

Making it

REAL

AND

RELEVANT

A

Multi-Media Enhanced,

Topic-Based

Bible Study

for

Youth

By Heidi K. E. Hawks, M.A., M.Ed.

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A Note to Leaders About The Topics:

This version of *Making it Real and Relevant* takes a topic and examines it in some detail over a 2 to 5 week period of time with the goal of addressing the characteristics of spiritual development. These goals are to: learn that one has a life-purpose and that it is possible to discern what that purpose is; to seek connection with the inner self (the spirit, as opposed to the outer self, the ego); to seek connection with God and with the world around one, both natural and human; and to experience transcendence (meaning seeing how one fits into the bigger picture). The first year will progress from inward to outward, focusing on "me" issues first, then progressing to "God" issues, and then examining "community and world" issues. Opportunities to experience transcendence will happen during community service projects suggested during Advent and Lent, as well as during discussion time in class.

When you receive the curriculum for each quarter, a separate page listing all the movie and music clips will be included so that you can plan ahead. My advice is to save money on the music and either burn the clips yourself or find a tech-savvy youth who can burn these clips onto one CD for you from sites such as Napster, iTunes etc. You can rent videos, borrow from church members who are movie fans, or purchase used videos inexpensively through sites such as amazon.com or a local video store. If the software is available to do so, burn a DVD with the movie clips in order ahead of time as well. When you are pulling these pieces of media together, please consider making copies of the lyrics of the songs available for youth as well; sites such as christianlyricsonline.com or lyricsondemand.com offer lyrics for free. All you have to do is cut and paste into a separate document and photocopy the lyrics for the youth to follow along when you play music clips. I highly recommend doing this because this music is chosen for the lyrics and no matter how good the music is, there is always a point where words get lost because of the drums, guitars, rap, or poor annunciation on the singer's part. When the youth don't hear the lyrics, they lose part of the meaning of the lesson. It is also helpful to have lyrics to refer back to when discussing the song after playing it.

The first topic will be handled a little differently from the rest. It serves as an overview topic, rather than a topic with a specific aim, but it will serve as a good start up for the year and will also allow some getting to know you time through group discussion and ice breaker type activities. Advent and Lenten topics are based on the current year's lectionary readings, so if you are in Year A, and are starting with the first year's worth of topics, you will receive Topic 14 instead of 4 for Advent, and Topic 16 instead of 7 for Lent.

Please contact me at hhawks@seespiritgrow.com or (336) 816-4555 if you have any questions or if you have suggestions for topics for the coming year; I'd love to hear them!

Thanks-

Heidi Hawks

**Making It Real and Relevant:
A Multi-Media Enhanced, Topic-Based Bible Study for Youth**

Topic 1: At Ground Level (4 weeks)

Week 1: Creating

God created humans from ground. What does it mean to know that you were created by God? We are like God in that we have the ability to be creative too. What are the responsibilities of the Creator (you or God)?

Bible passages: Genesis 2

Week 2: Reforming

God is like the potter, who creates with clay. If what the potter has created doesn't work right, the clay is soft, malleable and can be squashed back together and reformed. Out of the mistakes and failures can come something beautiful. When have you made a mistake or failed at something and found that redoing your error produced something better than you had even imagined?

Bible passage: Jeremiah 18:1-12

Week 3: Transforming

Jesus transformed a man's life by using a mud pack to change how the man saw things. Have you ever experienced transformation, where something happened that changed how you looked at or saw something? Is there somewhere in your life that needs transforming now?

Bible passages: John 9: 1-12 Jesus heals the blind man

Luke 19:1-10 Zacchaeus (short script of Zacchaeus and wife)

Week 4: Creating, Reforming, Transforming the world

God, in creating us in God's image, has given us the abilities to be creative, to reform and to transform our lives. These abilities can change the world. How can we make change happen with these three gifts?

Bible passage: Paul's Conversion Acts 19:1-19

This topic will have an ongoing activity that youth will spend some time on each week. During the first week, they will create an object. The second week they will squish their object and create something new. The third week, their object will be transformed into something else. The fourth week, the objects will be melded together into one new object in the shape of a Christian symbol. (The facilitator will bake the object after the fourth week.)

Topic 2: Who am I? (4 weeks)

This topic will help students explore who they are. They will assess their likes, dislikes, how they think, learn and communicate with others, how they are like other people and how they are unique, and most importantly, they will begin to discuss what it means to have been created with a purpose. What is my purpose? This question will lead ultimately to a deeper understanding of one's self and will encourage one's spiritual development.

All Saints Day

1st Sunday in November

Who are people of God? What have they done to become people of God? What does it take to become a saint? Can we live lives that approach the lives of the saints? Would we want to even attempt to? Why or why not? What is the common theme for becoming a saint (helping others in need). Can we help others in need? This is a prelude to our advent project, and will get youth thinking about individuals or a group in church or in the community who is in need and what they can do to make a difference

Bible Passage: The Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37

Topic 3: Fact Finding Mission: Who is God? (4 weeks)

How do we envision, describe, understand God? When we were young versus how we see God now – has that changed? How do other people describe and understand God (Biblical, clergy, parents, friends)? What is your experience of God? Have you had any experiences of God? How do you know that it was God you experienced? This topic will request a clergy person to come to class one week and talk to youth about who God is.

Topic 4: Advent (based on lectionary year C readings) (3 weeks)

What is Advent? What are we preparing for? What are some ways I can prepare? How can I be a part of the change that Jesus came to earth to bring about? Advent project: Changing The World (a little at a time).

Topic 5: The Gifts God Gave Me (3 weeks)

This three week topic focuses on spiritual gifts, what they are, who has them, what they are used for and helping students identify their spiritual gifts.

Topic 6: Family- Does It Matter? (3 weeks)

The continuation of Jesus' family story – the day the wise men came to visit. Family history. What are the stories in my family that make my family special? How do those stories help form who I am? (family history gives us values, roles, traditions, ties to other people in other places and in other times). Are the stories in the Bible part of my family history?

Topic 7: Lent-Temptation (Based on year C lectionary readings) (5 weeks)

Lent is a great time to talk about dealing with temptation; Jesus wandered the wilderness for 40 days after dealing with the temptations Satan presented him, and Christians often use this season to set aside temptations in the form of fasting. How do we deal with the tests and temptations that life throws our way? How do we overcome temptation?

Topic 8: Why Can't We Be Friends? (3 weeks)

Who are my friends? Why are they my friends? What do I look for in a friend? What do my friends expect from me? Can I count on my friends to be there for me? What do I depend on my friends for? What does the Bible say about friendships? Do I consider Jesus as a friend? What are Jesus friends like? How do your friends compare? How do you compare as a friend?

Topic 9: Can I Make A Difference In The World? (2 weeks)

Topic 9 centers on two ideas- the Great Commandment, found in John 13: 31-35 (Love one another) and having convictions and sticking with those convictions-what causes do students believe in and what people would they follow? Why? Is belief in Christ and his cause a conviction students share?

Topic 10: Making Decisions (6 weeks)

Our culture in the 21st century demands people to constantly make split-second decisions and this cultural phenomenon is creating some unique problems for the individuals living in this framework. Sometimes with all the decisions we have to make, we find ourselves in times of indecision; unable to decide between the choices placed before us. Other times, we decide too quickly and then have to deal with the consequences of making poor decisions. We are going to examine the phenomenon of the abundance of choices we have, how we make decisions, and how we deal with the aftermath of making a decision—how we can stand by our decisions even when they go against the flow, how we find role models and why we need them, and how we handle our response when our decision is tested

Topic 11: Faith (4 weeks)

This topic focuses on faith, and invites students to explore the idea of faith. What is faith? Do we have faith today? How easy is it for us in today's culture to have faith in God? Can we be half-hearted in having faith in God? What does it mean to have faith in ourselves? How does having faith in ourselves help us to have faith

in and be faithful to God? Finally, the students answer the question, How do we decide what we will believe in?

Topic 12: Tackling the Ten Commandments (5 weeks):

A look at the Ten Commandments, their importance in guiding us in our relationship with God and with the world around us. Students will discuss what these commandments mean as we live our lives in the 21st century; are all the Ten Commandments still applicable to our world today?

Topic 13: The Great Commandment: Love (3 weeks)

A brief review of the ten commandments that segues into a discussion of Jesus' Great Commandments; the lessons focus on what love means (honor, respect, value) and then discuss what it means to love God, love our neighbors, and love ourselves.

Topic 14: Caretakers and Stewards (3 weeks)

Topic 13 examines the ideas of being a good steward of our time and talent and being good caretakers of what God has given us. Students will discuss what it means to be a (good) steward and what the difference between a steward and a caretaker (if there is any difference) is. They will also discuss how they use their time, talent and income, and then talk about being caretakers.

Topic 15: Advent (based on Lectionary year A readings) (3 weeks)

Topic 16: Christ Revealed and what it means to be Christian (works well during Epiphany) (5 weeks)

What does it mean to be a Christian? This topic covers several key elements of this question. Week one reviews how Christianity came into being, with the birth of Jesus Christ, recognized by many even as an infant as a savior, a king, and messiah. Week 2 examines baptism, one of the foundations of the Christian faith, before discussing what people understood Jesus to be and why they chose (and still choose today) to follow him (weeks 3 and 4). During week 5, students will talk about the final act of revelation by God, the transfiguration of Jesus, and how witnessing this act affected the followers of Christ.

Topic 17: Lent: Living in Faith or Living with Doubt (based on Year A lectionary readings) (5 weeks)

During this Lenten topic, the lessons are built around stories that come primarily from the Gospel of John. Taken individually, each of these stories contains important messages that describe values we as Christians should be embracing. Together, these stories teach a valuable lesson that Jesus Christ wanted his followers to learn; to have faith in God. The stories all provide examples of the difference between having faith and allowing doubt to interfere with faith. The Lenten lessons start with Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, and examine stories such as the Samaritan woman at the well, the blind man who was healed, the story of Nicodemus and conclude with Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. In each story two themes will be examined; the overall theme for the Lenten season, which is about the need for Christians to live a life based on faith, rather than one filled with doubts; and the secondary theme, which will be specific for each lesson.

Topic 18: Advent: Preparing The Way (based on Lectionary Year B readings) (3 weeks)

Topic 19: Judging and Being Judged (2 weeks)

A short topic based on Matthew 7:1-5, on making judgments about others, when it is wrong to judge others and when we need to "judge others" as part of the process of remaining true to our beliefs and values.

Topic 20: Lent: What Did Jesus Do? (based on Year B lectionary readings) (5 weeks)

There are several important themes that wend their way through the Lenten season readings, but all can be tied to a common theme, which is "What did Jesus do?" In other words, what are the models Jesus left for us to follow? The passages we read through the season are reminders of the ministry that Jesus had and how he dealt with the realities of life; mainly, that life isn't always a bed of roses-it is often full of hardship, rejection,

disappointment, loneliness, and judgment. Jesus teaches us, by modeling how he lived through all these challenges of life, that the downs in life are bearable and even necessary in order for us to come to and really appreciate the ups. Furthermore, there are appropriate ways to act as we face the challenges of life, ways that will also bring us closer in our relationship with God.

A sample of topics to be released for 2009-2010:

Change and How We Deal With It

Being in the World vs. Being of the World

Fair's Fair... Right?

I Am The Way: What do Christians Believe?

God's Time vs. Our Time: Prayer and the Answering of Prayer

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Before Classes Start...

An Overview of *Making it Real and Relevant*

Making it Real and Relevant is a youth Bible study curriculum for use in a 45-55 minute class period. The course is available in two formats, a lectionary-based format and a topic-based format. The **lectionary-based format** follows the 3-year lectionary cycle as found in your choice of the Revised Common Lectionary, Roman Catholic or Book of Common Prayer. Therefore, one or more of the readings that will be heard in church during the Sunday morning service will be the focus of the class that Sunday. Readings are usually based on the New Testament readings, although Old Testament readings and occasionally the Psalm assigned for that Sunday become the focus reading for a lesson as well. The **topic-based format** examines a topic in some detail over a 3 to 4-week period of time. The topics are based on the characteristics of spiritual development, which are to learn that one has a life-purpose and that it is possible to discern what that purpose is; to seek connection with the inner self (the spirit, as opposed to the outer self, the ego); to seek connection with God and with the world around one, both natural and human; and to experience transcendence (meaning seeing how one fits into the bigger picture). The year will progress from inward to outward, focusing on "me" issues first, then progressing to "God" issues, and then examining "community and world" issues.

Regardless of the format (lectionary-based or topic-based) you have chosen, the weekly lessons in *Making it Real and Relevant* follow the same structure. The curriculum is designed to address multiple learning styles by incorporating small group and general group discussion, movie clips, music, current events and a variety of interactive activities to bring Bible readings to life. Through this varied style of presentation, youth can explore God, Jesus, the Bible, their faith and values in ways that show them how real and relevant these topics are in their lives. The curriculum is sectioned into four parts: an "Opener," "The Heart of the Lesson," "Wrapping it Up," and a "Closing." The "Opener" is primarily used to bring everyone's attention to the class and the topic being studied. "The Heart of the Lesson" and "Wrapping it Up" offer the substance of the class, and the "Closing" allows youth the opportunity to reflect on the discussion and readings for the class. The lessons are designed to be usable for small (2-6 students) or large (7 or more students) classes, and directions are included in each lesson plan for leaders of groups of both sizes.

There will be two opportunities for outreach during the year. The lessons during the seasons of Advent and Lent suggest projects and build in time to work on those projects, since they are perfect times to be thinking about how we can be more Christ-like as we remember why Christ was born into this world and why he died and rose again.

Some Words About Time and Discussion

Timing

Making it Real and Relevant lesson plans include suggested times for each section of a lesson. Times are located in parentheses in the line below each of the lesson section headings. For example, for the first section of the lesson you will see,

Opener
(10 minutes)

These times are only suggestions, based on pilot study results. Every class is different, however. You may have a class that really enjoys discussion but is not musically inclined. In this case, you may decide to not use the music clips and to extend the discussion time. Or, you may have a group that prefers to do the opening activities or spend more time in prayer at closing than in discussion following a Bible passage or movie clip. Again, you may choose to extend the time given for the activities the students like and seem to be getting the most out of.

Consequently, you will need to decide whether or not you will follow the suggested times for each section. If you choose to follow the suggested times, plan on cutting activities and discussions off at the end of the allotted time in order to move through the whole lesson in one class. If you choose to extend the time on a section that is holding your class's attention, think about what other section of the lesson you are willing to skip or condense. You may also decide to extend a lesson over two Sundays because the class is finding a lot to talk about or is taking time to absorb concepts being presented.

Discussion Questions

Making it Real and Relevant makes use of discussion questions following movie clips, Bible passage readings, music clips, and some activities. The questions are designed to get conversation rolling. There are often more discussion questions than you will have time to cover, so think about the questions that will be most meaningful for your group, and start with those questions first. You may also find there are questions not listed in the curriculum that would be appropriate for your unique group. You are encouraged to add questions as you would like. Remember that when asking questions, frame your questions so that students are required to give more than a "yes" or "no" answer. One way to do this is to ask students, "Why?" or, "Explain your reasoning."

Sometimes the conversation that develops from a discussion question will lead away from the original topic. As long as it is a topic of relevance to the spiritual growth and moral and faith development of your youth, allow the conversation to have a life of its own. It is amazing what can be learned and discovered when you get "off track." If you wish to cover a certain number of the discussion questions, you can place a time limit on "off track" conversations that develop out of a discussion and move the class back on topic by introducing the next question.

Some Words About Multimedia

This curriculum makes use of popular movie and music clips and information from recent world events. Therefore, it is very important that you, the instructor, take the time before class to familiarize yourself with what will be seen or heard in class. To save yourself from unpleasant or uncomfortable surprises, always have your movie clip cued up before you start class and watch it before you show it to your students. G, PG and PG-13 rated movies are the primary resources for video clips, but occasionally an R-rated movie (such as *The Matrix*) will have a scene that is too good not to use. The clips shown in class will be acceptable for any audience; however, unacceptable content may be in the preceding or following scenes, which is why it benefits you to know what is happening around your clip before you show it and why you should have the scene cued up ahead of time.

When you receive the curriculum for each quarter, a separate page listing all the movie and music clips will be included so that you can plan ahead. Most classes will make use of either a video clip or a music clip. Sometimes lessons will have both music and video and occasionally there will be neither. My advice is to save money on the music and either burn the clips yourself or find a tech-savvy youth who can burn these clips onto one CD for you from sites such as Napster, I Tunes etc. You can rent videos, borrow from church members who are movie fans, or purchase used videos inexpensively through sites such as amazon.com or a local video store. If the software is available to do so, you can burn a DVD with the movie clips in order ahead of time as well.

When you are preparing for classes that include music clips please consider making copies of the lyrics available for youth; sites such as www.christianlyricsonline.com or www.lyricsondemand.com offer lyrics for free. All you have to do is cut and paste the lyrics into a separate document and then photocopy the lyrics for the youth to follow along when you play music clips. I highly recommend doing this because this music is chosen for the lyrics—no matter how good the music is, there is always a point where words get lost because of the drums, guitars, or poor annunciation on the singer's part. When the youth don't hear the lyrics, they lose part of the meaning of the lesson. It is also helpful to have lyrics to refer back to when discussing the song after playing it.

Finally, current events do not stay current for long. If you find something that fits with the lesson plan that is more current than the plan suggests, use it! For example, at the time of this writing, Hurricane Katrina had just devastated the Gulf States. Lessons that may have used 9/11 or the tsunami as examples or discussion starters will have much more impact if they refer to Hurricane Katrina.

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Some portion of each class will be devoted to group discussion. Therefore, facilitators should go into the first class with some goals regarding group discussion rules and building trust and a sense of community in a group. Here are some things to think about:

Respect is the key to making a discussion format work.

Respect silence. Let silence happen after a question. Respect the students' need to ponder a question, to have the time to think about how they want to put words together, to let the Holy Spirit go to work in that space of silence. The first ten seconds after a question has been asked can be the most anxious ten seconds a group leader will endure. Please endure! Curb the inclination to fill the silent space with your thoughts and reflections. This class is about their thoughts and reflections—let them own the silence.

Respect for each other is also important. There will be talkative youth and silent youth. You'll know pretty quickly who is not going to talk in your class, but there will inevitably be a class that strikes a spark for the silent one; make sure that the ones who like to talk respect the right of all other group members to speak.

Along that line, remember to *temper your enthusiasm*. It's good to have examples from your life experiences to share that encourage discussion, but try to keep your input to a minimum.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, respect each other by making it clear to the group before you start the lesson that personal reflections offered during class stay within the group and are not to be shared with people outside of class. Nothing kills trust in a group more quickly than having something personal and private shared with the world. *Show respect for each other by fostering trust.*

If you find typos, errors, activities that went "splat," or if you or your youth have suggestions for music clips or opener activities and games, please email me so that I may continue to improve upon this work in progress. If you find things that go exceptionally well, I'd love to know that too! My email address is included below. Please put "real and relevant suggestions" in the subject line so I don't mistake it for junk or infected mail.

Thank you!

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SAMPLE
(Topic 1 [At Ground Level: Creation to
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Along that line, remember to *temper your enthusiasm*. It's good to have examples from your life experiences to share that encourage discussion, but try to keep your input to a minimum.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, respect each other by making it clear to the group before you start the lesson that personal reflections offered during class stay within the group and are not to be shared with people outside of class. Nothing kills trust in a group more quickly than having something personal and private shared with the world. *Show respect for each other by fostering trust.*

If you find typos, errors, activities that went "splat," or if you or your youth have suggestions for music clips or opener activities and games, please email me so that I may continue to improve upon this work in progress. If you find things that go exceptionally well, I'd love to know that too! My email address is included below. Please put "real and relevant suggestions" in the subject line so I don't mistake it for junk or infected mail.

Thank you!

Heidi K.E. Hawks

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Week 1: Creation
Focus Reading
Genesis 2

Overview

Creating: God created humans from ground. What does it mean to know that you were created by God? One of the many ways we are like God is that we have the ability to be creative too. What are the responsibilities of the Creator (you or God)?

Opener

(10 minutes)

After students arrive and before you begin the lesson, take a moment to welcome everyone, introduce all the leaders, and then explain some group rules. A list of suggested group rules is at the end of the lesson. Make sure everyone understands that what students say in group doesn't leave the group. Ask if anyone has any other group rules they would like to be considered. If there are reasonable suggestions, add them to the rules, and then post the rules on a wall. Please make sure these rules are posted on a regular basis, so that newcomers will be aware of how this group operates.

Start the class with an ice breaker game. If students are not already familiar with each other, play a circle game such as Alphabet Summer. Each student starts out by introducing him/herself (Hi, I'm _____). Then they have to state something they did this summer in one sentence. The sentence will begin with a specified letter of the alphabet. The student to the right of the student who just spoke then introduces him/herself, and states something they did this summer, starting with the next letter of the alphabet. Students will complete the alphabet; if you go around the circle and still have alphabet letters to go, on the second round, students say, "Hi, I'm," and the rest of the group has to say his or her name. Start the game with the letter "H." To add some excitement to the game, time the group and tell them they have to get from "H" to "G" in 4 minutes (10 seconds to respond per letter). You might consider having a box of donuts waiting to present to the group as a reward for completing the Alphabet circle within the time limit.

Here's an example of how the game might go:

"Hi, my name's Jessica. Hawaii was a great way to spend a week with my family this summer."

"Hi, my name's Fred. I didn't do anything special, but I did

Supplies

"Top 7 Rules for Great Group Discussions" located at end of lesson

Sculpey Clay: enough for half a packet (packets come in 4- two inch long sections) per student. Have a variety of colors available.

Sandwich bags in which to store completed Sculpey Clay objects

Sharpie Pens (permanent ink markers)

Movie clip from *Spiderman 2*

Steven Curtis Chapman's song, "All Things New," from the album, *All Things New*

Optional: Make copies of lyrics so that students can follow along

spend 8 hours a day playing Xbox.”

“Hi, my name’s Todd. Just saw Pirates of the Caribbean 15 times.”

... when you get to “Z,” the next letter will be “A.” You will go through letter “G.”

The Heart of the Lesson

(30 minutes)

The topic for this month lays the groundwork for the rest of the year. Because it is about laying groundwork, we’re going to base our discussions around stories that are of the ground this month. This week’s lesson starts at the beginning, as all good programs should!

Before getting started with the lesson, make the Sculpey Clay available to the students and explain that we are beginning a month long project. Have them take two sections of Sculpey Clay and tell them that today they are to create a unique object out of their Sculpey Clay. Their only directions are that the object must be complete in 5 minutes.

- While students are beginning their Sculpey Clay miniature projects, read aloud Genesis 2:4-23.
- After you finish reading, ask the youth,
- What did God create in this passage?
- Did Adam create anything? (answer: names of animals)
- What are some things that God created that are not mentioned in this second chapter of Genesis? (refer to chapter 1. If you are getting no response, read chapter 1 aloud. This is also a creation story, but biblical scholars believe that the first chapter of Genesis was written by a different writer than the writer of the second chapter of Genesis. Thus, when you read the first two chapters of Genesis, you are actually reading two different stories about the creation of the world.)
- In Genesis 1:26, God states that humans have been created in God’s image. What do you suppose that means? How are we like God?

Hand out plastic sandwich bags and have students close their clay creations up in the bags, then write their names on the bags with a Sharpie pen and set them aside or turn them in to the instructor. Tell them that they will be spending a little more time on their creations next week, then move on to the video clip.

In the movie, *Spiderman*, Uncle Ben tells Peter Parker, aka. Spiderman, that great responsibility comes with great power. In *Spiderman II*, Peter Parker witnesses the responsibilities of a creator when Dr. Otto creates computerized mechanical arms that attach to his body and brain.

Play the clip of the movie, starting at 33:30 (chapter 16 on DVD) when Dr. Otto welcomes his guests to witness the demonstration of the new arms, and ending at 38:19 when Dr. Otto shouts, "No!"

- After the clip, ask:
- Besides creating, what else should a creator do?
- One of the ways that God created us in God's image was by making us all creative beings. What responsibilities, according to what we know in the Bible and what we know of God, does the creator have? Does the creator have any responsibilities to the creation? Why or why not?
- What are some things that people create? What are their responsibilities to those creations?
- What does it mean to have great responsibility when one has great power?
- Have you ever created something you were really proud of? What was it? What did you do with your creation?
- Does the creation have any obligations to the creator? What are instances when the creation has an obligation to the creator?
- Do you agree that you are created by God? What are your obligations as one of God's creations?

Wrapping It Up

(7 minutes)

Play Steven Curtis Chapman's song, "All Things New" from the album, *All Things New*.

Tip...It is strongly recommended that when you play music clips, make lyrics available for youth to read as they listen. Sometimes the background music soars over the lyrics or the singer does not announce clearly, which makes it difficult to understand the words. You can save time and eye strain from retyping lyrics off the CD insert by copying them from a website such as

<http://www.christianlyricsonline.com/artists/steven-curtis-chapman/all-things-new.html>

Following the song, ask:

- What are some of the ways that God creates, according

- to this song?
- Does God only create things from scratch/ out of nothing? (Answer: No- God takes what has been made and remakes it when it has been broken or damaged)
 - What are some things that God remakes?
 - What does the title “All things New” mean? (Answer: Not just that God creates new things, but that God has the ability to give things fresh starts, to wipe the slate clean)
 -

Closing

(2-3 minutes)

Before closing with prayer, thank the youth for joining you, and invite them to take notice of all the things that have been created either by God or by humankind as they go through the week. If they appreciate any of the creations, they might consider taking a quiet moment at the end of the day before they go to sleep to thank God for what God created, and for the ability to be creative.

Here is an optional prayer if you are not comfortable with spontaneous prayer:

Almighty God,

Our creator and inspiration, thank you for the opportunity to take part in new beginnings, to exercise our ability to be creative beings, and to recognize your presence and creativity in everything around us. Remind us, as we continue through our lives, that being a creative being also carries responsibilities, and help us to live into our responsibilities with grace, commitment, hope and love, all things that you have shown us how to do through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Space For Notes

Top 7 Rules For Great Group Discussions

Maintain Confidentiality.
What is shared in the group remains in the group.

Contribute to the group's well-being by offering prayer, positive feedback and support.

Listen with compassion.

Encourage questions.

Agree to disagree respectfully.

Welcome silence. Don't be afraid of it.

Only one person may speak at a time.

Week 2: Re-Forming: Mistakes and Dealing with The Results

Focus Reading

Jeremiah 18:1-12

Overview

God is like the potter, who creates with clay. If what the potter has created doesn't work right, the clay is soft, malleable and can be squashed back together and reformed. Out of the mistakes and failures can come something beautiful. When have you made a mistake or failed at something and found that redoing your error produced something better than you had even imagined?

Opener

(10 minutes)

No Going Back!

Before class, photocopy the two mazes at the end of this lesson. Mix the two puzzles into one stack of paper so that some students get one puzzle and others get the second puzzle in a random order when you hand them out. As students arrive, direct them to finish the maze, following the directions at the top of the puzzle page. Have colored pencils or pens with different colors of ink (not markers, the maze lines are too narrow) available.

Give students 5 to 7 minutes to complete the maze. At the end of that time, tell them to stop. If they have not finished and are of the personality type that needs to finish what has been started (which we'll talk about in a few weeks in Topic 2☺) let them know that they can finish it at a later point or they can take it with them.

After students stop working the mazes, ask them,

- Were you able to complete the puzzle without going back and retracing your steps?
- What happened when you made a mistake or made a wrong turn?
- Was anyone tempted to just continue on without going back? Draw through a few walls?
- How many of you made mistakes because you checked with someone sitting next to you to see what they were doing, only to find out that they were working a different puzzle?
- If you finished the maze, how did you feel when you got to the other side? If you didn't finish the maze, how did you feel to get as far as you did?

The Heart Of The Lesson

(25 minutes)

Today we're going to talk about making mistakes and fixing them, or, using the words of a potter, we are going to talk about re-forming. Hand out the Sculpey clay creations that the youth made the week before. Have the students look at their objects, and explain that now that they've had a week away from their creation, they get to look at it with fresh eyes and see where there are flaws in their creation that they

Supplies

Variety of colored pencils or colored pens (not markers).

Copies of "No Going Back" mazes found at end of lesson

Sculpey clay objects from previous week

Extra Sculpey clay for newcomers

Clip from *Failure to Launch*

"I So Hate Consequences"
By Relient K, from the *mmHmm* album

Copies of lyrics for each student to be able to follow along with the music

would like to fix. If that means that they don't like the way their object turned out, they can squish it and start over again. If there are students present who weren't in class last week, give them Sculpey clay and invite them to create an object.

While they are working their clay, read the passage for today, Jeremiah 18:1-12. When you are finished reading, ask:

- What does Jeremiah have to say about making mistakes?
- What happens if the potter makes a mistake and rather than fixing it, leaves the error and completes his project?
- Are there times in life when leaving the mistake alone is the best thing to do? Give examples.
- What usually happens if you don't go back and fix your mistakes? Give examples from your life.

Here's an example of the making mistakes and the consequences of not fixing them when you make them. In today's video clip from *Failure to Launch*, Matthew McConaughey a 30 something single adult who moved in with his parents after his fiancé died. His parents hire Paula to pretend a romance with Tripp in order to encourage him to get out of his holding pattern and move on with his life—and out of their house. Paula, who has made a career of helping men find their self-esteem and become independent, finds out after she has been "dating" Tripp why he moved back with his parents, and at the same time discovers she loves him. She realizes she has made a big mistake in pretending to be his girlfriend and decides she has to tell him the truth, but she doesn't get the chance to tell him before he finds out on his own. In this scene, Tripp tells his parents and Paula that he knows they've all been lying to him and walks out.

The clip starts at 59:23 (Chapter 9 on DVD) where Tripp is in the kitchen making dinner. It ends at 1:04:17 when Tripp walks out of the dining room.

After the clip is over, ask:

- Both Tripp's parents and Paula are guilty of making a mistake that they did not fix; Tripp's parents hired someone to pretend a romance with him in order to get him to move out rather than just talking to him, and Paula pretended to be his girlfriend. Have you ever done something, or known someone else to do something, that you knew was wrong? How hard was it to go back and fix the mistake or admit to being wrong? Explain your answers.
- When you've done something wrong, did you do it because it was easier to do it, as it was for Tripp's parents, than it was to do the right thing? After you had to go back and fix the mistake, which would have been easier—doing it right the first time or fixing the mistake? Explain your answer.
- Sometimes the mistakes we make are not simple to fix; they involve hurting other people. Can you think of a time when you made a mistake that hurt someone else, or you were hurt because

Space For Notes

someone else made a mistake? Hurt can be mental, emotional, physical, or social. How much harder is it to fix these kinds of mistakes? Why?

- Think back to the maze we did earlier. How is doing the maze like doing life?
- Where is God in reforming our lives after we make mistakes?
- What is your understanding of God's attitude toward the mistakes we, as Christians, make? (you may need to direct students toward the discussion of the saving role of Jesus Christ).

Wrapping It Up

(10 minutes)

We are going to wrap up with a song by Relient K.

Tip...this is one of those songs where it is good to have lyrics in hand: the words are delivered rapidly and meanings can be missed if the words aren't there to read. Lyrics can be found at such sites as www.christianlyricsonline.com

Play the song, "I So Hate Consequences" from Relient K's album, *mmHm*.

- Have you ever felt like the person in this song, where you know you messed up but you are afraid to face the consequences, so you just keep avoiding or running from the situation? What happens when you do finally face the consequences? How do you feel afterwards?
- How does the singer feel when he stops running and faces God?
- What is God's reaction? Have you ever received a similar response?

Closing

(2-3 minutes)

Close with prayer. If you are not comfortable with spontaneous prayer, here is a prayer to use:

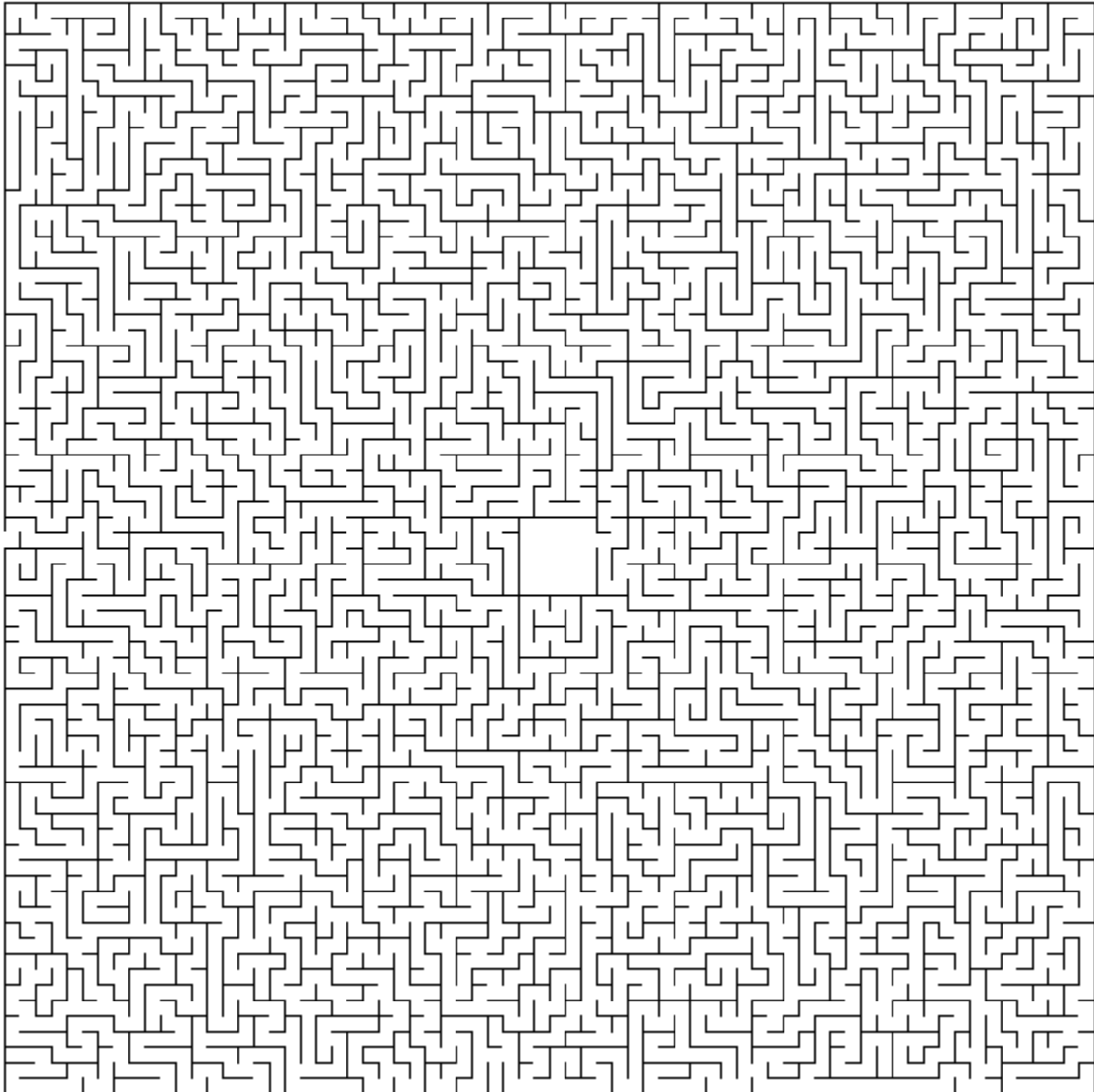
Almighty One,

While you have created us in your image, you did so out of dirt and clay. Your spirit was breathed into us, so that we could be like you, and yet we beings created out of ground are prone to error, failure, bad judgment calls, and acting on impulse. We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes, your strength to help us turn and face them, and your wisdom to help us correct them. Most of all, we thank you for your enveloping love that soothes us, fills us with hope, and gives us the courage to reform our lives. We go forward now as beings striving to become more and more Christ-like as we continue on the great adventure you have set before each of us. Amen

Space For Notes

No Going Back

Instructions: Starting either at the left side entrance or the middle square, work your way through this puzzle. The trick here is to keep your pen or pencil on the page until you reach a dead end. Each time you reach a dead end, figure out where your error was, then take another color pen or pencil and start tracing your way through the maze again.

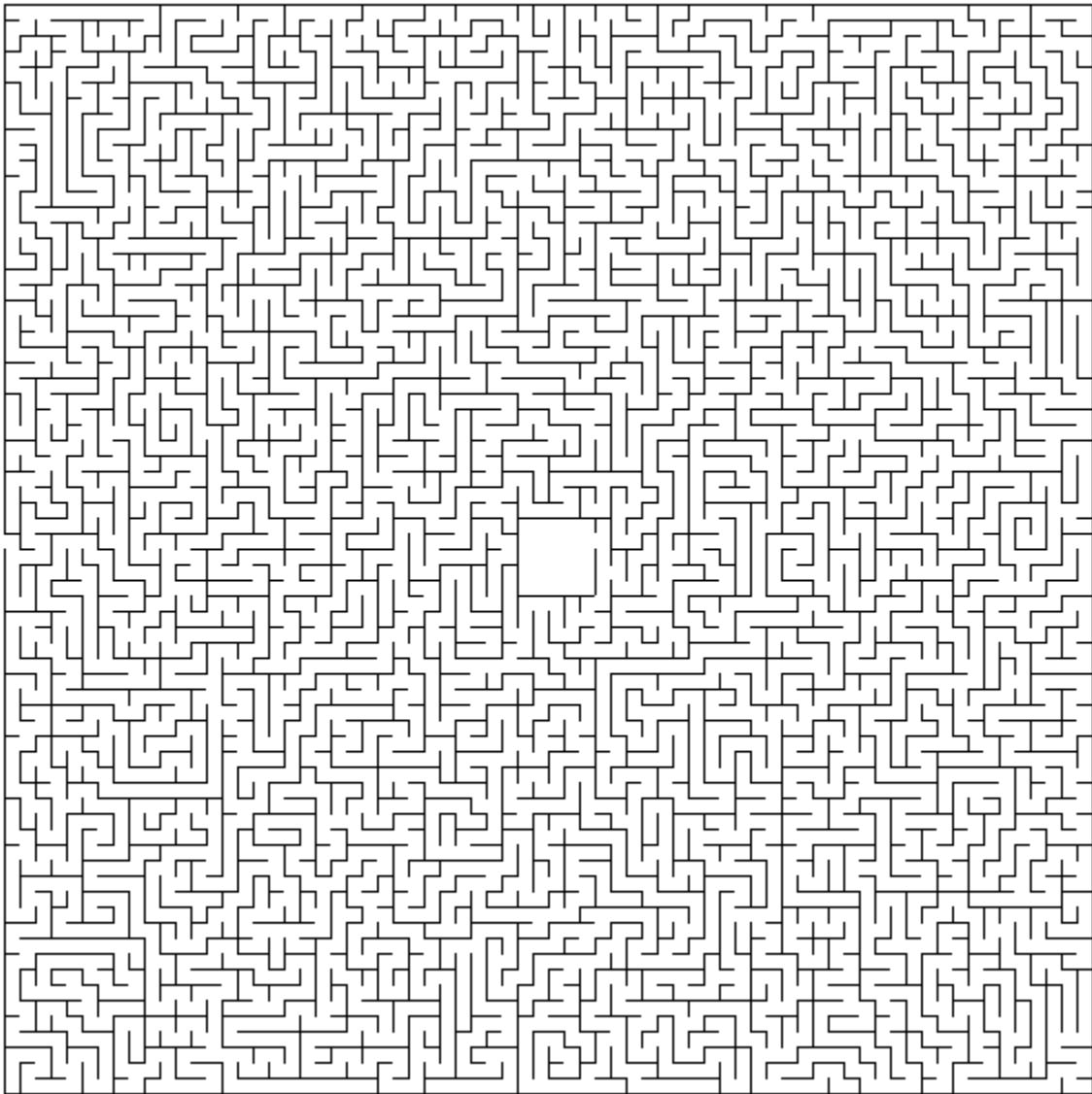


This puzzle was generated at www.puzzlemaker.com, found at DiscoverySchool.com



No Going Back

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This puzzle was generated at www.puzzlemaker.com, found at www.DiscoverySchool.com



Week 3 Transforming

Focus Reading

John 9:1-12; Luke 19:1-10

Overview: Transforming

Jesus transformed a man's life by using a mud pack to change how the man saw things. Have you ever experienced transformation, where something happened that changed how you looked at or saw something? Is there somewhere in your life that needs transforming now?

Opener

(10 minutes)

This week is packed with activities and discussion topics. You may want to read ahead and choose what you'd like to do in the time frame you have available, and what you will not have time to do.

There are several options for the opener this week.

- You can go to www.eyetricks.com and print a picture of a 3D stereogram image (this choice is in a column on the left hand side of the page).
- You can do some kind of magic trick where something is changed into something else.
- You can pick up a package of Magic Rocks (the pieces of rock that turn into the neat crystal formation when put in a water solution) at a toy store, kid's aisle of a drug store or variety store or science/discovery store.
- You can pick up a pack of the "pills" that when put in water, grow into a sponge animal or figure.
- My favorite suggestion is to bring the ingredients for homemade slime in and let the youth make their own stuff that, as long as they are moving it, stays solid, but once they stop moving it, it turns liquid. A great transformation lesson. A recipe for slime is at end of this lesson.

If you go with any of the first suggestions, please read the directions ahead of time and see if there is any advance preparation to do. For instance, the Magic Rocks take 6 hours to complete, but if you treat the experiment like a TV cooking show, where you show the process of making the product while having the finished product ready to display, you will still be able to make your point about how transformation works.

After youth arrive and are settled, open your class with one of the above demonstrations of transformation. If you do the

Supplies

Supplies for the opener you choose to use

Optional:
3 copies of Zacchaeus script, downloaded from website

Clip from the movie, *Maid in Manhattan*

slime, have sandwich bags available for youth to store their slime after they've made it.

One of the key things we'd like to get across is that transformation occurs because an agent of change occurs that transforms the original object into something else, whether completely different or just slightly different. In the opening experiment choices, the agent of change could be water or it could be changing how we look at something, as in the 3-D pictures. Ask the youth:

- What made the thing being observed change from what it was into something different?

The Heart Of The Lesson

(30 minutes)

We're going to look at two stories of transformation today. The transformation we are talking about is the kind that happens within each of us. Sometimes transformations are profound, miraculous, life-changing events (Jesus heals the blind man); at other times, they are quiet happenings that seem to tip the scale for change (Zacchaeus).

Read John 9: 1-12, where Jesus heals the blind man. After you or a volunteer has read, ask:

- What is the transformation here?
- What did Jesus use to make the transformation happen?
- Did this transformation just give the man sight, or did it do something more?
- Have you ever experienced a time where you felt like your eyes had suddenly been opened and you were seeing things clearly for the first time? What caused the change you experienced?

Now read Luke 19:1-10 when Jesus meets Zacchaeus. This story is a little harder to recognize as a transformation scene, but there is an excellent, very brief script that you can download freely at <http://bobsnook.org/stg/nt/zaccheus.htm> It has three parts, Zacchaeus, his wife, and Jesus (there are also some additional non-speaking parts). Have the youth act out the script, then ask:

- What is the transformation that takes place in Zacchaeus' story?
- Is there more than one transformation taking place in the story you just acted out? What are the other transformations?
- How did the transformations occur? For Zacchaeus? For his wife?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you suddenly

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realize that something within you has changed; perhaps how you look at something or how you understand someone?

Alternate choice to reading Zacchaeus:

If you would prefer a video clip to reading the script of Zacchaeus, try two clips from *Maid in Manhattan*. Each clip portrays a different kind of transformation that Marissa (Jennifer Lopez) experiences as a maid who falls in love with a high profile man entering the race for Senate. Of course, the man doesn't know the woman he met and is falling for is a maid either, which is the problem the movie has to resolve.

In the meantime, in the first clip, Marissa is being transformed, like Cinderella, by her friends to go off to a party with the soon-to-be senator. The transformation from maid to wealthy woman of equal social "class" as the senator is Marissa's first transformation. The clip starts at 1:07:54 (chapter 18) as the women are holding up clothes to try on and ends at 1:11:57 when Marissa says, "So are you."

The second clip is an inner transformation. Marissa has just been fired from her job, has borne the humiliation of having the senator-elect find out who she is and then has had the press witness their breakup; she is returning home to where her mother and son await her. The clip starts at 1:27:57 with her walking into her house, and ends at 1:30:36 when she closes the door on her mother.

After the clips play, ask:

- Marissa experiences two transformations. What are they? (Answer: she gets to wear beautiful clothes, and she realizes that she's just as deserving of good things happening to her as anyone else; as a management person in a hotel, or as the girlfriend of a senator)
- Which transformation is more important? Why?
- What caused the transformations to happen? (Answer: friends, and a change in how she thinks of herself, brought about probably because a wealthy, smart, successful man has shown her that she can be much more than she allows herself to be).
- Sometimes when people experience transformation, the people around them are afraid of change, like Marissa's mother is when Marissa tells her she wants more than to be just a house cleaner. How hard is it to make changes when the people around you don't agree with or are afraid of the changes you are making?

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- Have you ever experienced inner change? What caused it? How supportive were the people around you? Was God involved in your transformation?
- Are there areas in your life where you know you need to change but are afraid to do so? How can you overcome your fear of change?

Wrapping It Up

(5-10 minutes)

Pass out the Sculpey creations from last week. Tell students that just as we can experience transformation, as creative beings we are also able to be agents of change—to cause transformation. Give the youth each an additional segment of Sculpey clay, and tell them that they have until the end of the period to act as agents for change, transforming their object into something special; they do not have to start all over again, but can simply add or change some of the aspects of their object.

Closing

(2-3 minutes)

Close with prayer. Here's one for those of you who don't like to pray spontaneously:

Our Father in Heaven,

You have created us to be formed, reformed and to be transformed so that we may better experience your wondrous love and help others to do the same. We thank you for the moments of transformation that we have experienced already in our lives; grant us the inner strength and peace to accept the changes you desire for us as we grow in our spiritual knowledge and understanding. We ask this too for those whom we love, so that they may recognize the changes that you cause and be supportive of your will, rather than fearful of change. Finally, we thank you for the gift of your son, whose transformation has given us all grace and salvation. In your holy name we pray.
Amen.

Space For Notes

To Make Homemade Slime:

Two bowls to mix ingredients in
Borax (found in the laundry aisle)
Water
Food coloring
Ziploc sandwich bags
Measuring spoons
White Elmer's glue in a bottle (or generic brand of Elmers)

Mix together 3/4 cup warm water, 1 cup glue, and several drops green food coloring in the first bowl.

Mix 4 teaspoons Borax and 1 1/3 cups warm water (this probably will not dissolve completely-that's ok)

Pour the first bowl into the second. Don't stir; it will congeal. After about 30 seconds, you can pull the slime out of the bowl and divide it up among the students.

Youth can play with it, and when done, store it in a plastic Ziploc bag. Warn them that it is not safe to eat slime (the Borax is toxic only in very large doses, so it's not really a problem, but be sure to keep it away from babies and pets). Also, if they'd like it to last any amount of time, tell them to wash their hands before playing with it; that way it doesn't grow mold. Finally, wash hands after using it; it does have glue in it and it will get sticky on some materials.

Alternative Version of Homemade Slime:

Another version of slime is to simply mix one part water with two parts corn starch. Stir the two ingredients together and add additional water as needed. The consistency desired is one in which the cornstarch feels like a liquid while standing, but tries to form a solid when stirring. Drop some drops of the solution on the table and then try to wipe it up with your finger. While it looks like a liquid, when you try to push it or wipe it up, it becomes a solid.

Space For Notes

Week 4: Creating, Reforming, Transforming the World

Focus Reading

Acts 19:1-19

Overview God, in creating us in God's image, has given us the abilities to be creative, to reform and to transform our lives. These abilities can change the world. How can we make change happen with these three gifts?

Opener

(15-20 minutes)

"An Ideal World"

What would be different if we lived in an ideal world? After the youth have arrived, tell them to split up (if your class is large enough, split into small groups of 3-5 members; if not, do this as one group) and have the small groups brainstorm something that could change the world, making it the ideal world-something like having enough water available for everyone; for free.

Give students 2 or 3 minutes to choose a topic, then have them brainstorm a way that their life-changing event could be made possible. Tell them to try to be realistic, but also understand that humans are creative beings and new inventions are being thought up every day. If they have to come up with a new invention in order to make change happen, that's fine.

Give them 5 to 10 minutes to come up with their answer to one of the world's problems (if only it were that easy!) before bringing them back as a large group and sharing with the rest of the group their problem and their solution.

As they share, on a large sheet of paper divided into two columns, write down the problem that is being resolved in the left column, and what it takes to make change happen in the right (what causes transformation?).

Ask,

- Do you think it is possible for these things to happen? Why or why not?

Now have youth suggest some things that have happened in the past 1000 years that have transformed the world into what it is today. (The creation of the Scientific Method; discovery of bacteria, viruses, antibiotics, electricity, dehydrated food, space exploration, nuclear energy, telephone, cell phone, computer, paper, fuel combustion engine to name a few.)

Supplies

Flip chart paper or similar size paper

Markers to write on flip chart

CD of
3rd Day's song,
"Love Song" from
Offerings

Copies of lyrics for each student to be able to follow along with the music

As they suggest things that have transformed the world, write down on your sheet of paper what was changed in the left column, and in the right, how it was changed, just as you have already done with their ideas about how to make change happen in the future.

After you get several ideas written down, ask:

- We've got a good list of things that have transformed or could transform the world. Looking at this list, what does it take to make a transformation happen? (Answer: it takes creativity to think up new ideas, it takes someone doing something or acting to make the transformation take place)

The Heart Of The Lesson

(20 minutes)

Not only does transformation happen as outside, physical things, transformation that changes the world also happens on the inside.

Ask:

- How did Jesus transform the world? (add the answers to this on the sheet of paper)

Besides the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, another person, Paul, was also an agent of transformation. Read the story of Paul's conversion found in Acts 19:1-19. When you have finished, ask:

- What is the transformation that occurs in this story? (answer- Jesus appears to Saul and converts him)
- How does this transformation change the world? (You may have to help with this one—Paul spent his life taking the message outside of Israel, to the rest of the world. Because of Paul, Christianity spread throughout the Mediterranean world. Many of the letters we read in the Bible are written by Paul or are attributed to Paul— they are all letters to communities in other countries that he had traveled to in order to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ).
- How has your faith and your belief in God transformed your life? Remember that many people do not have the extreme conversion experiences that Paul did. Many of us, who were perhaps born and raised in one set of faith values, experience quieter transformations. Perhaps you were on a mission trip and suddenly realized how God is so very present in the world, or you understood for an instant that what you were doing was helping other people in ways you had never imagined. So, when we ask, how has your faith changed your life, think about things you would be doing right now (besides sleeping in) if you did not believe in God or Jesus Christ.

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In the right hand column of your sheet of paper, write the name of your class (Senior High Sunday School at _____Church).

Place a ? in the left hand column. Ask the students,

- What will we do to transform our part of the world?

Explain that during Advent (December), we are going to take time to do a transformation project; we can change the lives of one family, many families, a community, our church community, whatever we want to do, In coming weeks, we will take time to talk about what our transformation project will be. For now, start thinking about ways in which we can make transformation happen in small or large ways.

Wrapping It Up

(5 minutes)

Set out a baking sheet with tinfoil lining the bottom. Hand out the clay creations the youth have been working with for the past three weeks. Invite them to take their objects and join them together on the cookie sheet, merging the objects into a kind of collage that forms the shape of the cross or some other Christian symbol. Try not to completely lose the shape of the individual objects as you merge them with each other. Explain that when they are pressed together into one object, you will bake the clay model and it can remain in the youth room as a reminder of our creative, reforming and transforming abilities that have been bestowed upon us by God.

Closing

(3-5 minutes)

Depending on the time available, either play "Love Song" by 3rd Day from their *Offerings* album while youth are putting their clay creation together, or if you have time, let them complete their project and then have them sit and listen to the song. Lyrics can be found at most Christian lyrics websites, should you decide to provide lyrics for them to read along with.

Directions for baking Sculpey clay

Sculpey clay bakes in a 200 degree oven for 20 to 30 minutes. Directions should be on the package cover. Before baking, make sure that pieces are pressed together; otherwise, they will not stick and you will have to dab pieces that didn't bake together with craft glue. You can mount a hanger in the back of the object before baking, or you can mount it in a shadow box/deep frame.

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