*Group and Simply Youth Ministry teamed with the Creators of Celebrate Recovery®...*

## CelebrateRecovery® for Students

Distinctively Christian | Uncompromisingly Biblical
Designed Especially for Celebrate Recovery® Churches

# the Landing™

WEEKS 1-14

"Over 20 years ago, God gave me the vision of Celebrate Recovery®. The vision was for the church to provide a safe place where families could find healing and restoration. Where moms, dads, and their children, of all ages, could find freedom from their hurts, hang-ups, and habits. With the introduction of The Landing™—God's vision for Celebrate Recovery® is now complete!" *John Baker*

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Religion/ChristianMinistry/Youth

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the Landing™ LEADER GUIDE 1

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A CELEBRATE RECOVERY® RESOURCE

JOHN BAKER
JOHNNY BAKER
WITH RICK LAWRENCE

# the Landing™

## CelebrateRecovery® for Students

LEADER GUIDE 1

A CELEBRATE RECOVERY® RESOURCE

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# the Landing™

## CelebrateRecovery® for Students

LEADER GUIDE 1

**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.

**Johnny Baker** has been on staff at Celebrate Recovery® since 2004 and has been the director of Celebrate Recovery® at Saddleback Church since 2007. As an adult child of an alcoholic who chose to become an alcoholic himself, Johnny is passionate about breaking the cycle of dysfunction in his family and helping other families find the tools that lead to healing and openness. Not only has he seen Celebrate Recovery® work in the lives of his parents and countless others, he has seen it work in his own life as well. He knows that because of Jesus Christ, and by continuing to stay active in Celebrate Recovery®, his children—Maggie, Chloe, and Jimmy—will never see him drink. Johnny is a nationally recognized speaker and teacher of Celebrate Recovery®, a co-author of ***Celebration Station,*** and an associate editor of the ***Celebrate Recovery Bible***.

**Rick Lawrence** has been editor of GROUP Magazine for over 20 years. GROUP is the world's most widely read resource for Christian youth leaders. In his role as "Youth Ministry Champion" at Group Publishing, he leads the organization's expeditionary efforts to challenge, encourage, and equip youth pastors.

Rick has authored hundreds of magazine articles and is the author, co-author, or editor of 31 books including ***Youth Ministry in the 21st Century***, ***Jesus-Centered Youth Ministry***, ***In Pursuit of Jesus***, and ***Ten Tough Things***—all published by Group Publishing. He's a consultant to national research organizations and a frequent conference and workshop speaker.

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**

THE LANDING™
A CELEBRATE RECOVERY® RESOURCE
LEADER GUIDE 1
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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 or 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.*



the Landing

# DENIAL

## lesson one

# DENIAL lesson one

## PRINCIPLE 1:

Realize that I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor" (Matthew 5:3 GNT).*

*"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:18 NIV).*

## SCHEDULE

- CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- TEACHING TIME (30 minutes)
- VIDEO TIME (10 minutes)
- SMALL GROUPS (30 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 1
» Paper grocery bag filled with miscellaneous, ordinary items
» Bag of white flour—you also could use sand or rice or a similar substance as a replacement for this activity
» Stack of newspapers
» Bibles

## 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.

**SUPPLIES:** a paper grocery bag with miscellaneous, ordinary items from your house or your meeting place, such as a comb, a match, a leaf, a toothbrush, a fork, and so on—gather enough items so you have one for each person you expect to come. If you have an older group of teenagers, consider more complex, challenging items; keep it simple for a younger crowd. If you have a large group, ask other adult leaders to bring items, too.

Have your kids sit in a circle, and have one teenager reach into the bag and take the first thing he or she touches. Give that young person two minutes to tell a personal story related to that item. Then go around the circle until those who want to share have selected an item and told a story that it brought to mind. If you have a large group, create multiple circles, each with an adult leader who can keep things moving along.

If kids have a hard time thinking of a story, suggest story themes that the items might inspire, such as a bad hair day (comb), a campfire mishap or burning a meal (match), a nature experience (leaf), a personal hygiene faux pas (toothbrush or deodorant), or a restaurant encounter (fork). Prime the pump by going first!

## WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, ask teenagers to get in a circle for a short prayer time. Ask them to silently offer to God anything they feel stressed about. Some may want to close their eyes as they do this. Others may want to write down their thoughts on a piece of paper. Give them freedom to express their thoughts to God in whatever way is most natural and comfortable—especially if you have young people with limited church

experience. Close by praying that God would give them strength in the midst of their stresses.

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 those who know they are spiritually poor" (Matthew 5:3 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

**SAY:** Today we begin a journey together—a 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. This journey begins with Principle 1, where we admit that we are powerless to control our tendency to do the wrong thing and that our lives become unmanageable and out of control when we do the wrong thing. These principles are based on



the beatitudes, where Jesus laid out principles for happiness in the sermon on the mount.

But before we begin this journey toward freedom together, we need to ask ourselves two questions:

» Am I going to let my past failures prevent me from taking this journey?
» Am I afraid to change?

You aren't here by mistake. It's my prayer that each of you will receive what God has for you, regardless of your past failures or fear of your future. But before we can make any progress, we need to face our denial. Basically, denial is "a way we act that keeps us from honestly facing the truth."

As kids we all learned coping skills—we used them to make it through our pain or get what we want from life or deal with our fears. These coping skills worked for a while. But as we get older, the skills that once helped us no longer work—or may even hurt or hinder us. For example, when we were 4 years old, we probably threw temper tantrums to deal with situations that made us upset or unhappy. Now, as teenagers, throwing temper tantrums is no longer acceptable to deal with similar situations. When we hang on to our early methods of coping, we end up in denial. In the end, what we think is protecting us, is actually hurting us.

We don't have God's perspective on life. God sees a big picture we can't see. For instance, God sent Jesus to serve hardhearted people who eventually murdered him. It makes no sense—until we step back and see the larger picture of God's plan to bring us back into relationship with him.

**ASK:**

» When you think about your future, what's something that scares you? Explain.

» When you think about what you might have to give up on this journey of finding freedom, what is something you need to let go of or change? Explain.

**SAY:** You may have been in your hurt, habit, or hang-up for so long that it has become your identity. Denial has hardened like cement in your soul. You may be thinking, "What will happen if I really give this a chance? Will I change? If I give up my stuff, what will I become? Who will I be? What will happen if I change and my friends no longer accept me?" Even if our past was extremely painful, we may still resist change and the freedom that can be found in really committing to this journey. That's because we fear the unknown, or we have no hope of changing, or just because we think we don't deserve any better.

**SUPPLIES:** newspapers and a bag of white flour (if flour is too expensive or too messy for your meeting space, you can replace it with sand or rice or something similar that can slip through the teenagers' fingers). Spread some newspapers on the floor—enough coverage so all your teenagers can stand on them.

Have kids stand on the newspaper on the floor, an arm's length away from each other. Have someone read aloud Job 1:13-22. Then have them cup their hands in front of them as you place small mounds of flour in their hands. Ask them to close their eyes.

**SAY:** What you hold in your hands is your whole life. You hold your family members. Open your fingers just a little bit and let them slip away. You're holding your possessions. Open your fingers a little bit more and let them slip away. You hold your best friends. Open your fingers a bit and let them slip away. You hold your health. Open your fingers a bit and let it slip away. You hold your future. Open your fingers a bit and let it slip away. You hold on to coping skills from when you were younger. Open your fingers a bit and let it slip away. You hold on to denial. Open your fingers a bit and let it slip away. Now open your fingers. You hold nothing. It's all gone.

Have kids open their eyes.

**ASK:**

» How would it feel to lose everything that's precious to you?

» What would your attitude be toward God?

» How did Job reconcile the tragedy in his life with his knowledge of God?

SAY: Job didn't understand why he lost his children, wealth, possessions, and health. But when Job didn't understand what happened, he talked to God. Honestly. With emotion. And that was the beginning of Job's understanding and healing and journey toward freedom. He made the choice to cope in a healthy way by talking to God, not using denial as a way to deal with his losses.

Denial sounds like things we've heard often—it's often treated as "normal." For example:

» "Can't we stop talking about it? Talking only makes it worse."
» "If we don't talk about it, it will go away."
» "Let's pretend that it didn't really happen."
» "If I tell her that it hurts me when she says that, I'm afraid I'll lose her love."
» "I really don't drink that much."
» "It really doesn't hurt when he does that; I'm fine!"
» "Blake does drugs way more than I do."
» "Stacy has been drunk a couple dozen times; I've only been drunk five or six times."
» "If I stop listening to this band, then Eric won't be my friend."
» "I eat because you make me so mad!"
» "If you didn't nag me all the time, I wouldn't..."
» "Look, school is really hard. I need something to help me relax. It doesn't mean I have a problem."



These phrases represent denial. God says in Jeremiah 6:14, "You can't heal a wound by saying it's not there!"

Ask teenagers to pray silently as you lead. Begin with a confession of how you don't understand why God allows some things to happen.

SAY: God, give us eyes to see you at work in this world—to have a faith that trusts you no matter what. Help us when we struggle to believe. Now hear us as we silently tell you what things we find hard to accept and understand... (pause) We offer to give back the coping skills we once trusted so much... (pause) We remember that you are a loving and just God... (pause) Amen.

## VIDEO TIME

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video "Booger Monster" from DVD 1 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 9:06 long.

## 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.

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.

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 was really true about the video? Explain.
» What's something that was challenging about what you saw? Explain.
» When have you seen denial at work in the lives of people you know? Explain.
» It's hard to see denial in our own lives—so think about it for a moment: What would you guess is one way you've struggled with denial in your life? Explain.
» Why is it so hard to let go of the coping skills we learned when we were younger?
» Who's someone who seems to have let go of their childhood coping skills—someone who seems to live outside of denial? Explain.

Depending on your group's comfort level, either have your small group leaders lead the group in a prayer for everyone to have the strength to leave behind their coping skills and trust God (low comfort level), or have kids pair up and pray for each other (high comfort level).

## CLOSING

SAY: Truth may hurt for a while, but it's an essential step in the process of being cured, finding healing, and pursuing freedom. God promises us in Jeremiah 30:17, "I will give you back your health again and heal your wounds." I encourage you to *step out* of your denial, even though it's not easy. But here at The Landing you have people who care about you and who love you for who you are—people who will stand beside you as truth becomes a way of life. You can do it.

Jesus tells us, "Know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Step out of your denial so you can step into Jesus' unconditional love and grace and begin your healing journey toward freedom from your hurts, hang-ups, and habits.

Challenge your teenagers by asking them to shout out as many of the Ten Commandments as they know.

Have your teenagers turn to Exodus 20:1-17 to review the Ten Commandments.

**ASK:**

» **It's hard enough to remember the Ten Commandments, but what makes it really hard to actually obey them?**

After kids respond, go through the list, discussing relevant examples.

**SAY: The Bible says the purpose of the Ten Commandments is to remind us of God's standards and remind us that we can never meet those standards on our own—our only hope is to face the truth about ourselves and trust God with our life.**

**Each week we are going to end our time together with a prayer called The Serenity Prayer. It's short, but it sums up a lot of what we're doing here. Serenity is another word for peace. As we pray through these words, really think about what they mean. Try not to just read them or recite them, but think about what you're saying to God. Imagine talking to your friend, your Father, and asking him for peace, courage, and acceptance. Turn to page 3 in your Student Journal, then let's pray together.**



**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.

the Landing

# DENIAL

## lesson two

# DENIAL lesson two

## PRINCIPLE 1:

Realize that I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor" (Matthew 5:3 GNT).*

*"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:18 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)
» Old bedsheet or large sheet of newsprint or butcher paper
» Stack of newspapers
» Bibles
» Markers
» Small or medium-sized backpack; large groups may want multiple backpacks
» Box of saltine crackers

## PREPARATION

» Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
» Review this lesson
» Gather supplies
» Make sure your room has a variety of items teenagers can use in Connect Time

## CONNECT TIME

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

**SAY:** One of our goals as we begin this journey is that we get to know each other. So for the next minute or so, I want you to find something in this room that represents some aspect of who you are. If you like to read, you may want to grab a book. Or, if you like to draw, you could grab a pencil. Have fun with this—be creative!

When you've found your object, bring it back to your seat and form groups of three.

Tell kids to each examine the object chosen by the person on their left, and then describe that person based on that object. Have them give as much detail to their description as they can. For example, a set of car keys might indicate the person loves to travel. They should simply do the best they can, guessing if necessary.

Then **ASK** trios to discuss these questions:

» How accurate was the other person's description of you?
» What's the best way to get to know someone really well? Explain.
» If there was only one thing you could tell people about who you really are, what would it be? Explain.

**SAY:** It's not always easy for others to "get" us—often, we don't even "get" ourselves. We need God to help us discover who we really are.

Have a volunteer read aloud Acts 9:1-23.

**ASK:**

» This passage from the Bible tells us about the life-altering change for a guy named Saul, also known as Paul. Before his conversion, he persecuted and hunted down Christ-followers—but he later went on to write most of the books in

the New Testament. What object might he have chosen to describe himself *before* this turning point? Explain.

» What object might Paul have chosen to describe himself *after* his conversion? Explain.

**SAY:** Paul's life had spun out of control—he spent all his time and energy doing things that hurt God and people who loved God. Paul's turning point came when God confronted him over his behavior—told the truth about how he was hurting those around him—and made him powerless. No matter who we are or what we've done, we all have times when we need to hear the truth about ourselves—and the core of that truth is that God loves us just as we are, not as the person we sometimes con others into thinking we are.

## WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, ask teenagers to get in a circle for a short prayer time. If you have a large group, have them stay in their rows or sit at their tables. Invite them to silently offer thanks to God for anything that comes to mind, including anything they experienced during the Connect Time—something as simple as "God, thanks for helping me with school this week" or "God, thanks for giving me cool friends." If you have a group with students who are comfortable praying out loud, encourage them to do so—this can help the other



students in the group to recognize that prayer doesn't need to be something intimidating or complicated. Close this time of prayer after a minute or two.

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 those who know they are spiritually poor" (Matthew 5:3 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** old bedsheet or large sheet of newsprint or butcher paper, a stack of newspapers (enough for each teenager to have a section), a small or medium-sized backpack (depending on the size of your group), markers, and a Bible.

Put some sheets of newspapers on the floor, and then have kids spread out the bedsheet (or butcher paper) on the floor on top of the newspapers; this will keep your carpet safe from any ink from this activity. Have the teenagers sit around it, and pile some markers where kids can reach them. If you have a large group, you may need to form several groups of teenagers doing this, with one adult leader for each group.

**SAY:** Don't we all worry about things we don't have control over and don't have the power to change? As we walk this journey toward freedom at The Landing, remember 1 John 4:18: "Where God's love is, there is no fear, because God's perfect love drives out fear."

Let's say this bedsheet (or paper) represents God. Draw a picture or a symbol on it that represents who God is to you.

Give kids a few minutes to draw their pictures on the bedsheet or paper. Ask teenagers to each explain their drawing.

**SAY:** Let's take a little time to share what God means to each of us—in other words, how do you see God, and what role does God play in your life?

Then pass around newspapers and ask kids to each take a section. Have them look for examples of failure in their section. After a few minutes, ask them to tell about the stories they found.

**SAY:** Now that we've read about others' failures, let's spend a few minutes thinking about our own failures. Consider your own life—in what ways have you failed yourself, failed others, and failed God? Maybe you want to close your eyes as you do this. Each time you think of something, wad up a page of the newspaper and toss it onto the bedsheet (or paper). Do this silently.



Don't tell the group what you're thinking about.

After a few minutes, **ASK:**

» What impact do our failures and our sins have on how we see God?

» How is the way we've covered the sheet (or paper) with crumpled newspapers like the way our bad choices or failures harm our relationship with God?

**SAY:** Bad choices come between us and God—they mess up our relationship with him and make closeness with him difficult. In Old Testament times, God provided a set of rules to live by. But the Jewish people became so caught up in those rules that they forgot God and served the rules instead. Thankfully, God gave us a new beginning—a new way to relate to God. God sent his Son, Jesus.

Have someone read aloud John 3:16. Then have the group carefully bring together the four corners of the sheet or paper so it still holds the crumpled newspapers. Then have everyone work together to roll it up so all the newspapers remain inside but the sheet or paper looks like a delivery package. Have kids pass the "delivery package" around the circle.

**SAY:** As you hold this bundle that looks a little like a package, filled with all your mistakes and bad choices, think about how God must've felt, knowing that he was sending his Son Jesus as a special

delivery for us—and that Jesus would someday bear the burden of all our hurts, hang-ups, and habits.
As kids continue to pass around the bundle, read aloud Hebrews 12:1 (NCV):

*We are surrounded by a great cloud of people whose lives tell us what faith means. So let us run the race that is before us and never give up. We should remove from our lives anything that would get in the way and the sin that so easily holds us back.*

**SAY:** There are two things I would like to point out in this verse. First, God has a particular journey and a unique plan for each of us. It's a plan for good, not a life full of dependencies, addictions, or obsessions. God doesn't want us to be trapped by our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. The second thing is that *we need to be willing* to get rid of all the stuff that keeps us from a close relationship with God—our past failures that keep us stuck. The passage we just read says, "We should remove from our lives anything that would get in the way and the sin that so easily holds us back."

Now have the group members carefully unwrap the "delivery package" again and hold it stretched out between them.

**SAY:** The first step in moving toward freedom is always to take an honest, unflinching look at the stuff we've done to hurt God and others. You can't get rid



of the junk that you pretend doesn't exist! So take a long look at what's on this bedsheet right now.
After a minute or so, bring out the backpack. Have kids each grab a few of the crumpled-up newspapers and stuff them into the backpack until all the newspapers are contained in it. Then zip the backpack shut. If you have a large group, you may need multiple backpacks.

**SAY:** For many of us, our past hurts, hang-ups, and habits hold us back and get in our way. Many of us are stuck in bitterness over what someone has done to us. We continue to hold on to the hurt and we refuse to forgive the ones who've hurt us. I want you to know that I hurt for you. I'm truly sorry for you, sorry that you had to go through that hurt. But holding on to that hurt and not being willing to forgive someone who hurt you in the past allows that person to continue to hurt you today, in the present.

Have each kid put the backpack on. If you have a large group, ask for a few kids to volunteer to put on the backpacks.

**SAY:** Jesus promised he'd take all our hurts, hang-ups, and habits and put them on his back. He'd carry them, freeing us to be in relationship with God. But we have to give him our stuff—he can't carry what we hold on to. Some of you are bound by guilt. You keep beating yourself up over some past failure or some poor decisions. You're trapped, stuck in your guilt.

You think that no one anywhere is as bad as you are, that no one could love the *real* you, and that no one could ever forgive you for the terrible things that you have done.

You're wrong. God can. That's why Jesus went to the cross, for our sins. He knows everything you've ever done and everything you've ever experienced. And you're not alone. Some people right here have faced similar failures and hurts in their lives and have accepted Christ's forgiveness. We're all here to encourage and support each other. The Apostle Paul had a lot to regret about his past. Before his conversion in Acts 9, Paul even participated in Stephen's murder. Yet in Philippians 3:13 (CEV) he tells us, "My friends, I don't feel that I have already arrived. But I forget what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead." I don't mean that we *ignore* the past—it's right here in this backpack. We all need to *learn* from our past, offer forgiveness, make amends, and then release it. Only then can we be free from our guilt, grudges, and grief! God isn't interested in how we started, but how we finish the race.

If you'd like, close your eyes as I read this poem, called "God Sent Us a Savior":

If our greatest need had been information,
God would have sent us an educator.
If our greatest need had been technology,
God would have sent us a scientist.
If our greatest need had been money,



God would have sent us an economist.
If our greatest need had been pleasure,
God would have sent us an entertainer.
But our greatest need was forgiveness,
So God sent us a Savior.

## 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 your conversation leaders tell about a past failure (make sure they choose appropriate examples) and its impact on their life. Have them talk about the ways they've seen God use "what Satan intended for evil" for good 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:**

- » What's something you've liked about this week's gathering, and why?
- » What's something you wish you understood better, and why?
- » What's a failure or mistake that is still impacting your life today?
- » Have you seen God using that failure or mistake to bring something good into your life? Why or why not?
- » If you were free of the things that keep you stuck, what's something you'd start doing, and what's something you'd stop doing?
- » What's something you'd like our group to pray for you about?

Close your small group time in prayer.

## CLOSING

You'll need a box of saltine crackers. Gather teenagers together in a circle and serve them each a cracker. Ask them to eat their cracker as you read aloud Romans 1:18-25.



**SAY: All the ways people typically search for meaning will leave them empty, still thirsting for truth. It's a lot like these snacks. They taste good, but they leave you thirsty.**

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.

Warmly thank everyone for coming to the group, and invite them to stick around for some connection time.

## 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.

LEADER NOTE: As you go through this program, you may find that some of the students are going through some pretty heavy things. Situations may arise in which you feel out of your comfort zone. If this happens, do a couple of things. First, let them know that you are there for them. Next, report the situation to your pastor. Don't try to figure it out on your own. Go for help.

For more information on this important topic, please reference the document *Important Note_Please Read!* on the CD-ROM.



# POWERLESS

## lesson three

# POWERLESS lesson three

## PRINCIPLE 1:

Realize that I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor" (Matthew 5:3 GNT).*

*"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:18 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)
» Non-inflated balloons—one per teenager
» Black markers—one per teenager
» Paper—one sheet per group of three teenagers
» Dictionary
» Pens or pencils
» Bag or tray of ice cubes
» Several towels or paper towels to cover floor for ice activity (unless you do this activity outside)

## 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.

**SUPPLIES:** non-inflated balloons and black markers.

Give each teenager a non-inflated balloon and a black marker. Have kids blow up their balloons and hold them closed at the necks without tying them. Ask them to write on the balloon one place they go on a regular basis—it could be school, home, the gym, the library, the mall, the ball field, and so on.

Have kids release their balloons all at once. Ask everyone to keep an eye on his or her balloon as it flies through the room. Then have the teenagers go stand wherever their balloon landed. Have them form groups of three with the people who are standing closest to them.

Read aloud John 3:8. Then have kids each share a struggle or challenge or worry they have that's related to the location written on his or her balloon.

After five minutes or so, **SAY: Our paths, wherever they take us, are rarely smooth—just like the crooked, loopy path our balloons took in the air before they landed. But God can always find us in our story—we can't outrun him, we can't hide from him, and we can't fly from his hand so crazily that he can't find us again.**

**ASK:**

» **Who has a story of feeling like you were "found" by God when your life was challenging or crazy?**

Consider starting the conversation by telling your own story of God "finding" you at a difficult time in your life, then encouraging a few teenagers to share their stories.

## ♫ WORSHIP

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 those who know they are spiritually poor" (Matthew 5:3 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

Have teenagers take their markers and blow up their balloons—this time, tying them off. Ask them to draw something that makes them happy. After several minutes, have kids each display and tell about their picture.

**ASK:**

» Now that you've shared what makes you happy, I'd like you to find another spot on your balloon and draw the worst thing you've ever done, and then share it with the group.

After a short pause, **SAY:** Never mind, I'm not going to have you do that.



**ASK:**

» How did you feel when I asked you to share the worst thing you've ever done?

After a few teenagers respond, **SAY:** This is similar to what happened to a woman Jesus met when he was teaching on the temple grounds.

Read aloud John 8:1-11 as kids follow along.

**ASK:**

» What do you think this woman was feeling at the moment she was dragged before Jesus?
» What are some reasons Jesus would stop to write in the dirt before answering the Pharisees?
» If you were this woman, what would you want to ask Jesus?
» How would it feel to be completely powerless to save your own life—to be dependent on someone else to come through for you?
» Why is it often so hard to truly trust God with our lives?
» How can we discover whether or not God is trustworthy?

**SAY:** Often, the only time we really trust God is when we have to—when we're powerless to help ourselves. And we hate admitting we're powerless, don't we? That's too vulnerable and—well, weak. In fact, we prefer to do things by ourselves. But the Bible tells us the self-sufficient way never really

works out—we need to admit that we are powerless and turn our lives over to God. Jesus knew how difficult this is to do. In Matthew 19:26, Jesus said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

When we keep doing things that we don't want to do and when we fail to do the things we've decided we need to do, it starts to dawn on us that we don't have the power to change by ourselves.

The same grace that the woman caught in adultery received when her power was taken away is extended to us through Christ. Jesus knows every thought you've ever had and everything you've ever done, and he knows your only hope is his help. In John 8:36, Jesus says: "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

SUPPLIES: a dictionary, paper, and pens or pencils.

Choose a bizarre word from the dictionary and read it out loud. Ask your kids to offer some possible definitions for the word. After kids have shared several made-up definitions, read the real definition from the dictionary. Do this for three or four words—just make sure the words are so bizarre that even the spelling bee champ in your crowd won't know its definition. If you have a large group, you could divide into smaller teams for this activity, with an adult leader for each group.



Next, form trios. Distribute paper and pens or pencils, and ask the trios to create some definitions for the word "freedom." After about three minutes, read the definition from your dictionary. Then have the trios discuss how their definitions are better or worse than the dictionary definition.

Then read aloud Luke 4:16-21.

**ASK:**

» What did Jesus mean when he talked about "freedom" here?
» Who were the prisoners, the blind, and the burdened?
» What does freedom mean to you?
» What does freedom from your failures and bad choices mean to you?

Have a volunteer read aloud John 8:31-36, then **ASK:**

» Why does Jesus use "slavery" to describe sin?
» What does slavery to sin look like?
» How might our definitions of "freedom" apply to freedom from sin?

**SAY:** Absolute freedom is not always a good thing. Think about driving: If we were all free to drive however we wanted, there'd be countless deadly accidents. True freedom comes when we admit we're powerless to help ourselves, commit ourselves to Jesus, and trust him to bring us the freedom we crave.

## 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 with an appropriate personal story of a time when he or she felt powerless—what it felt like, what they did, and how it turned out. Then have groups each discuss these questions (available on the CD-ROM).

**ASK:**

» **When was a time you felt powerless in your life?**
» **What did you do to make it through that time?**
» **Why is it so difficult for us to admit we're powerless to make the changes we really want in life?**



» **Why does God have more freedom to move in our life after we've admitted we're powerless than before we do?**
» **If you've ever trusted God more than yourself in a situation, tell us what happened.**

Have leaders close their small group time by pausing in silence for 60 seconds—tell kids this is their chance to talk with God in silence, admit to him that they're powerless, and trust him with their lives. After (at least) 60 seconds, the leaders should close in prayer for the group, thanking God for his love and strength in our lives.

## CLOSING

**SUPPLIES:** ice cubes, towels or paper towels to cover floor.

Gather back together as one group, and if possible, move your group outside for this closing activity. Bring out a bag or tray of ice cubes. If you need to stay inside, cover your floor with towels or paper towels.

**SAY: The power to change only comes from admitting we're powerless and turning it over to Jesus.**

**ASK** these rhetorical questions:

» **Are you ready to truly begin your journey toward the wholeness and freedom God has always**

intended for you? Are you ready to stop denying the pain you feel in life? Are you ready to stop playing God and start trusting him to show you the way? Are you ready to start admitting your powerlessness against your hurts, hang-ups, and habits?

Hand teenagers each a few ice cubes and tell them they cannot put the ice cubes down—encourage them to hold tight to the ice cubes until they just can't stand it anymore. See who can hold them the longest.

**ASK:**

» Why was it so hard to hold the ice?
» What made you keep holding it?
» What role does pain play in our freedom?

**SAY:** When you dropped your ice, you opened your hands—a symbol of opening your life to God more deeply. If you held onto your ice even when it was unbearable, God wants to say to you tonight: "It's OK to drop your pain and open yourself to me."

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

Warmly thank everyone for coming to the group, and invite them to stick around for some connection time.

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.

# POWERLESS

## lesson four

# POWERLESS lesson four

## PRINCIPLE 1:

Realize that I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor" (Matthew 5:3 GNT).*

*"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:18 NIV).*

## SCHEDULE

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

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

» CD player (optional)
» CD with worship music (optional)
» TV and DVD player
» The Landing DVD 1
» 3X5 cards—one per teenager; you'll be using lots of 3X5 cards over the course of this curriculum, so if possible, purchase a large quantity
» Pens or pencils
» Bibles
» Welcome mat; you'll probably want multiple mats if you have a large group

## PREPARATION

» Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
» Review this lesson
» Gather supplies
» Print out a copy (or copies) of the Loneliness Quotes (available on the CD-ROM), and cut the quotes into individual slips

## CONNECT TIME

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

This is an opening "connect" activity that you'll do 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 were stuck on an island, which three books would you want with you?" Or "If you could have dinner with one person, who would it be, 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.

If you have a large group, you could create several circles to accommodate all of your teenagers, with an adult leader for each circle.

## WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, ask teenagers to each stand on one leg while they close their eyes for prayer. As they struggle to stay balanced on one leg, pray about our own inability to keep our balance in life. Ask God to bring everyone in the group the balance they can't achieve on their own.

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 those who know they are spiritually poor" (Matthew 5:3 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** You'll need Bibles and slips of paper with quotes about loneliness written on them from the Loneliness Quotes page (available on the CD-ROM).

Have kids each find a partner and stand 10 feet away with their backs to each other (if you have an odd number of teenagers, have one of your adult leaders pair up with someone). The taller teenager in each pair is Person 1. Person 1 in each pair should close his or her eyes while Person 2 slowly and quietly approaches from behind. When Person 1 thinks Person 2 is less than a foot away, he or she should yell, "Stop!" Person 1 opens his or her eyes to see if Person 2 is within a foot. Then have them switch roles.



After both partners have experienced each role, **ASK:**

» **What was it like to have your eyes closed and know someone was creeping toward you?**

**SAY: When we acknowledge that we're powerless to "save" ourselves, we can feel really vulnerable. It's easy to panic and try to regain the control we've always told ourselves we can't live without. It's a lonely feeling to admit that we're powerless—especially when we look at our hurts, hang-ups, and habits.**

Form trios, and give a slip of paper with a quote about loneliness to each group. Have trios each read the quote on their slip and then answer the questions. After five minutes gather back together and have a spokesperson from each trio summarize its discussion.

**ASK:**

» **Which quote struck you the most, and why?**

Then read aloud John 1:43-49 and **ASK:**

» **What can we learn about Jesus that he went looking for Philip?**

Explain that when Nathanael told Philip, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" it was an indication that his experience of Nazareth was nothing special.

Then **ASK:**

» **What would be an equivalent statement in your world?**

» Jesus invites Nathanael to follow him despite his skepticism—what do you know about Jesus from this?
» What does Jesus do to alleviate Nathanael's suspicions and doubts?

Read aloud John 1:47-51, then **ASK:**
» Why did Nathanael respond to Jesus this way?

**SAY:** Maybe that fig tree was Nathanael's special, quiet place. Maybe he went there when he was lonely. Maybe he went there to wrestle things out with God. Gauging by Nathanael's response, the fig tree was a place only he and God knew about.

Have teenagers get back in their trios to discuss.

**ASK:**
» Where or what is your "fig tree"?
» What do you do there?
» How does God influence or interrupt or engage you in your fig tree times?

After five minutes or so, **SAY:** Jesus knows all about your fig tree—he knows your every fear, shame, and sadness. He knows your every hope, dream, and desire. He knows your hurts, hang-ups, and habits. He knows you're powerless to save yourself, even if you haven't admitted it yet. Jesus longs to show you that he knows you completely—he's waiting for you



to invite him, to admit your need for him. Let's give him that chance.

Have kids each find a place to be alone in your meeting room—their own "fig tree" space. Once they're settled, ask them to be silent until you invite them to gather again. Then challenge them to pray, asking Jesus a simple question:

» "Jesus, what do you know about me that I need to know?"

Remind them that you're just playing with this. Tell your students that if they don't "hear" anything, that's OK. After a few minutes of quiet, gather and ask if anyone would like to share what they "heard." As kids share, affirm those things that seem from God and engage those things that seem suspect. Make sure kids know you're available to talk to them afterward.

To transition to the video time, **SAY:** Jesus marvels that Nathanael believes in him just because of the fig tree. He then says, basically, "You ain't seen nothing yet." Jesus wants to take us on an adventure. He doesn't want to just know our hurts and our hopes and fears. He wants to heal our hurts and surpass even our wildest hopes.

## VIDEO TIME

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video "Baggage" from DVD 1 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 10:18 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:**

- **What's something you saw that was really true about the video? Explain.**
- **What's something that was challenging about what you saw? Explain.**
- **What's something that you've really wrestled with God about?**
- **The Bible says God is always with us—so why do we still feel so lonely at times?**
- **What or who typically makes you feel good about who you are? Explain.**
- **What's risky or dangerous about trusting anything besides God to make us feel good about who we are?**

Close by praying for the kids in your group, asking God to enter into our loneliness and give us the strength to trust him.

## CLOSING

**SAY: The power to change only comes from God's grace. Are you ready to truly begin your journey toward The Landing—to a place where you trust God with your life, instead of trusting yourself and your own strategies? Are you ready to stop denying the**

pain you feel inside? Are you ready to confront your hurts, hang-ups, and habits? Are you ready to stop playing God? Are you ready to start admitting your need for God?

Pull out the welcome mat and explain that it's a symbol of Christ's unconditional love for each one of them. Also explain that it's an affirmation of their acceptance in your group. Have everyone place one foot on the mat. Encourage a volunteer to pray for their group—that as they experience God's unconditional love, they'll also reflect the same kind of love to each other.

If you have a large group, you'll want multiple welcome mats and adult leaders to accommodate all of your teenagers.

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.

# HOPE

## lesson five

## PRINCIPLE 2:

I earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him, and that he has the power to help me recover.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4 GNT).*

*"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13 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)
» Pile of magazines or newspapers (be careful which magazines you choose—if you have any doubt, don't use it!)
» Bibles
» Pens or pencils
» 3X5 cards—one per teenager
» CD with instrumental music (optional)
» Mirror (handheld)
» Dry-erase marker
» Cloth or eraser
» Six or so images of famous works of art printed from a website (such as www.theartgallery.com.au/ArtEducation/greatartists/)
» Small, smooth stones—one per teenager
» Permanent markers—one per teenager

## 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.



Give your teenagers a minute or two to come up with an original middle name that describes something about them. For example, "Indiana Jones" could describe someone who's particularly adventurous. "Goth" could peg a person's worldview; "LeBron," a basketball fanatic; or "Drama Queen," a member of the drama club. Then go around the circle and have kids introduce themselves, explaining their new middle names.

**ASK:**

» Does the middle name you've just chosen describe the "real" you?
» Is this name closer to the real you than the name your parents gave you? Why or why not?

**SAY:** Here are two verses from the Bible that help describe our reality: "Anyone who comes to [God] must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6) and "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him" (Psalm 62:5).

In Principle 1, you faced some of the hurts, hang-ups ,and habits in your life and got real about what's wrong and what's right in your life. It's in the second principle at The Landing—"Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him, and that he has the power to help me recover"—that we find our true and lasting hope in Jesus Christ! It's here we come to understand that God wants to fill our lives with his love, his joy, and his presence.

## ♫ WORSHIP

**SUPPLIES:** a pile of magazines or newspapers.

To bridge into your worship time, ask teenagers to get in a circle; pile the magazines in the middle of the group. Ask kids to find at least one photo in a magazine that represents—either literally or metaphorically—something they're hoping for in life. They should tear out those images.

After a few minutes, ask kids to share about the image(s) they tore out.

**SAY: The hopes we've just shared are mostly universal, aren't they? But we're taking a risk that the things we hope for will deliver the happiness they promise, aren't we? When we can honestly say that God is our greatest hope in life—that a closer relationship with him is something we really want—we will know we've left our old life behind and are deep into the adventure of a new life with God at the center.**

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 those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, pens, one 3X5 card for every teenager, a CD player, an instrumental-music CD, newsprint or butcher paper, markers, a mirror (handheld), a dry-erase marker, and a cloth or eraser.

Before the group gathers, use a dry-erase marker to completely cover a mirror with positive and negative labeling words that teenagers often use to view themselves and others, such as "cool," "failure," "ugly," "hot," "athlete," and "loser." Also, print out six or so images of famous works of art from a website such as www.theartgallery.com.au/ArtEducation/greatartists/ and post the art on the wall near one corner of your meeting room.

After praying for your group, form trios and have them each come up with a list of their five favorite "pieces of art"—they can include paintings, graphics, sculpture, music, written works, or even TV shows or films. After a few minutes have the trios each explain their favorites.

**ASK:**

» **In general, why are these pieces of art our favorites?**

» **Why do we consider them great?**
» **Who are the best artists in world history? Explain.**

After kids respond, emphasize that the great artists themselves give each piece its fame and immense worth.

**SAY: Some of the most famous pieces of art in the world—the Mona Lisa, the Pieta in Rome, or even songs like The Beatles' "Hey, Jude"—are priceless because of their makers. They were created by world-renowned artists. You were created by God. The Bible says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful..." (Psalm 139:13-14 NIV). Now ask yourself: What is my worth—my value as a person—compared to a painting? If we pay attention to who has made you and embrace that your worth is found in your Maker and not in yourselves or in others' opinions of you, it's not a stretch to say each of you is a priceless treasure. Who you are is derived from who God is. Because of God's greatness, we who are created in God's image have great worth.**

Divide the students into duos or trios and assign each group some of the following Scripture passages: Psalm 8, Psalm 11, Psalm 29, Psalm 47, Psalm 75, Psalm 84, Psalm 93, Psalm 95, Psalm 101, Psalm 138, or Psalm 146. It's OK if you don't use all of the Scripture references.



Distribute 3X5 cards and pens or pencils to the groups. Ask them to write the question "Who is God?" on each card, read their assigned passage, and then write on their cards their thoughts about how the passage answers that question.

After five minutes, have the teams discuss the answers to how the passages answered the questions.

After about five minutes, **ASK:**

» **How does your understanding of who God is impact your identity? Explain.**

Play some peaceful music and have kids spread out around the room. Invite them to spend a few minutes at each of these stations you're about to set up.

**Station 1:** Set out the mirror and invite teenagers to look at themselves in it, read the various labels, and then pray, asking God to strip away the false sources of identity through which they view themselves.

**Station 2:** Gather the kids' 3X5 cards and display them, with the lists of God's attributes visible. Have teenagers read the cards and then quietly meditate—asking God to reveal one attribute that stands out to them.

**Station 3:** Set a few Bibles near the corner of your room where you've posted works of art on the wall. Instruct teenagers to look at the pictures and then read Psalm 139:13-16 and think about the truth that they are God's work of art.

Have teenagers wander freely through the stations in any order they choose. After 15 minutes or so, gather everyone near the mirror.

**SAY:** In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel's entire identity was based on God. The Jewish people saw their value as focused entirely on God making them and choosing them as his people. This same amazing God made you. Not only are you each made in God's image, but you are also uniquely created and loved by God. You are not meaningless accidents—you are God's masterpieces.

In the first principle we embrace here at The Landing, we admitted we are *powerless*. It's through this admission of our powerlessness that we are able to *believe* and *receive* God's power to help us leave behind our hurts, hang-ups, and habits and move toward the good things God has for us. We do need to be careful, though, not to just cover over any habits and hang-ups that bring pain with layers of denial or by trying some unrealistic quick-fix. Because we know God loves us and created us to love him, we can keep our hurts exposed to the light, where God can get access to them and heal them. It's in the second principle of The Landing that we come to believe God exists, that we are important to him, and that we are able to find our homecoming in Jesus Christ. We come to understand that God wants to fill our lives with his love, his joy, and his presence.



Erase all the words on the mirror; then write the phrase, "Made by God—Chosen by God" on it. Conclude by leading the group in a prayer of praise, focusing on God's greatness and goodness.

## 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 with an appropriate personal story of a time when they first began to understand their own worth or beauty or unique value as a person. Have them briefly share the catalyst for their understanding, and what impact it's had on 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:**

- » **Which of the words on the mirror hit on a wound in your own life?**
- » **Why is it difficult for so many of us to believe that we are "Made by God" and "Chosen by God"?**
- » **When have you had even a little taste of how much God loves you? How did you experience that taste?**
- » **What words do you wish you could actually hear God say to you? Explain.**

Close by asking kids to pray for the person on their right (either silently or out loud)—to lift up to God the words he or she said would love to hear from God. After everyone has prayed, pause for 60 seconds and encourage kids to ask God to respond to those words.

## CLOSING

**SUPPLIES:** a small, smooth stone and a permanent marker for each teenager.

Gather back together as one group, and give each person a stone and a marker.



Have kids each write on their stone the words they'd love to hear God say to them.

Have kids take their stones and stack them into a kind of pyramid somewhere in your meeting room—in a place that's out of the way enough that the pyramid won't be knocked over. Have the group gather around the stones, studying them to find a word or phrase on a stone that's not their own. Then encourage kids to silently pray a one-sentence prayer for whoever listed the word or phrase on that stone.

**SAY: Eternal life does not begin with death; it begins with faith! Hebrews 11:1 tells us what faith is: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Faith—even faith the size of a mustard seed so small you can hardly see it—is our flashlight on the path to a life with God. We can't find this life through intellectual understanding, gifts of money, good works, or even attending church. No! The way to finds life with Jesus is described in Romans 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."**

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

Warmly thank everyone for coming to the group, and invite them to stick around for some connection time.

**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.



# HOPE

lesson six

## PRINCIPLE 2:

Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him, and that he has the power to help me recover.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4 GNT).*

*"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13 NIV).*

## SCHEDULE

- CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- TEACHING TIME (35 minutes)
- VIDEO TIME (5 minutes)
- SMALL GROUPS (30 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 1
» Bibles
» One bottle or cup of water
» One small plastic bag filled with grass
» One or two twigs or small branches

## 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.

Gather teenagers in a circle for this Q&A opener—the catch is they have to answer questions in the third person (meaning, they refer to themselves by name instead of using "I"). You can change the questions each time to make your opening activity fresh—we'll use this idea a handful of times throughout the year. Use fun questions such as:

» **What's a story about a time when you met someone famous or semi-famous?**
» **How would you describe your most embarrassing moment?**
» **What's the earliest memory you have?**
» **How would you prepare for a job interview with Steven Spielberg or Bill Gates?**
» **What's the strangest thing that's ever happened to you?**

Add your own questions to this list. It's funny to hear people talk about themselves this way—but this opener has the added benefit of cementing the other kids' names in their memory, and providing some enjoyable stories about each other.

# WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, **SAY:** **One of my favorite parables is in Luke 15—the story of the prodigal son. This son chose to receive his inheritance while his dad was still alive, leave his family behind, and pursue a wild lifestyle. Eventually, he wasted everything and ended up desperate and desolate—but his father still forgave him and welcomed him back home. Though the story focuses on a father's love for his son who has rejected him and left his home, it is really a picture of God's love for us—for you and me. God is a pursuer by nature, and he's been pursuing you your whole life, even if you never realized it. God can and will find you, no matter how many times you may have made bad choices. But God won't drag you home—just as in the story of the prodigal son, he will run to you when you stop running from him.**

Ask teenagers to get in a circle—with at least an arm's length separating them on each side. Ask them to face out from the center, so they're looking at the walls of your meeting room, not each other. Ask them to close their eyes.

**SAY: Think about the struggles and sins—your hurts and hang-ups and habits and destructive coping skills—that have carried you away from God.** (Pause) **Now, silently and with your eyes closed, hand those bad choices over to God. Even though this story is about God loving his children, has there been a time where your parents have shown you love when you feel you haven't deserved it?** (Pause) **Some of you may have been hurt by a parent or family member, and for that I'm very sorry.** (Pause) **But we learn in this story that God is a good, perfect Father.** (Pause) **With your eyes still closed, imagine God sees you and is running to you with open arms.** (Pause) **He wants to embrace you and hug you and tell you how much you mean to him.** (Pause) **OK, go ahead and open your eyes.**

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 those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, one bottle or cup of water, one small plastic bag filled with grass, and one or two twigs or small branches.

**SAY: Let's take a look at another perspective on what makes for a fulfilling life.**

Read John 10:10.

**SAY: In this passage, Jesus is talking to a crowd of people, comparing his followers to sheep. Sheep are very simple creatures and only need a few things like water and some grass to survive.**

**ASK:**

- **What's Jesus trying to say here? How are we like sheep? How are we more complex than sheep?**
- **What does Jesus mean by a "full," "abundant," or "satisfying" life?**

**SAY: Jesus calls himself the good shepherd, one who offers us new life. And those who enter through his "gate" find abundant pasture. His sheep have provision, rest, protection, and pasture—ultimate**

fulfillment. Sheep are simple; in Jesus' analogy, a full life for sheep is not complex. But what about for us humans?

**ASK:**

» What do you think your friends at school would say if you asked them, "What does it mean to live a full life?"
» What might your teachers say? your parents?
» How else do people in our society seek fulfillment in life?
» Do you think people are generally successful in finding fulfillment in life? Why or why not?

Display the bottle or cup of water, the bag of grass, and one or two twigs or small branches.

**SAY:** Right now, I'm holding water, grass, and wood—the three elements that give sheep a full life. Sad, I know! But what could these three elements represent for us? In other words, what are the deepest desires of humanity—the needs we have that, when satisfied, lead to the full life Jesus is talking about in John 10:10?

Have your teenagers form trios, then discuss these questions.

**ASK:**

» How does living the full life Jesus describes look different from the way non-Christians in our culture live?



» In living life to the fullest, what would you lose? What would you gain?

## VIDEO TIME

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video "It's Not Over" from DVD 1 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 3:27 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:**

» What's something you saw that was really true about the video? Explain.
» What's something that was challenging about what you saw? Explain.
» What's one way you've really struggled to hope in life?
» We know Jesus died to give us hope—so why do we still struggle to experience it?
» What's one way you've tangibly experienced the hope God has given you?

Close by praying for the kids in your group, asking God to enter into our loneliness and give us the strength to trust him.

## CLOSING

**ASK:**

» Many people write to advice columnists asking for help with life's challenges, both big and small. Why do people turn to total strangers seeking wisdom and advice?
» Who are some of the people you've turned to for advice?
» Do you think columnists' advice really gives hope to the letter-writers? Explain.
» If God were an advice columnist, how might his advice differ from what we find written online and in magazines and newspapers? Explain.

**SAY:** If we will take the faith we invest in advice columnists or others we look to for advice and, instead, trust in Jesus, our life will be changed! We'll find hope in him. His Spirit will come with supernatural power into your heart to help you deal with your hurts, hang-ups, and habits. It can happen to you—I know, because it happened to me! I encourage you to take this step of hope. At The Landing, our prayer is that you will find the courage to reach out and hold Christ's hand and face the present with confidence and the future with hope.

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.



# PEACE

lesson seven

# PEACE lesson seven

## PRINCIPLE 2:

Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him, and that he has the power to help me recover.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4 GNT).*

*"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13 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)
» Pile of newspapers—enough so that each teenager can have a section
» Pens or pencils
» Newsprint or butcher paper for two activities
» Markers

## PREPARATION

» Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
» Review this lesson
» Gather supplies
» Print out copies of the questionnaire for Connect Time—one copy per teenager (available on the CD-ROM)
» Tape some newsprint or butcher paper to the wall for two activities

## CONNECT TIME

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

Distribute pens or pencils, and pass out questionnaires (available on the CD-ROM) to your teenagers with the following questions:

I am thankful for my pet _____
because _____

I am thankful for my relative _____
because _____

I am thankful for my favorite class at school _____
because _____

I am thankful for my favorite hobby _____
because _____

I am thankful for the vacation I took to _____
because _____

Tell kids to answer the questionnaire truthfully by listing things they're thankful for, with the exception of one fake response. For example, Jessica, who doesn't own a snake, could say, "I'm thankful for my pet, Ace the boa constrictor, because he lives under our house and catches rats."

After kids have answered the questionnaires, have them sit in a circle. Each person should read their answers to the group and have the group try to guess which answer is phony. Form multiple circles if you have a large group.

## WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, **SAY: It can be fun to fool others with stuff we've made up about ourselves, but when we live our life by fooling others about who we really are, we'll have no peace. Peace**

**comes when we live a "consistent" life—when we're the same person in every situation.**

Have your teenagers get in a circle, and all together at the same time, offer a prayer of thanks for the person to their left. This type of prayer is often loud and fun, as everyone is trying to speak over each other.

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 those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

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.**

**Can someone define insanity?** (Wait for students to respond.) **One way to define insanity is "doing the same thing over and over again, expecting a different result each time." Sanity, on the other hand, is described as "wholeness of mind; making decisions based on the truth." When we base our decisions on the truth, we can find God's peace even in the midst of the stresses we experience in life.**

Form a circle and ask a volunteer to sit in the middle. Prior to having your volunteer sit in the middle, take him/her outside and explain to them that they will be yelled at during this exercise. If they feel uncomfortable with this, then you'll want to find another volunteer. Consider forming multiple circles if you have a large group. On "Go!" have everyone in the circle yell some of the stressful messages they hear every day at the person in the center. It's essential to remind them to refrain from yelling anything abusive or inappropriate. Suggest messages such as "Hurry up!"; "Watch out!"; "Don't be late!"; "That's not the way you do it!"; "Get that homework done!"; "You're never going to finish it!"; "You can't afford that!"; and "It's time to go!" After a minute, quiet everyone and ask the person in the center to talk about how he or she felt during the "stress barrage."

**ASK:**

» What are some things that rob teenagers of their peace?

Use a marker to list your kids' responses on newsprint or butcher paper taped to a wall. Ask them to vote on the top five "peace-robbers" in their lives, and then circle those situations.

**SAY:** People have been living with "peace-robbers" since the dawn of time. God knows what we're up against in our life, because so many people throughout history have felt the pressure to rely on their own power—their own strength—to find the peace they crave. But that's how we get into messes and problems with our hurts, hang-ups, and habits!

Form three groups and have each group read one of the following Scripture passages: Genesis 37:1-11; 1 Kings 19:1-8; and Acts 16:16-40. Then ask each group to discuss these questions.

**ASK:**

» What was the peace-robber in each situation?

» How did the people react to the pressure they felt?

» How did God offer peace in the midst of that pressure?

After kids have a chance to discuss the questions, gather back together and ask a spokesperson from each group to summarize their story and their discussion.



Read aloud Luke 5:1-3, then **ASK:**

» What was it like for Jesus always having people crowding around him, wanting something from him?

» Would Jesus feel more or less pressure trying to fulfill his mission today, compared to the time he walked the earth? Explain.

» How do you deal with the pressures of the crowd—family, friends, teachers, and so on?

Read aloud Luke 5:4, then **ASK:**

» Jesus took Simon Peter into deep water—how might deep water symbolize the pressure you live under every day?

» What's scary about deep water?

Read aloud Luke 5:4-5, then **SAY:** It's understandable that Simon Peter doesn't trust Jesus for fishing advice—Jesus was only a rabbi, as far as he knew. What Simon Peter didn't know was that Jesus created the fish! There's nothing that you'll go through in life that Jesus doesn't know everything about. He invites us to share all our needs with him—he can help us with our hurts, hang-ups, and habits.

Read aloud Luke 5:6-7, then **ASK:**

» If you were Simon Peter, what would you do?

**SAY:** I'd probably try to hire Jesus as my fishing partner! Think of all the money we could make! When we trust Jesus to go with us into our own situations

of deep water, he promises to go on the adventure with us, and he asks us to trust what he tells us to do.

Read aloud Luke 5:8-10, then **ASK:**

» Why did Simon Peter answer this way?
» What clues do we have about how he thinks about himself? about how he thinks about God?
» How does Jesus respond to Simon Peter's disbelief and humiliation? What does that say about Jesus?

**SAY:** Jesus is basically saying, "Simon Peter, we've got bigger fish to fry" (pardon the pun). Jesus can handle our doubts and the controlling ways we try to handle our pressures on our own—he won't condemn us.

Read aloud Luke 5:11, then **SAY:** Jesus doesn't mess around. Every single person who's ever seriously followed Jesus was never the same afterward. Their lives weren't always an unbroken string of happy events, but every one of them would've told you it was so worth it. The same goes for us. If you follow Jesus, beware: Your life will never be the same. You will find peace—a sanity in the midst of a world that's so often insane and full of peace-robbers.

Form six groups. If you have a small group of teenagers, simply give this assignment to individuals. Assign each group (or individual) a verse in Psalm 23. Ask them each to paraphrase the verse—to put their verse in contemporary language and context—to show how God provides peace to us. Then have each group use a marker to write, successively, its paraphrase on newsprint or butcher paper taped to a wall. Then read the whole thing together, as a group, in unison.

**SAY:** God doesn't always remove the things that try to rob us of peace—in fact, we're guaranteed to face some of those things the rest of our lives—but he does give us peace in the midst of it all.

Challenge kids to read Psalm 23 daily for a week and pray for God's peace. Then form one circle and ask kids to call out one or two words that describe their stress (for example, "homework" or "expectations"). Pray for these stresses in your teenagers' lives.

## 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 with an appropriate personal story of a time when he or she was under a lot of pressure, and what he or she did to trust God in that situation. 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:**

- » **Why do we so often rely on ourselves first in stressful situations, instead of seeking God for our peace?**
- » **How do we rely on friends to help us with our pressures? Do you think our friends can be peace-robbers?**
- » **What are some ways God has brought you peace during stressful situations?**
- » **What have you learned about trusting God to help you through the pressures of your life?**
- » **What's a simple way we could all remember to stop in the midst of pressure and ask God to help us?**

Close the small group time by asking kids to pray about one thing in their life—they can do that by simply speaking one word that represents that thing: "school," for example. The leader should close by speaking out his



or her own word, then thanking God for his strength and grace in the midst of our pressures.

## 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.



# PEACE

## lesson eight

# PEACE lesson eight

## PRINCIPLE 2:

Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him, and that he has the power to help me recover.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4 GNT).*

*"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13 NIV).*

## SCHEDULE

- CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- TEACHING TIME (25 minutes)
- VIDEO TIME (15 minutes)
- SMALL GROUPS (30 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 1
» 3X5 cards—one per teenager plus additional cards for auction activity
» Bibles
» Pens or pencils
» Paper
» Trash can of any size—but make sure it's clean

## 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.

Here's 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 had three wishes, what would you wish for?" Or "if you could describe yourself in using two words, what would they be 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 one 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

To bridge into your worship time, **SAY: When we focused on Principle 1, we learned how to admit our powerlessness, and we moved from chaos to hope when we talked about Principle 2. Remember, hope comes when we believe that a power greater than ourselves, Jesus Christ, can and will restore us to a close relationship with God. Jesus can give us the power to live our lives for him, instead of giving in to the hurts, hang-ups, and habits that hurt us in life. He alone can restore order and meaning to our lives; he can also restore our peace.**

Ask teenagers to find some space in the room where they can feel a little bit alone. Once they do, tell them you're going to do something radical. Ask them to be totally quiet for two whole minutes. Some may want to close their eyes for this exercise; if they don't feel

comfortable, allow them to keep their eyes open, but encourage them to focus on the image you're describing. Have them imagine they're standing or sitting under the spray of a shower, but the "water" is God's peace. Tell them the water's warm, and encourage them to soak in it. Let the teenagers sit in silence as they think about this experience.

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 those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, pens, paper, and a trash can.

**SAY: People who are mourning sometimes have a deep awareness of their own inability to make life work the way they want it to. We grasp whatever we can control, quickly trusting more in what we can see rather than in what we can't see.**

**For example, in upscale auction houses, anonymous investors hire buyers to control their money. It's a great job—buyers get to spend other people's money! Imagine that you're now buyers at just such an auction. You're out to buy the ingredients for a fulfilling life, and you're representing God, who's given you each a $100,000 spending limit. You can't go over that $100,000 limit, you must keep your own running tally of what you've bid, and your goal is to purchase the most fulfilling life possible.**

You'll act as the auctioneer. Set the number of auction items at half your attendance so there's bidding competition. Remind your teenagers that they can buy more than one item if their money lasts. Make it fun by going over the top as the auctioneer. Write each item on a separate 3X5 card and hold it up as the auction progresses—the winner of each item gets to keep the card.

Auction lots might include:

- Health ("When you've got your health, you've got everything.")
- Wealth ("Use it for a comfortable lifestyle, or give it all to charity.")
- Fame ("You'll be everyone's best friend—instantly!")
- Family ("Warm moments with those you love the most.")
- Power ("You're in control of what's hot and what's not.")
- Possessions ("The person with the most toys wins!")
- Career ("You'll have one great job after another—and be rich!")

» Friends ("Close buddies who'll stick with you forever.")
» Inner Peace ("Be at peace with yourself and others. What stress?")
» Fun ("Need we say more?")
» Talent ("Be impressive—make a big impact with your skills.")
» Suffering ("Build character that would impress Mother Teresa.")

Give kids paper to keep track of their purchases; they should still have pens or pencils from the Connect Time activity. Then start the auction.

After the auction, check in with kids to see what they bought, and why. Then **ASK:**

» Why are the things you bid on important for a fulfilling life?
» At the beginning, I mentioned that you were representing God. How faithfully did you represent God's interests? Explain.
» If you could switch what you bought for something else, what would it be, and why?
» Which items on the auction list are priceless? Explain.
» What's something on the list that really won't help you lead a fulfilling life? Explain.
» If you had to give up *everything* on the list to get *one thing* on the list, would you? And what would your "one thing" be? Explain.
» Is a fulfilling life the same as a godly life? What's the difference? Which is better? Explain.



**SAY:** God wants to give us a fulfilling life, full of purpose and the peace of living consistently—being the same person in every situation. But before we can accept what God has for us, he asks us to lay down all that we have so we're ready to receive what he has for us. It's an idea from the Bible that we call being "poor in spirit," Principle 1—realizing that all we have and all we are belongs to God.

Place a trash can on the floor and gather kids in a circle around it. Pray for a willingness to be people who come to God with their needs, refusing to only rely upon themselves to make life work. Ask kids to let go of the fulfilling things they bought at auction by dropping the 3X5 cards in the trash can as a symbol of their trust in God.

## VIDEO TIME

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video "Hurting Helpline" from DVD 1 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 16:05 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:

» What's something you saw that was really true about the video? Explain.



» What's something that was challenging about what you saw? Explain.

» What's one way you've "mourned" in life—in other words, recognized your need for God and turned to him for help?

» Have you ever mourned but turned to something or someone other than God?

» What's one way you're learning to accept yourself for who you are, and one way you're learning to accept others for who they are?

» In what ways are you challenged to be the same person in every situation?

» What's one way you've learned to maintain your integrity in different situations?

Close by praying for the kids in your group, asking God to enter into our mourning and give us the courage to live in the light of truth.

## CLOSING

Offer a prayer of thanks. You could pray something like this, if you choose: **Dear God, I've often tried to "fix" and "control" my hurts, hang-ups, and habits all by myself. I admit that by myself, I am powerless to change. I admit that I need your power to help me live the life you've always intended for me. You loved me enough to send your Son to the cross to die for my sins. Help me be open to the hope that I can only find in him. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.**

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.

# TURN

lesson nine

## PRINCIPLE 3:

Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are the meek" (Matthew 5:5 GNT).*

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1 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)
» Potatoes—one per teenager (you could substitute some kind of fruit for the potatoes, if necessary)
» Permanent markers
» Slips of paper with step-by-step directions from your meeting site to Anchorage, Alaska
» A Bible
» Six large boxes or pillows or other large but light, carry-able items; you want enough of the same item that it creates a visual roadblock to move the stack from one side of your meeting room to the other side—and if you use boxes, you can bring them collapsed and ask the kids to help you assemble them

## PREPARATION

» Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
» Review this lesson
» Gather supplies
» Select songs for the Worship Time
» Print out directions to Anchorage, Alaska, and cut the steps into individual slips

# CONNECT TIME

**SUPPLIES:** a potato and a permanent marker for each teenager in your group. (You could substitute some kind of fruit for the potatoes, if necessary.)

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

Have your teenagers sit in a circle on the floor. Give each one a potato. Encourage them to get to know their potato by using all their senses—smell it, touch it, taste it, see it, even listen to it! Have kids each use a marker to write their name on their potato. Then after a few minutes, take their potatoes away.

Ask your teenagers to close their eyes. One at a time, pass the potatoes around the circle. When kids think they're holding their original potato, have them place their potato in their lap and continue passing the other potatoes.

Once all the potatoes have been selected, have kids open their eyes to see if they chose correctly.

**ASK:**

» How successful were you at determining which potato was yours?
» How easy or difficult was it for you to "know" your potato?
» What unique features stood out about your potato?
» How were all the potatoes similar? different?
» In what ways are we similar? different?
» Tell one unique thing about you that others in our group may not know.

## ♫ WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, have kids each find their potato if they haven't already, then use a marker to write words on their potato that describe some of God's character qualities. If necessary, prompt your group with such qualities as "loving" or "compassionate."

After a few minutes, ask your teenagers to share the words they wrote. Then have them pick the one word they like the best and, silently in prayer, thank God for that attribute.

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 meek" (Matthew 5:5 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** step-by-step directions from your meeting site to Anchorage, Alaska; a Bible; and boxes or pillows or other large but light, carry-able items.



Use an Internet mapmaking site (Google Maps or MapQuest, for example) to create a step-by-step map from your meeting place to Anchorage, Alaska. Cut the steps into separate slips of paper. Shuffle slips so they're in random order, and be sure no slip actually names Anchorage as the destination—also be sure to cut off any numbers that indicate if it's the first step, second step, and so on. You'll also need the boxes or pillows or other large but light, carry-able items.

Distribute slips so everyone has one. If there aren't enough slips, give them to pairs or trios of kids.

**SAY: In Principle 1, you faced some of the hurts, hang-ups and habits in your life and got real about what's wrong and what's right in your life. In Principle 2, you started to believe that God has the power to help you change. Today, we're going to start on Principle 3, where we'll need to make a commitment to trust our lives to Jesus. When we say, "Happy are the meek," we begin to see ourselves as God sees us.**

Pray for your group, thanking God for what he's doing in the lives of your teenagers and bringing you to this point in The Landing journey.

**It's never too early to plan for spring break! I've found an uncrowded, beachfront spot with an ocean view—but you have to figure out where it is. You've got three minutes to assemble these directions to your scenic spring break paradise.**

After three minutes, ask for the directions to be read back to you—in order. If kids identified the location, congratulate them. If not, praise their effort and help them put the directions in the right order.

Ask teenagers to form trios. Then **SAY:** You worked hard to get directions to Alaska, but that doesn't mean much if that's not where you want to spend spring break. Doing a great job going the wrong way isn't a good thing.

**ASK:**

» Tell about a time you worked hard to accomplish something and later discovered it wasn't worth the effort.

Ask a spokesperson from each group to tell the whole group about insights from their discussions.

**SAY:** People can do terrible things with the best intentions. Some of the people who crucified Jesus were trying to avoid political conflict. Others acted out of religious conviction. Yet they were wrong. The Apostle Peter spoke to some of the people who'd stood by and let Jesus be crucified. Listen to what Peter says.

Read aloud Acts 2:36-39.

**ASK:**

» How would you have felt if you'd heard Peter say this? Explain.



» What are some things you've done—maybe with great intentions—that have taken you in the wrong direction?

**SAY:** It wasn't enough for the people Peter was addressing to feel sorry or learn from their experience. They had to repent—to actively turn from the direction they were going and head the other way. They turned from ignoring or dismissing Jesus to embracing him as their Savior. If you were to "repent" of spending spring break in Anchorage, it calls for *not* going to Anchorage—but it *also* calls for going in the opposite direction (like to Florida). You have to trust Jesus with your life—including your hurts, hang-ups, and habits—if you're intending to truly turn in the opposite direction.

Now ask for volunteers to help you pile the boxes (or pillows or other large but light, carry-able items that will block the vision of the person carrying them) against a wall. Don't reveal what they're for. When you've finished, ask teenagers to form pairs next to the piles.

**SAY:** Each team will now move the stack to the far wall and leave them there, stacked. We'll see which team can do this fastest. The person in your team whose birthday is closest to today will stack, and the other person will carry. You'll need to stack the boxes in a tower in the arms of your box-carrier. Get ready; you'll start across the room at my signal. Work together as you move your baggage to the far wall. Stackers, if your partners drop anything, you've got

to stack it back up for them—and give any directions that might be helpful. Move quickly. Once the first team is done, we'll see how well the second team does. Go!

Be sure each pair has a stack that will block the vision of the person carrying them. Use a watch, wall clock, or cell phone to time how long it takes each pair to transport the boxes to the far wall.

After you've determined a winning team, have pairs form foursomes and discuss these questions.

**ASK:**

» What strategies helped your pair move the boxes to the far wall and back?
» How was this activity like living your daily life?
» How was this activity like living your Christian life?

Ask a spokesperson from each foursome to share insights that emerged during their discussions.

**SAY:** It's tough navigating when you're carrying extra baggage. That's true physically, and it's true spiritually with our hurts, hang-ups, and habits.

Read aloud Hebrews 12:1.

**SAY:** Our hurts, hang-ups, and habits are peace-robbers—baggage that ensnares us, distracts us, and keeps us from doing the things God has set before us. The good news is that we don't have to carry it. We can turn in the opposite direction (repent) and be forgiven by others and by God.

Ask your teenagers to pick up the boxes, then form a circle. Then read aloud 1 John 1:8-9.

**SAY:** Let this box represent the bad choices in your life. As we pause for a few minutes of silence, pray silently. Ask God to let you know what he'd like you to give to him—your actions, your attitudes, your hidden moments. Mentally place those sins in your box. God doesn't want them to ensnare you. He's ready to forgive you—if you confess those failures to him. Let God take care of them.

Close in a prayer of thanksgiving for God's forgiveness.

## 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 with an appropriate personal story of a time when he or she repented of something in their life, and what he or she did to trust God in that situation. 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:**

» **Why is it so important to repent of the things we have done to hurt God, ourselves, and others?**



**Couldn't we just decide to stop doing those things and move on? Explain.**

» **What has been the hardest thing about giving up some of your hurts, hang-ups, and habits?**

» **What have been the fruits—or good results—of repentance in your life? What are the good results of giving up those things?**

» **How can we really be sure God will forgive us if we turn away from those things and go to him?**

Ask kids to pray for the person on their right. They can pray silently, or if you ask them to pray out loud, they could either all pray at once or pray one at a time around the group—it all depends on the comfort level of your group. Once the teenagers are done praying, thank God for giving everyone the courage to repent.

## 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.



# TURN

lesson ten

## PRINCIPLE 3:

Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are the meek" (Matthew 5:5 GNT).*

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1 NIV).*

## SCHEDULE

- CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- TEACHING TIME (35 minutes)
- VIDEO TIME (5 minutes)
- SMALL GROUPS (30 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 1
» Two bowls
» Powdered sugar
» Cornstarch
» Plastic spoons—two per teenager
» Photo of a cute baby
» A Bible
» Several sheets of paper
» Pens or pencils

## PREPARATION

» Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
» Review this lesson
» Gather supplies
» Select songs for the Worship Time
» Just before teenagers arrive, prepare the two bowls—one with powdered sugar and one with cornstarch

# CONNECT TIME

**SUPPLIES:** two bowls (one with powdered sugar and one with cornstarch), and plastic spoons.

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.



Have kids sit in a circle. Place a bowl of powdered sugar and a bowl of cornstarch in the center—but don't let your kids know the contents of the bowls. Give each person a plastic spoon.

**SAY: Every day we have to make decisions about whether we'll turn to God for help or try to make it on our own. It's tough trying to make good choices. Let's practice making a decision right now. Here at The Landing, we have lots of opportunities to practice good decisions!**

Ask kids to look at the bowls' contents and decide which one they want to taste. If kids question the contents, tell them both bowls contain something edible—but don't offer any specifics.

**SAY: We'll go around the circle, and you can take as little or as much as will fit on your spoon. Wait until everyone has a spoonful, and then we'll all eat what we've chosen. If you don't want to take the chance, go ahead and pass. OK, eat up!**

After everyone has eaten their selection, **ASK:**

» **What was easy and what was difficult about your choice, even if you decided to pass?**
» **How was this experience like decisions you make in life?**
» **What advice would you give to someone when it comes to making the right decisions?**

Pray, asking God to help each teenager choose well this week.

## ♫ WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, **SAY: When you choose to live Principle 3—when you consciously choose to commit all your life and will to Christ's care and control—you can find the strength and will to chart a new course in your life. You can overcome hurts, hang-ups, and habits. And the best way to prepare ourselves to turn over our life to Jesus is to worship him.**

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 meek" (Matthew 5:5 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** photo of a cute baby, paper, pens or pencils, and a Bible.



Gather your teenagers and pass around photo of the cute baby.

**SAY: If you think about it, babies get something of a raw deal. Before they're born, they're safe, warm, and secure in the womb. Everything they need is provided for them. Then, after a few hours of labor (hopefully!) they're plopped into a cold, confusing, hostile world. They're completely at the mercy of others, dependent in every way. It's time to start growing up.**

Have your teenagers form trios. Give each trio several sheets of paper and a pen or pencil, then ask them to select who will play three roles: Note-Taker (who'll take legible notes), Presenter (who'll tell what the trio writes to the larger group), and Director (who'll keep everyone on task and make sure the group finishes in time). If you have a large group, you may want to form larger groups of teenagers.

**SAY: Nobody grows up all at once. It's a process. And it's helpful if there's good advice along the way. Your job is to take 10 minutes and brainstorm some advice to help this baby reach the ripe old age of 14. How can this child benefit from things you've learned? Take good notes because your Presenter will be sharing your trio's advice with the entire group.**

Give three-, two-, and one-minute countdowns so trios can wrap up on time. Ask one trio to share first and for others to add things that haven't been shared.

**SAY: Great advice! Babies do more than just get bigger; they transform into children, and from children into adolescents. They become new creations.**

**ASK** your groups to discuss these questions:

- **What's a piece of advice you've heard—in your trio or from another trio—that you think is particularly good? Why is it good?**
- **What's a piece of advice you wish you'd heard and taken to heart as you grew from a child into a teenager? Explain.**
- **Has the advice you've received from friends always been good? Explain.**

Ask for a quick summary from trios. Follow up and probe with additional questions.

**SAY: Good advice is great, but all the good advice in the world won't help the baby in this situation as much as having his/her parent walk through life with their child. The baby's parent will provide a place to cry and be comforted. When human parents make mistakes, we can always lean on God, the perfect Father.**



Gather everyone into a large circle. Then read aloud Romans 8:26-27.

**SAY: The Bible is full of good advice, and we need to take it to heart. But God didn't just give us good advice and call it a day. He's provided a way to cry and be comforted. A place to laugh and be affirmed. A way to know we're understood even when we don't understand ourselves. God isn't just giving us advice as we become new creations in him—he's here for us when we finally stop running from him and turn.**

## VIDEO TIME

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video "Crowd or the Cross" from DVD 1 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 3:02 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:**

» **What's something you saw that was really true about the video? Explain.**



» **What's something that was challenging about what you saw? Explain.**

» **What's one way you've made a choice to follow God instead of the crowd in your life?**

» **Have you ever felt pressure to choose a path contrary to God's intentions for your life?**

» **How do you know when you've really given your whole heart to God?**

» **Describe the best decision you ever made.**

Close by praying for the kids in your group, asking God to enter into our mourning and give us the courage to live in the light of truth.

## CLOSING

**SUPPLIES:** bowl with powdered sugar, and spoons for your kids. Make sure the kids do NOT use the same spoon they used earlier in the lesson; give them new, clean spoons!

Have teenagers each get a spoonful of powdered sugar from the bowl you used in the opening activity. Have them get in a circle, and give them new spoons.

**SAY: God's ways are not only good for us; they're the sweetest things in life. I'd like you to put your spoonful of powdered sugar in your mouth and let it sit there for a moment. Think about one way your life**

has become sweeter by turning from the path you were on and following God instead. Then, silently thank God for that sweetness.

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.

# ACTION

## lesson eleven

# ACTION lesson eleven

## PRINCIPLE 3:

Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are the meek" (Matthew 5:5 GNT).*

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1 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—one full sheet per teenager
» Pens and pencils
» Markers
» Bibles
» Slips of paper—two per teenager
» Trash can (or metal container)
» Dollar bills—one for each conversation leader

## PREPARATION

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

# CONNECT TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Paper and pens or pencils.

Warmly welcome everyone to the group.

Hand your teenagers each a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Ask them to write their name at the top, then have them get in pairs and exchange their papers. Ask partners to interview each other about their favorite things, such as bands, TV shows, Scripture verses, places to shop, food, hobbies, sports, and so on. After five minutes, have partners design a logo for each other based on what they've discovered, plus one thing they like about their partners. Once all the students have designed their logo, have them each present and explain them to the rest of the group.

# WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, have kids each take their paper and turn it over to the blank side. Ask them to create a logo that represents God's character and personality and passions.

After a few minutes, stand in a circle and ask a few volunteers to show their "God logo" and explain it.

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 meek" (Matthew 5:5 GNT).*

# TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, pens or pencils, slips of paper, and a trash can (or metal container).

Give kids one slip of paper each, and have them hold on to this piece of paper for a couple of minutes. Ask them to secretly write what tempts them. Let them know that this is for their eyes only.

**SAY:** In this world, we're tempted and enticed by the very things that can potentially destroy us. In Matthew 18, Jesus zeroes in on this issue.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 18:7-9.

**ASK:**

» How would you describe this passage?

» If this is not meant to be taken literally—and it is not—then what is Jesus actually saying about sin and the Christian life?

**SAY:** Jesus' message at the beginning of his ministry was very simple, as Matthew 4:17 tells us: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." As we discussed last week, this idea of "repenting" means taking the action to turn toward Christ and turning away from a previous life of hurts, hang-ups, and habits. Notice that Jesus' initial message focused on the issue of sin—then, later in Matthew, sin still remains a major theme in his teachings about what it means to follow him as Lord.



**SAY:** Contrary to the way people today focus entirely on promoting themselves, Christianity's distinguishing characteristic is "loss of self." When we follow Christ as Lord, we're changed inside. When it comes to our ethics, our relationships with others, and our relationship with God, we no longer focus on satisfying our own selfish desires. Instead we learn to make better choices so that we can move closer to God.

Give the teenagers another slip of paper. Tell them again that this next exercise is for their eyes only. Have them spread out in the room and reflect silently on the things that move them closer to God. Then have them think about and write down some of the things that move them away from God. Give them a few minutes to complete this exercise.

Next, ask the teenagers to rip up the slips of paper representing things that move them away from God and the piece of paper on which they wrote what tempted them, then throw the pieces in the trash can (or metal container) you've placed in the center of the room.

After everyone has put their papers in the trash can,
**SAY:** Temptation to make bad choices will always surround us. But when we've been changed by Christ, we no longer want to remain in our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. Instead, we take sin seriously and we take action to turn toward Christ.

Wrap up by having everyone gather in a circle around the trash can and asking a volunteer to pray aloud for the group, thanking God for freeing them from the destructive cycle of hurts, hang-ups, and habits.

## 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 with a short object lesson about conversion. Each leader will need a dollar bill.

They should each hold up the dollar bill and **ASK:**

» **How would I go about converting this dollar bill?**



After kids offer their answers, **SAY: I can convert this dollar bill into quarters or 10 dimes or 20 nickels, right? It's still the same amount of money, but in a different form. And when we experience conversion in our life, we still look the same and talk the same and—we are the same. But we're also fundamentally changed into something new.**

Take a few moments and have the leader of each group briefly share how they came to Christ.

Then, have groups each discuss these questions (available on the CD-ROM).

**ASK:**

» **The Bible describes our conversion as being "born again"—it's a metaphor for the deep change that happens in us when we turn away from our bad choices and turn our life over to God. When have you had an experience that's like that—something that made you feel changed into something new?**

» **What are the obstacles to turning your life over to Christ—including hurts, hang-ups, and habits?**

» **Have you turned your life over to the care of Christ? If not, what's holding you back?**

Close the small group time by inviting kids to find a spot in the room where they can kneel or sit down and close their eyes.

**SAY:** Slowing our minds down is a way of opening ourselves to conversion. Being quiet helps us to make the choice to allow God to change our life. Right now, spend a minute silently talking to God.

After a few minutes, the leader should close in prayer.

## CLOSING

Have kids grab their logos and sit in a circle.

**SAY:** The logos on your papers reflect what someone else discovered about you, plus one other thing they like about you. It's affirming to know that other people like us, isn't it? But here's even better news: God likes you, too. In churches, we often talk about how God loves us, but it's also true that God likes us. God loves you and likes you so much that he sent his Son Jesus to make the ultimate sacrifice for you on the cross.

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.

# ACTION

lesson twelve

# ACTION lesson twelve

## PRINCIPLE 3:

Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS:

*"Happy are the meek" (Matthew 5:5 GNT).*

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1 NIV).*

## SCHEDULE

- CONNECT TIME (15 minutes)
- WORSHIP (15 minutes)
- TEACHING TIME (35 minutes)
- VIDEO TIME (5 minutes)
- SMALL GROUPS (30 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 1
» 3X5 cards—one per teenager
» Pens or pencils
» Bibles
» Roll of masking tape
» Bag of jelly beans

## PREPARATION

» Pray for your teenagers and your meeting
» Review this lesson
» Gather supplies
» Select songs for the Worship Time
» Place the piece of masking tape across the floor of your meeting room; write the words OVERRATED and UNDERRATED on opposite ends of the tape

# CONNECT TIME

**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 live anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?" Or "What are three things you do well, and what are three things you hope you did well?"

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 one 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

To bridge into your worship time, **SAY: It's a lot easier to talk about worshiping God than to act on it. Sometimes it seems too embarrassing or too personal to express our worship to God by doing something. In 2 Samuel 6, the Bible tells us about a time that King David's wife was embarrassed when he danced in front of the Ark of the Covenant as it was being brought into Jerusalem—David danced because he wanted to act on what he believed.**

**ASK:**

» **What's something we could do as a group to worship God right now—something that would be an outward sign of our love and gratefulness to God?**

Whatever your teenagers decide to do (and if they are comfortable), do it as you listen to a worship song.

Then lead kids in two 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 meek" (Matthew 5:5 GNT).*

## TEACHING TIME

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles and masking tape.

Have your kids play a game of Overrated/Underrated by deciding where to stand on the continuum of tape you've placed on the floor of your meeting area. To play, you'll say the name of a person, place, or thing. Kids will then move to the side of the line with the word that best reflects their opinion about whether that thing is overrated (more popular or acclaimed than it deserves) or underrated (deserves more attention and acclaim). The idea is to name things that your kids would have opinions on—for example: NASCAR; the Beatles; golf; California; country line dancing; fast food; the Fourth of July; museums; a recent movie; and the Olympics.

Transition by telling the group you'll be focusing on someone in the Bible who's sometimes "underrated"—a person whose example of acting on his beliefs doesn't always get the attention it deserves. Together as a group, read Luke 19:1-10.

**ASK:**

» **Why would you call Zacchaeus "underrated"?**

After you've given your students a chance to respond, **SAY: Zacchaeus could be considered underrated because he was a tax collector. In those days being a tax collector wasn't something that was popular amongst the everyday people. His job was to make sure that people paid the right amount of money on time to the government. Another reason he could be underrated is because he was short and people wouldn't make room for him to see.**

**So what does Zacchaeus do? He takes action. He wants to see what was happening amongst the crowd, so he climbed a tree. And there, he sees Jesus, and more importantly, Jesus sees him. Jesus walks up to Zacchaeus and invites himself to his house.**

Once Zacchaeus has an interaction with Jesus, it changes him. Even though he's judged by the people and called a sinner, he has changed. He takes more action. He says he's going to give money to the poor and give back four times the amount to anyone he has cheated. That's change! All this because Jesus saw him, and came into his house.

ASK:

» Have you ever wanted something so badly that you went out of your way to get to it? If you feel comfortable, explain.
» Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so badly?
» How would you feel if Jesus came to your house unannounced? Think about your room; is it clean? Is there anything there that you wouldn't want him to see?

Place two strips of masking tape on the floor that form about a 45-degree angle. Don't do this before your group meets; place the tape as they watch. Show kids how small the difference is between these vectors at just an inch from the starting point, and then contrast it with the large separation between the lines a foot from the starting point. Emphasize that one small action changed the course of Zacchaeus' life.

## VIDEO TIME

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video "The Gospel According to Blaine" from DVD 1 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 3:18 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:**

- **What are some examples of things that keep people from "running the race" with God—things that are like the watch in this video?**
- **What are some ways that your friends keep you from "running the race"?**
- **Why is it so difficult for us to get rid of our sins—our destructive habits and hurtful choices—on our own?**
- **What decision did Blaine have to make to finally be rid of his watch? What was the motivation behind his decision?**
- **Have you made a decision that was like Blaine's? Describe what you did, and why.**

To close the small group time, the leader should have everyone close their eyes and hold out their left arm in front of them, just as Blaine did in the video, when he responded to the man's offer to help him get rid of his watch. Ask kids to offer up to God whatever functions like Blaine's watch in their life. After a minute or so of silence, the leader should close in prayer.



## CLOSING

**SUPPLIES:** jelly beans.

Bring out the jelly beans and give kids each a cross-section of colors. Tell them that the colors represent these emotions: yellow/fear; red/embarrassment; green/envy; blue/sadness; purple/anger; black/loneliness; orange/peer pressure; pink/stubbornness; white/defensiveness. You may want to print this out for your teenagers to reference (available on the CD-ROM).

Begin by having one person choose a jelly bean and share in one minute or less an experience related to that jelly bean color. (As leader, you may want to start this off by choosing a jelly bean and sharing your story first.) Then go around the circle and have each person choose a jelly bean and share a story related to that emotion.

**SAY: All of the emotions we've talked about are powerful—any one of them can keep us from acting on what we believe. Let's act on our knowledge of God's power in our life to help us follow him, no matter what, by taking the jelly bean we just shared about and eating it.** (Pause) **Nothing is so powerful that God's power can't help us overcome it.**

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.





# HONESTY

lesson thirteen

# HONESTY lesson thirteen

## 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)
» Decks of cards or card-based games
» Bibles
» TV

## 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.

Gather teenagers in a circle for this Q&A opener—one you're doing every other month or so. The catch is they have to answer questions in the third person (meaning, they refer to themselves by name instead of using "I"). You can change the questions each time to make this Connect Time fresh.

Use fun questions such as:

» **Who's your favorite superhero and why?**
» **Are you a morning or night person?**
» **What would your ultimate vacation look like?**
» **If you could prepare any meal, what would you make and who would you share it with?**
» **If you could have any superpower, what would it be?**

Add your own questions to this list. It's funny to hear people talk about themselves this way—but this opener has the added benefit of cementing the other kids' names in their memory, and learning some fun stories about each other.

## WORSHIP

**SUPPLIES:** decks of cards or card-based games, such as Uno.

Form groups of four or six. Give each group a deck of cards and have them play a common game, such as Go Fish, Hearts, or Gin Rummy. (It's best to discourage kids from playing a betting game like Poker or Blackjack, although those games would fit the illustration.) Or give each group a card-based game, such as Uno.

Explain to your kids that there's a catch: They have to play with all the cards facing up—everyone needs to be able to see other players' cards. Play for about five minutes. Then have groups discuss these questions.

### ASK:

» **Why is it more difficult to play games this way?**
» **What's one area of your life that you easily show others?**

» What's one area of your life that's difficult to show others?

**SAY: Though we can easily "hide our cards" from each other, God (of course) not only can see our cards, he created the materials those cards are made out of! And he created you. God knows everything about you and sees everything you think is hidden. And he loves you—so much that he sacrificed his Son for you. Let's thank him for loving us even though he sees us just as we are.**

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 and a TV

**SAY: In Principle 1, you faced some of the hurts, hang-ups, and habits in your life and got real about what's wrong and what's right in your life. In Principle 2, you started to believe that God has the power to help you change, and in Principle 3, you may have given your life to Jesus. Today, we'll begin to look at Principle 4 where we'll take a good, thorough look at your life—both the good and the not so good—and come clean about it.**

Pray for your group, thanking God for his faithfulness to your group.

Have kids form trios, then **ASK** them to discuss:

» **When has it seemed as though something from your past was preventing you from achieving your dreams for the future?**
» **Why is our past so hard to leave behind?**
» **Why does our past have such power to define who we are?**

Make the room as dark as possible and ask kids to close their eyes for this activity. Ask your teenagers to think about circumstances from their past that have affected their view of themselves or their future opportunities.

**SAY: Sometimes our pasts can prevent us from seeing the future God has in store. We're limited by this inability to see—we just can't get past the past. As we all pause and remain quiet, ask God to show you how your lack of vision is holding you back right now.**

After a few minutes, turn the lights back on, and have kids open their eyes.

Form three groups and assign each group one of the following people and Scripture passages. If you have a large group, repeat the assigned passages for multiple groups of kids.

» #1—The sick boy's father in Mark 9:14-21
» #2—Rahab in Joshua 2:1-13
» #3—Joseph in Genesis 37:12-28.

Have groups each read aloud their passage and discuss the following questions.

**ASK:**

» **What was your character's life probably like up until this point?**
» **How might their past have affected the way they viewed themselves, God, and their future?**

Invite a spokesperson from each group to summarize their Bible story and their discussion.

**SAY: The boy's father faced years without hope, wondering if his son's condition could ever improve. Rahab probably felt as if she could never move beyond the sexual sins of her past. Joseph grew up being abused and hated by his brothers—that abuse could have easily limited him to a life of failure.**

**ASK:**

» **How are their circumstances similar to or different from issues people face today?**



» **How are their circumstances similar to or different from what you've experienced in your life?**

Again in their groups, have teenagers read their assigned verses:

» #1—The boy's father in Mark 9:22-27
» #2—Rahab in Joshua 2:14-21 and Hebrews 11:31
» #3—Joseph in Genesis 41:38-45; 45:1-8.

Then have kids discuss the following questions.

**ASK:**

» **How was your character able to get past the past?**
» **How do you think his or her life probably changed after this? Explain.**

Invite each group's spokesperson to summarize their discussion.

Then **ASK:**

» **What can we learn from these people about moving beyond the issues in our past to find hope for the future?**
» **What is our part, and what is God's part, in cleaning up our past?**

To close this time, **SAY: I wish I could say that you can escape the pain of your past altogether by going around it or jumping over it. But the only way we can get rid of the pain of our past is to face it head-on**

and give it to God—to face the hurts, hang-ups, and habits. Some people spend their lives rationalizing the past, complaining about the present, and fearing the future. They, of course, are not moving forward into the life God has always dreamed for them. By coming to The Landing, however, you've chosen to continue going forward. And if you keep going forward, growth will occur. Principle 4 begins the process of "coming clean." Here we will openly examine and confess our faults to ourselves, and to God. We clean out all the junk from our past that has piled up over the years and has kept us from really seeing the truth about our past and present situations.

## 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 with an appropriate personal story of a time when they experienced freedom through honesty. 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 you've ever had to do, honesty-wise? What happened?
» What's hard about living with secrets?
» Why is it so important to "come clean" about ourselves if we hope to live the life God has dreamed for us?
» Is there anything you'd like to "come clean" about right now? If you're comfortable, would you like to share it?

The leader of the group should close this time with a prayer that offers up to God anything that kids have said they want to come clean about and asks for forgiveness and freedom on their behalf.

## CLOSING

Tell your kids that you want to end this week's lesson with a variation on "Stupid Human Tricks." You want to see who can make the wildest, craziest faces. Have two or three teenagers participate at a time, so everyone else can watch and laugh.

**SAY:** It's so funny to see the faces we can make. We'd never want our senior class photo to look like this...well, most of us wouldn't. But God delights in our "true faces"—God knows us and loves us just as we are, not as we're supposed to be.

Pray something like this: Dear God, you know our past, all the good and the bad things that we've done. We ask that you give us the strength and the courage to face them so that we can "come clean" as we honestly examine our lives, and our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. Please help us reach out to others who you have placed along our journey into closer relationship with you. Thank you for providing them to help us keep balanced as we face the things in our life we need to face. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

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.

the Landing

# HONESTY

## lesson fourteen

# HONESTY lesson fourteen

## 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 (30 minutes)
- VIDEO TIME (10 minutes)
- SMALL GROUPS (30 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 1
» Bibles
» CD with upbeat music (optional)

## 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.

Set up chairs in an inward-facing circle, but make sure there's one fewer chair than needed for everyone to have a seat. The person without a chair begins by standing in the middle and telling something about herself that she thinks she might have in common with others, such as "I'm an only child" or "I can play the piano." All those in the circle who share that particular characteristic must jump up and scramble to find different seats—at least two seats away from where they were sitting. The speaker rushes to grab a seat, too. A new person will be without a seat, and he or she becomes the new speaker.



# WORSHIP

To bridge into your worship time, **SAY: Once we've been really honest with ourselves and with others, it can feel awkward. What will people think of us now? What is God thinking of me right now? It's hard to know for sure, isn't it? But we do know that Jesus said that whatever he said and did was an exact reflection of what God says and does.**

**Let's spend a few minutes worshiping Jesus for the mercy he offers us.**

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:** You'll need Bibles, a CD with upbeat music, and a CD player.

Ask teenagers to form trios and discuss these childhood memories as you play upbeat music in the background:

» #1—Their first memory
» #2—Their most vivid memory
» #3—Their favorite memory

Gather together and **SAY:** **Memories are strange things. We're all shaped by our past experiences. Who we are and what we do are in some way connected to the things we remember. Our insecurities, our passions, and our interests are all influenced by our memories.**

**ASK:**

» **If I asked you what was your "most important" memory, what would it be? Explain.**

After kids have a chance to respond, **SAY:** **One other thing about memory—it's usually linked to significant events, either good ones or bad ones. What we're going to do now is look at some memories—not of a specific person, but of a particular group of people.**

Have kids re-form their groups, read these verses, then discuss the following questions: Deuteronomy 5:6, 15; 7:18; 15:15; 16:3, 12; 24:9, 18, 22; 25:17.

**ASK:**

» **Why does God tell the Israelites to remember their slavery in Egypt?**
» **Why is this so important?**



» **How would remembering this event shape them as a people?**

After 10 minutes or so, gather and ask kids to share their observations.

**SAY:** **Imagine the Israelites' thoughts and feelings. Not only were they created by God and chosen by God, but now they're freed from slavery by God. If they ever wanted to know who they really were, all they had to do was look back on this amazing, defining moment in their history.**

**ASK:**

» **What's a defining moment like this for Christianity?**

When one of your teenagers names Jesus' death on the cross, focus everyone's attention on it.

Ask a teenager to read aloud 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

**ASK:**

» **Why does God instruct Christ-followers to regularly remember Jesus' sacrifice on the cross?**
» **Why is it so important that we remember this?**

Have kids get back in their trios, and ask them to each read aloud the following passages: John 8:34-37; Romans 6:17-18; Romans 8:1-2; Colossians 2:13-14; and Hebrews 12:2.

**ASK:**

» How is remembering the cross like the Israelites' memory of their freedom from slavery? How is it different?

» In our last gathering we explored what it might look like for us to be free of our secrets, our hurts, hang-ups, and habits—how does Jesus' sacrifice on the cross help us to find that freedom?

When groups wrap up their discussion, **SAY: For Christians, the cross reminds us that we are no longer slaves to sin—bound to live in guilt, in feelings of failure, in weariness and weakness, and trapped by our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. Instead, we're set free! We're forgiven! We're loved! The cross gives us the courage to open up to God about who we really are, and what we really struggle with.**

Read aloud Hebrews 12:2. Then ask your teenagers to sit in a circle and close their eyes. One by one, ask the following questions and ask your kids to silently consider their answer. Give them at least one full minute of silence after each question.

**ASK:**

» What do I feel guilty about?

» What do I resent?

» What are my fears?



Quietly **SAY: Please keep your eyes closed. We'll talk more about this experience in our small groups in just a few minutes. But right now I want you to know that Jesus knows exactly what you were thinking about just now, and he's longing to take those heavy burdens from your shoulders and set you free. Will you let him?**

Pause for one more minute of silence, then close by thanking God for his goodness and his mercy.

## VIDEO TIME

Set up a DVD player and TV in your meeting area. Ahead of time, cue up the video "Mercy" from DVD 1 in the kit. Play the video—this one is 8:15 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:

» What's something you saw that was really true about the video? Explain.



» What's something that was challenging about what you saw? Explain.

» It's easy to receive mercy but really hard to offer it—talk about a time you received mercy, and a time you gave it.

» Do most people seem to take God's mercy for granted, or do most people seem to appreciate the mercy God has offered them? Explain.

» Our guilt, anger, and fears show us the places in our hearts that still hang on to our shame and hurts—one big step toward freedom from these things is to simply be honest about them. If it's time for you to be honest about something, do you want to share it with us now?

After all the kids who want to have shared, the leader should close in prayer.

## 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.