and tell about what stood out to them from the stations. Encourage your teenagers to ask each other follow-up questions to explore their experience more deeply.

Inviting kids to pray about these questions (give them a significant pause between each question).

##### **ASK (rhetorically):**

- » Are you available—like Philip was—to go where God leads you?
- » Are you available—like Philip was—to change your plans and do things his way?
- » Are you attentive?
- » Do you notice who God has put in your path?
- » Can you spot where God is at work in others' lives?
- » Are you prepared?
- » Are you ready to point others to God?

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the group. That's OK; encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will; So that I  
may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Don't forget to remind your students to spend time  
with their journals this week, reflecting on what God  
is teaching them during this journey.



## CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders  
can hang out and connect. Consider having some  
healthy options for those who may use food as a way of  
coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few  
board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

# ONFESSION

## lesson twenty-four

# **CONFESS** lesson twenty-four

## **PRINCIPLE 4:**

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## **SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:**

*"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).*

*"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16 NIV).*

## **SCHEDULE**

- CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- ♫ WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- ▢ TEACHING TIME (40 minutes)
- ▢ SMALL GROUPS (30 minutes)
- ▢ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)



## CONNECT TIME

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with a version of the song "Amazing Grace" (optional)
- » 3X5 cards—one per teenager plus 10 more for references from Romans
- » Pens or pencils
- » Bibles
- » Copies of the handout with lyrics to "Amazing Grace"
- » 10 bricks (or 10 of something that's heavy and stackable)
- » Signs for each station
- » Blank calendar (with "Too busy for God" written in pencil on every day of current month)
- » Erasers
- » Band-Aids
- » Breath mints

### PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Set up the four stations
- » Print the handout with lyrics to "Amazing Grace" (available on the CD-ROM)
- » Write references for 10 Romans verses on 3X5 cards

**SUPPLIES:** Pens or pencils, and 3X5 cards—one per teenager.

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

This is the opening "connect" activity that you're doing once every month. Have teenagers get in a circle. Give them each a 3X5 card and something to write with (if they don't already have a pen or pencil). Ask them to write one creative question on their card that's designed to discover what their friends in the group think, feel, and believe. For example: "If you could perform any miracle, what would it be?" Or "Would you rather skydive or bungee jump, and why?"

Ask teenagers to pass the cards to you, then quickly select five question-cards based on which ones you think would be most interesting to answer. Then ask a teenager to volunteer to sit in a chair in the middle of your circle—the "Hot Seat." One by one, ask the Hot Seat person the five questions.

Encourage the remaining kids in the circle to ask at least two follow-up questions (total) after every answer from the Hot Seat person.

## WORSHIP

Print copies of the following lyrics to John Newton's classic hymn "Amazing Grace" (available on the CD-ROM):

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear.  
And Grace, my fears relieved.  
How precious did that Grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come;  
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far  
and Grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me.  
His word my hope secures.  
He will my shield and portion be,  
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.

When we've been here ten thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun.  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we've first begun.

Give your teenagers each a copy of the "Amazing Grace" lyrics.

**SAY:** Let's read these lyrics aloud, together...

**ASK:**

» God's grace is often not-so-amazing to us—we sort of take it for granted, don't we? How have you experienced God's grace as "amazing" in your life?

After your kids respond, go back to your "Amazing Grace" lyrics and encourage your kids to sing along with the band or CD.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week's beatitude: "*Happy are the pure in heart*" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).



## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, 10 bricks—or 10 of something that's heavy and stackable. You'll also need to gather the simple supplies for the four stations.

Before your Landing gathering, write each of these numbered references on a separate 3X5 card:

- » #1—Romans 1:18
- » #2—Romans 1:32
- » #3—Romans 1:25
- » #4—Romans 1:20
- » #5—Romans 2:12
- » #6—Romans 2:23
- » #7—Romans 2:1
- » #8—Romans 3:19
- » #9—Romans 3:9
- » #10—Romans 3:20

Set up the four stations before your gathering; ask your conversation leaders and other adults to arrive early to help with setup.

### **STATION 1**

Write “Too busy for God” in pencil on every square in the blank calendar, open to the current month. Set out the calendar and erasers. Post a sign (available on the CD-ROM) that says:

Read Romans 3:10-11. Ask yourself:

- » How often do I take time to seek God?
- » Am I “too busy” to set aside special time to focus just on God?

Now spend some time thinking about the ways you connect to God and confessing to him whatever you feel convicted about.

Now pray, asking God to give you guidance on how you can spend time with him every day. Listen for his voice. Erase a day in the calendar to symbolize clearing out time to seek God.

### **STATION 2**

Set out Band-Aids and a sign (available on the CD-ROM) that says:

Read Romans 3:12. Ask yourself:

- » What ways have I “done good” since I started attending The Landing?
- » In what ways have I overlooked or ignored the needs of hurting people around me?

Now pray, confessing to God your missed opportunities to do good. Put a Band-Aid on your hand as a reminder to do good to others.

### **STATION 3**

Set out breath mints and a sign (available on the CD-ROM) that says:

Read Romans 3:13-14. Ask yourself:

- » How have I hurt others with my words? gossip? lying? cutdowns?
- » How have I hurt myself with my words? hard words I've used to describe myself? denial? defensiveness?

Put a mint in your mouth. Then pray, asking God to fill your mouth with fresh and uplifting words.

## STATION 4

Post a sign (available on the CD-ROM) that says:

Read Romans 3:15-18.

Now pray, confessing your sins of anger or violence and committing to walk in the way of peace.

When kids arrive, **ASK:**

- » What are the characteristics of a good lawyer?
- » What does a lawyer need to build a good case?

Explain that in Romans, Paul plays the role of lawyer and builds a case against two defendants: the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews are representative of people who've always followed God, like people who grow up in the church. The Gentiles are representative of people who've lived their lives away from God and church. Pass out the prepared slips of paper to 10 kids, and then have the teenagers look up and read the verses in their numbered order. After each verse, ask a volunteer to stack a brick in the center of the group.

**SAY:** Brick by brick, Paul has built a powerful case.

**ASK:**

- » How does it feel to be declared personally “guilty”?
- » Do you live your life as if you’re guilty or innocent? Explain.

Read aloud Romans 3:9-10. Then direct teenagers to take their time silently confessing their sins using the prayer stations you’ve set up, in whatever order they like.

Before you begin your stations, **SAY:** If you have been working on your Inventory, you can probably answer the question at stations 2, 3, and 4 pretty easily. Add any new thoughts that have come to mind. If you haven’t filled out a Personal Inventory, the questions at the stations will still apply to you.

Play a version of the song “Amazing Grace” on repeat during the prayer experiences—or several versions of the song, if you have multiple legal versions. After about 30 minutes, wrap up by reading aloud Romans 5:20-21 and 1 John 1:9, reminding the group that though we’re all guilty of sin, God loves us and has forgiven us.



## SMALL GROUPS

Prior to beginning your small group, read through the following Small Group Guidelines with your teenagers.

1. Focus on your own thoughts and feelings when sharing with the group.
2. Please avoid ALL cross talk.
3. We are here to support one another.
4. Value and protect anonymity and confidentiality.
5. Avoid offensive language; it has no place in a Christ-centered group.

Remember, as a leader you are to model these

 **CLOSING**

Break your larger group into small groups of three or more, with a conversation leader in each one. To prime the pump for discussion, have the leaders begin the small group time by telling about a time (using their discretion) when they experienced the life-changing power of confession. Then have groups each discuss these questions (available on the CD-ROM).

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

**ASK:**

- » Think about your experiences at the four stations—was there one thing you confessed that was new or surprising for you?
- » What keeps us from practicing the spiritual discipline of confession more often?
- » Is it enough to confess our sins in private, or does it help to confess publicly somehow? Explain.
- » How does confession make you stronger?
- » How does confession make you freer?

Close this time with a prayer that offers God thanks for the friendships in their lives and asks him for help in developing deeper friendships that help you on the journey toward the life he has for you.

Have your teenagers get as far away from each other as possible in your meeting room. Once they've scattered as far away as they can, have them close their eyes. Stand in the center of the room and read aloud Psalm 103:11-13: **"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him...."**

**SAY:** Now, in the quiet of this room, let the words of God—the God who loves you with all his heart—sink deeply into your soul. (Pause) How far is the east from the west? (Pause) How far is infinity? (Pause) Let God speak to you individually now. (Pause) Now spend some time silently telling God what's on your heart right now. (Pause)

After a minute or so of silence at the end, close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the group. That's OK, encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,

the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will; So that I  
may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Don't forget to remind your students to spend time  
with their journals this week, reflecting on what God  
is teaching them during this journey.

# CONFESS

## lesson twenty-five

### ••• CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders  
can hang out and connect. Consider having some  
healthy options for those who may use food as a way of  
coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few  
board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

# **CONFESS** lesson twenty-five

## **PRINCIPLE 4:**

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## **SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:**

*"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).*

*"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16 NIV).*

## **SCHEDULE**

- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- ❖ WORSHIP (10 minutes)
- ❖ TEACHING TIME (30 minutes)
- ❖ VIDEO TIME (10 minutes)
- ❖ SMALL GROUPS (35 minutes)
- ❖ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)
- » TV and DVD player
- » The Landing DVD 2
- » Grocery bag filled with variety of odd wearable items
- » Digital camera (or old Polaroid camera with film)
- » CD with upbeat music (optional)
- » CD with calm music (optional)
- » Basin of water
- » At least one cloth or towel
- » Cup of clean water

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time

## •• CONNECT TIME

**SUPPLIES:** a grocery bag with variety of odd wearable items, such as pantyhose, lipstick, old ties, slippers, crazy glasses, strange hats, earrings, shower caps, and buttons. The crazier, the better. Don't buy anything—just grab some odd stuff from home or your meeting area. You'll also need a CD player, a CD with upbeat music, and a digital camera—even better, an old Polaroid camera (if you still have one and still have film for it).

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

Have your teenagers sit in a circle. Play upbeat music and have kids pass the bag around the circle until you stop the music at random spots. Whoever's left “holding the bag” reaches in without looking and has to put on whatever he or she pulls out. Take a picture of each person. Vary the game by telling kids they have to put on two, three, or four things at the same time. And make sure they keep wearing their outfit as the bag is passed on to other kids.

Be sure to get a group picture afterward.

## WORSHIP

Have your teenagers stay in their circle; invite them to close their eyes. Then **SAY:** Focus on the things that are dominating your thoughts right now. Silently, name each one. (Pause) Now imagine you've placed each one of those dominating thoughts, by name, in the palms of your hands—give them all to God. (Pause) Now thank God, in whatever way you want, for taking what you've offered to him.

Then lead kids in three of your group's favorite “quieter” worship songs. If you have a youth band, invite the group to lead your teenagers in worship. Otherwise, play the songs from a CD and encourage kids to sing along—or simply play the music as everyone sits and thinks about the words of the songs.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week's beatitude: "*Happy are the pure in heart*" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).



## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** a CD player, a CD with calm music, a basin of water, and at least one cloth or towel.

Read aloud John 13:1—and no more than that.

**ASK:**

- » John says that Jesus showed them the full extent of his love—what do you think he did?

Likely, they'll say something about the cross. Affirm that answer, but tell them it's actually something you're going to do during your time at The Landing today. Then read aloud John 13:2-8.

**ASK:**

- » Why do you think the washing of feet was such a big deal in Jesus' time?

After kids respond, **SAY:** Remember, they didn't have cars back then. Folks had to walk everywhere they had to go, traveling on the same roads as animals. And they wore sandals. Their feet were disgusting. They didn't take showers every day, and they didn't have indoor plumbing. Washing a guest's

feet was a job for the lowest of servants. But Jesus wrapped a towel around his waist and washed the disciples' feet.

**ASK:**

- » What does this show us about the kind of person Jesus is?
- » Why do you think Peter didn't want Jesus to wash his feet?

**SAY:** Jesus knew Peter was dirty. He knows our dirt, too. All of it. And like Peter, we are ashamed to let others see it, including Jesus. But this is the truth: You can't hide anything from Christ. And unless you let him deal with it, your relationships—with him and others—will suffer.

Now we're going to do something different. I'm going to give you some time, just like last week, to confess your dirt silently—to tell Jesus all of it.

Tell your teenagers to find a place where they can be alone but not out of earshot. Give them a solid 10 minutes. Play music softly. Encourage them to spend the time spilling out their dirt to Jesus. After 10 minutes, pray to end the time.

Have your group form a circle around the basin of water as you prepare to wash the feet of an adult leader or a volunteer teenager. Make sure that prior to starting this illustration, you fill in another adult leader or a teenager

that has been coming to The Landing for a while, that you'll be washing their feet to help demonstrate the power of what Jesus did.

As you begin washing this person's feet, **SAY:** Listen friends, the Bible says if we confess our dirt, God will forgive us and cleanse us from it all. In the name of Jesus, and because of his sacrifice on the cross, you are forgiven, and you are clean!

**ASK:**

- » What do you think it would be like to wash someone's feet? to have your feet washed?
- » Which is more difficult? Why?

**SAY:** Jesus said, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." What are some relevant ways we can "wash each other's feet?"

After kids respond, challenge them to choose one idea and do it the next week.



## VIDEO TIME

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video "The Prodigal" from DVD 2 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 7:15 long.

## SMALL GROUPS

Prior to beginning your small group, read through the following Small Group Guidelines with your teenagers.

1. Focus on your own thoughts and feelings when sharing with the group.
2. Please avoid ALL cross talk.
3. We are here to support one another.
4. Value and protect anonymity and confidentiality.
5. Avoid offensive language; it has no place in a Christ-centered group.

Remember, as a leader you are to model these guidelines for your group as you lead the discussion.

After the whole group has watched the video, split into your small groups, with a conversation leader in each one. Have your conversation leaders ask these questions (available on the CD-ROM) about the video, with the intent to draw out personal stories from the kids in the group.

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

**ASK:**

- » As you watched the video, what impacted you the most? Explain.
- » What gets in our way of "turning back to God"?

- » Why is it sometimes hard to believe that our sins, hurts, hang-ups, and habits are truly “washed away”?
- » After he returned, do you think the younger son in the parable of the prodigal son struggled to receive his father’s love? Why or why not?
- » How would you feel if you forgave someone for something they’d done to you, but they refused to forgive themselves? Explain.
- » If you were God, and you heard the confessions you’ve offered over the last two weeks, how would you respond? Explain.

At the end of this discussion, Close in prayer, thanking God for washing away our sins.

## CLOSING

Don’t forget to remind your students to spend time with their journals this week, reflecting on what God is teaching them during this journey.

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the group. That’s OK, encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.  
  
Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will; So that I  
may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

## CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders can hang out and connect. Consider having some healthy options for those who may use food as a way of coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

ADMIT

lesson twenty-six

# **ADMIT** lesson twenty-six

## **PRINCIPLE 4:**

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## **SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:**

*"Happy are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).*

*"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16 NIV).*

## **SCHEDULE**

- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- 🎵 WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- 📖 TEACHING TIME (40 minutes)
- 👥 SMALL GROUPS (30 minutes)
- ⌚ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)
- » Bibles
- » Paper cups—one per four teenagers
- » Stack of hardcover books OR other heavy objects that can be stacked
- » Paper
- » 3X5 cards—two per teenager plus extras for other activities during the lesson
- » Pens or pencils

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time

## CONNECT TIME

**SUPPLIES:** A Bible, paper cups, and hardcover books or other heavy objects.

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

Form groups of no more than four and have each group form a circle. Place a paper cup and a pile of hardcover books (or other heavy objects) in the center of each circle. Have each group turn the cup upside down and then place one book on top of the cup. Then have kids

add a second book, and a third book, and so on until the cup collapses. See which group can create the highest stack of books being supported by the cup.

## ASK:

- » Each book that you added created more pressure on the paper cup—how is this similar to what we experience when we hide secrets from others in life?
- » We feel pressure when we hold on to our secrets. What other emotions do we experience, and how do those emotions affect us?

## WORSHIP

Read Romans 8:28 aloud. Tell your kids you'd like them to complete this sentence: "And God has 'made good' this in my life: \_\_\_\_\_

After everyone has offered a "fill in the blank" statement (either out loud or silently, based on the size and comfort level of your group), lead kids in three familiar worship songs. If you have a youth band, invite the group to lead your teenagers in worship. Otherwise, play the songs from a CD and encourage kids to sing along—or simply play the music as everyone sits and thinks about the words of the songs.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week's beatitude: "*Happy are the pure in heart*" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).



## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, 3X5 cards, paper, and pens or pencils.

Form three groups, and have each group read aloud Luke 15:11-24. Form more groups if you have a larger group. When they're finished, **SAY:** This is a story that we talked about last week, but let's see how the story might change if we create a "remake" using circumstances that are a little bit more relatable to your lives.

Assign each group one of these three scenarios: (1) Instead of leaving home, the younger son gets addicted to drugs. (2) Change the younger son into a teenage girl who sneaks out to meet a boy her parents have forbidden her to see. (3) Instead of leaving home, the younger son gets suspended from school for cheating. If you create more than three groups, assign the scenarios to multiple groups. Distribute paper to the groups.

**SAY:** As much as possible, leave the storyline intact—change only what is necessary to update the story with your new character. Work as a group to design your "remake," writing down the basics of your story. Make sure you choose someone in your group to present your remade story to the whole group. As kids redesign their stories, encourage everyone to be involved—contributing ideas, writing those ideas,

or presenting those ideas. Encourage them to be creative within the boundaries of the storyline. Then, after five minutes or so, have each group present its remade story.

Give each person a 3X5 card and a pen or pencil, and then **SAY:** These remade stories illustrate a few of the struggles teenagers can face. But, of course, they're not the only choices we struggle with. On your 3X5 card, draw a symbol or write a word for your eyes only that represents a hurt, hang-up, or habit you've struggled with in your own life.

When kids have done this, **SAY:** We all struggle with poor choices—the hardest part is often admitting that we've failed in that struggle. What can this story teach us about what it means to admit we've made bad decisions? Let's find out.

Have teenagers return to their three groups. Give each group a 3X5 card and one of these mini-assignments—have them write their answers on the card:

- » Group 1—Read Luke 15:17. When it says the son "came to his senses," what do you think that means?
- » Group 2—Read Luke 15:20. When it says the son "got up and went to his father," how might that apply to the way we deal with sin in our own lives?
- » Group 3—Read Luke 15:21. In the story, the son admitted his sin to his father. What might that

"admission" look like in our own lives?

After five minutes or so, have a spokesperson from each group take turns sharing their discoveries with the whole group. Then **SAY:** True confession is more than just admitting to ourselves that we've done something we shouldn't do. It involves an admission to God and others—that's what leads to a change of heart, a change of mind, and a change of direction. When we admit our failures to others, we fight against the power sin can gain over our lives. Sin is crazy—it fuels our hurts, hang-ups, and habits, and our admission helps us "come to our senses" and realize that we really don't want the hurts, hang-ups, and habits at all. What we really want is God.

Read James 5:16.

**ASK:**

- » Why do you think the Bible tells us to confess sins to each other?
- » How do you think that heals us?

**SAY:** There's a saying, "You're as sick as your secrets." It means that if there is anything in your life that you can't talk about, anything you keep secret, it already has control over you. Once you talk about it, once you tell someone about it, it begins to lose power. Let's say you're doing something you know you shouldn't. Every time you do it you swear that you'll never do it again. You've prayed about it,

maybe over and over, and you still struggle with it. As long as you keep it secret, you give it power. Take a moment to look at the 3X5 card with a symbol or word that represents a struggle you've been dealing with in your own life. I'd like you to quietly ask God to show you someone who is safe here at The Landing or someone else in your life to confess the struggle that's written on your card.

It's crucial you choose a safe person to share with. You're welcome to talk with any of the leaders here at The Landing. We promise that we won't talk about it with anyone else, and we won't judge you. Or if you'd like, we can help you choose the right person. Also, in the Student Journal, there are some suggestions on how to choose a safe person to share with.



## SMALL GROUPS

Prior to beginning your small group, read through the following Small Group Guidelines with your teenagers.

1. Focus on your own thoughts and feelings when sharing with the group.
2. Please avoid ALL cross talk.
3. We are here to support one another.
4. Value and protect anonymity and confidentiality.
5. Avoid offensive language; it has no place in a Christ-centered group.

Remember, as a leader you are to model these guidelines for your group as you lead the discussion.

Break your larger group into small groups of three or more, with a conversation leader in each one. To prime the pump for discussion, have the leaders begin the small group time by telling about a time (using their discretion) when they admitted to another person something they needed to “get in the light.” Then have groups each discuss these questions (available on the CD-ROM):

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

### ASK:

- » What's something you learned about the story that you'd never heard before? If this happens to be the first time you've heard this story, what surprised you most, and why?
- » What's the most relevant aspect of this story to your own life?
- » Why is it “not enough” to simply determine to stop sinning in your life? Why is it so important to admit our faults to another safe person?
- » For you, what's the hardest aspect when you think about admitting your sins to someone?
- » Think of a time when you “came clean” and admitted a wrong you did to someone—how did that impact your life and your relationships?

The leader of the group should close this time with a prayer that offers God thanks for the friendships in their lives and asks him for help in developing deeper friendships that help you on the journey toward the life he has for you.



## CLOSING

Give your kids each another 3X5 card and a pen or pencil.

**SAY:** Smith Magazine created a little contest, just for the fun of it, that's now grown into something huge. It's called the “Six-Word Memoir” project. A memoir is a short account of your life's experiences—

sort of like an autobiography, but not as long or as comprehensive. We're going to spend a few minutes right now thinking up our own "Six-Word Memoirs."

Here are a few, just so you can get the idea:

- » "It all changed in an instant."
- » "Cursed with cancer. Blessed with friends."
- » "Business school? Bah! Pop Music? Hurrah!"

Give your teenagers a few minutes to come up with a six-word memoir, then circle up and ask for volunteers to read them aloud.

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the group. That's OK; encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will; So that I

may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you forever  
in the next. AMEN.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Don't forget to remind your students to spend time with their journals this week, reflecting on what God is teaching them during this journey.

## CONNECT TIME

Serve refreshments of some kind so kids and leaders can hang out and connect. Consider having some healthy options for those who may use food as a way of coping. A ping-pong table, foosball table, or even a few board games will give teenagers an excuse to connect.

ADMIT

lesson twenty-seven

# **ADMIT** lesson twenty-seven

## **PRINCIPLE 4:**

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

## **SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:**

"Happy are the pure in heart" (*Matthew 5:8 GNT*).

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (*James 5:16 NIV*).

## **SCHEDULE**

- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- 🎵 WORSHIP (10 minutes)
- 📘 TEACHING TIME (25 minutes)
- 🎥 VIDEO TIME (15 minutes)
- 👥 SMALL GROUPS (35 minutes)
- ⌚ CLOSING (5 minutes)
- ❖ CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- » CD player (optional)
- » CD with worship music (optional)
- » TV and DVD player
- » The Landing DVD 2
- » 3X5 cards—one per teenager
- » Pens or pencils
- » A large bowl
- » Potting soil or dirt
- » Water
- » Newspapers, towels, or trash bags to cover floor
- » Cups of cold, clean water—one per teenager

## PREPARATION

- » Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
- » Review this lesson
- » Gather supplies
- » Select songs for the Worship Time
- » Mix the potting soil and a little water in large bowl; stir until it's a thick, pasty mud that will stick to kids' hands



## CONNECT TIME

**SUPPLIES:** pens or pencils, and 3X5 cards.

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

This is the opening "connect" activity that you're doing once every month. Have teenagers get in a circle. Give

them each a 3X5 card and something to write with (if they don't already have a pen or pencil). Ask them to write one creative question on their card that's designed to discover what their friends in the group think, feel, and believe. For example: "If you could be any type of animal, what would you be?" Or "What is your favorite quote or philosophy?"

Ask teenagers to pass the cards to you, then quickly select five question-cards based on which ones you think would be most interesting to answer. Then ask a teenager to volunteer to sit in a chair in the middle of your circle—the "Hot Seat." One by one, ask the Hot Seat person the five questions.

Encourage the remaining kids in the circle to ask at least two follow-up questions (total) after every answer from the Hot Seat person.

## WORSHIP

Lead kids in three familiar worship songs—preferably ones based on psalms. If you have a youth band, invite the group to lead your teenagers in worship. Otherwise, play the songs from a CD and encourage kids to sing along—or simply play the music as everyone sits and thinks about the words of the songs.

Then have everyone read aloud, together, this week's beatitude: "*Happy are the pure in heart*" (Matthew 5:8 GNT).



## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** a large bowl; potting soil or dirt; water; and newspapers, towels, or trash bags to cover the floor. Make sure to mix the potting soil or dirt and a little water in a bowl before your group meets.

Gather the group in a circle on the floor of your meeting area. Cover the floor with newspapers, towels, or trash bags. Place the bowl of mud in the center of the group. One at a time, ask your teenagers to stick their hands in the mud. While they have their hands in the mud, ask them to think of one or two words that represent something they need forgiveness for—for example: “Hurt Mom” or “Lied” or “Used again” or “Betrayed.” As kids each lift their hands out of the mud, have them wipe off as much as possible into the bowl, then return to their seat with their hands still dirty.

If it’s too messy to have kids stick their entire hands into the mud, have them just dip two or three fingers into the mud. When questions talk about “hands,” use the word “fingers.” The rest of the instructions would remain the same.

After they’ve all had a chance to dip their hands in the mud and admit their wrongs, **ASK:**

- » What went through your mind and heart when you placed your hands in the mud and spoke out a word that represents how you’ve blown it?
- » How do you feel about the experience right now?

- » How is this activity similar to the way we often feel when our bad choices are finally found out?

**SAY:** I’ve got some great news for you! God loves to forgive us when we mess up. As we learned last week, he will run to us—ready to embrace us and celebrate our return to him—when we admit what we have done wrong. You still have dirty hands. I want everyone to go to the bathroom and wash your hands completely clean and then come back to the circle.

When kids return, **ASK:**

- » How is the feeling of having clean hands again like the feeling you have when you’ve been forgiven?
- » Is it enough that God says you’re forgiven, or do you need more than that to “feel” forgiven? Explain.

Read aloud Psalm 32:1-5 from your Bible. Then **ASK:**

- » Why do we often “keep silent” when God has promised his forgiveness for our bad choices?
- » When you have kept silent about your poor choices, how have you experienced God’s “heavy hand”?
- » When we admit our sins, God forgives “the guilt of my sin” but he doesn’t say he will wipe out the consequences of it—why is that?

 **SMALL GROUPS**

**SAY:** Let's sit in a circle quietly; you may want to close your eyes, if you feel comfortable doing that. (Pause) Now, one by one, I'd like you to think about the word or two you said at the beginning of our Teaching Time. After you've said your word or words, silently thank God for his forgiveness.

Read aloud Psalm 130:3-4 (MSG):  
**If you, God, kept records on wrongdoings, who would stand a chance? As it turns out, forgiveness is your habit, and that's why you're worshiped.**

Then, to close, ask kids to speak out one or two words that represent reasons to praise God—for example: "Kindness" or "Mercy" or "Love."

 **VIDEO TIME**

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video "Adam and Eve" from DVD 2 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 16:25 long.

Prior to beginning your small group, read through the following Small Group Guidelines with your teenagers.

- 1. Focus on your own thoughts and feelings when sharing with the group.**
- 2. Please avoid ALL cross talk.**
- 3. We are here to support one another.**
- 4. Value and protect anonymity and confidentiality.**
- 5. Avoid offensive language; it has no place in a Christ-centered group.**

Remember, as a leader you are to model these guidelines for your group as you lead the discussion.

After the whole group has watched the video, split into your small groups, with a conversation leader in each one. Have your conversation leaders ask these questions (available on the CD-ROM) about the video, with the intent to draw out personal stories from the kids in the group.

Remember, as the leader, you may want to model some of these answers for your group by sharing from your own experience.

**ASK:**

- » **As you watched the video, what impacted you the most? Explain.**

- » If we never admitted our own responsibility for the hurts, hang-ups, and habits in our life, how would that impact our relationships?
- » Why is God so interested in us dragging our sins out of the shadows and into the light?
- » Forgiveness isn't always easy to accept—what makes it difficult for you to receive mercy from God and others?
- » Is it possible to feel completely "clean" in life? Why or why not?
- » When have you felt "clean" in your life, and why did you feel that way?

At the end of this discussion, the leader should close in prayer, thanking God for cleansing us from our sins.

## CLOSING

**SUPPLIES:** cups of cold, clean water. Give one to each teenager.

**SAY:** Close your eyes and take a drink from your cup. (Pause) Think about how refreshing and good the water feels going down your throat. (Pause) Take another drink now. (Pause) Now think about the cleansing power of the water—that it's right now cleansing your body of impurities. (Pause) Now take one last drink—finish off the cup. (Pause) Now, silently as the water goes down, think about the way God cleanses you from impurities—how he's right now restoring you into relationship with him.

Close by reading the Serenity Prayer together (available on p. 3 of their Student Journal). Keep in mind, some teenagers may not want to read aloud with the rest of the group. That's OK; encourage them to focus on the words being shared.

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Living one day at a time,  
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Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is;  
Not as I would have it;  
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## CONNECT TIME

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