

Teaching Guide for
Making Decisions

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The characteristics for young people listed on page 9 are from a study by the Search Institute as reported in "Characteristics of Early Adolescent Growth," a handout compiled by John Roberto and Brian B. Reynolds (Naugatuck, CT: Center for Youth Ministry Development, n.d.).

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Introduction



THIS COURSE AND THE DISCOVERING PROGRAM

The Discovering Program consists of fourteen six-session courses for use with middle school or junior high students. This one, *Making Decisions*, invites students to deepen their awareness of themselves as maturing Catholic Christians.

In our society young adolescents are given frequent opportunities to take on greater responsibility for their life. For example, middle schools and junior high schools presuppose that they are ready to assume more responsibility for their own class schedule. Young adolescents are expected to meet the demands of an ever widening circle of influence, such as in jobs and on increasingly competitive teams. In large urban or consolidated rural schools, they are expected to learn from many teachers in a maze of classrooms. And though some school systems provide for a gradual and relatively smooth transition to senior high school, this move is often a jolting one for many young adolescents.

As young people venture into broader worlds, they still most value the stable institutions that have generally served them well—their home, their church, and their school—and they seek refuge in and guidance from those institutions. Nonetheless, they may also try on new styles, follow new models, test limits, and attempt to disguise their need for the acceptance and clear, firm, understanding guidance of adults. This course offers young people a forum in which to explore the myriad facets of decision making and presents them with the durable, cherished values of the church.

This course is most effective if it is offered after the students have had an opportunity to explore the dynamics of their own physical and emotional growth and of their relationships with one another. Courses in the Discovering Program that provide a strong foundation for this course are *Understanding Myself* and *Learning to Communicate*. *Becoming Friends* and *Dealing with Tough Times* can serve as excellent follow-up courses. For further help and insight into the placement of this course in the Discovering curriculum, refer to the coordinator's manual.

The content of this course lends itself to a variety of formats. It has been designed for six 1-hour sessions spread over six to twelve weeks. However, sessions can be combined for longer, less frequent meetings, such as two 3-hour sessions. The course can also function well in a weekend or overnight retreat format. The sessions themselves can be extended beyond 1 hour with the optional approaches suggested at the end of each session plan. Also consult these approaches as alternative strategies if your teaching style or the students' learning style calls for changes.

The time estimates suggested for the session steps are based on a group size of about fifteen participants. If your group has considerably more or fewer members, you may need to make minor adjustments in the session plans. This course, like all Discovering courses, works well with larger groups, but in such cases you will have less opportunity to address the students' individual contributions and needs.

BACKGROUND

The Young Adolescent and This Course

Young adolescents have just begun to stretch from childlike, here-and-now thinking to abstract thought. Many can now reason on the basis of possibilities rather than being restricted to what they experience. This ability puts them in good stead as they ask why not, why, and what if. However, a group of typical seventh or eighth graders will display as much as a four-year span in physical and cognitive maturity. This means that some students in your group will likely be quite comfortable dealing with abstractions, while others will likely be much less so. For that reason the activities in this course offer specific cases that call on the students' abilities to deal in the concrete as well as the abstract.

Although early adolescence is a time when young people are often able to engage in complex decision making, they frequently act impulsively and do not consider in advance the consequences of their actions or decisions.

This course allows young adolescents the time and the opportunity to practice various steps in weighing and making decisions. It allows them to hear and evaluate the reactions of their peers. Its activities and explorations provide tools for decision making and can increase the young people's confidence in their own abilities and their power to stand on their own.

Those who work with young adolescents are keenly aware that junior high religious education programs must be responsive to the needs of young people. A study conducted by the Search Institute documents the following characteristics for young people who affiliate with a church:

- Peer relationships are crucial for healthy development. In peer relationships young people teach one another about values, morality, sex roles, and control of aggression.
- The influence of peers increases during early adolescence but does not outweigh that of parents.
- Young adolescents incorporate positive values and behaviors into their life when they experience religion as a liberating force.

Throughout this course, peer, family, and church influences are clearly emphasized.

The positive value of peer relationships. During early adolescence people begin to notice and pay a great deal of attention to the values of their peers and to persuasive outside influences such as the media. Young adolescents face the task of identifying those values and the influence of those values on them. *Making Decisions* invites young adolescents to work together on this task in a setting of mutual respect. As a group the students address sensitive issues where values are in conflict, and consider difficulties they may never have thought about before. Their own ideas and behaviors, as well as those they observe in their daily life, become the content for discussion and decision making.

The values of the family. As young people discover their own power to make and be responsible for decisions, they look for guidance from mature people who hold worthwhile values. This course assumes that the students already have a fairly clear sense of right and wrong. It further assumes that they have a feel for, and some can articulate, values that their parents and they themselves hold, even though they may, at this time of experimentation, test and question those values.

The importance of positive religious experience. *Making Decisions* assumes that the students are members of the church community and attempts to help them recognize that Christians are people who try to act responsibly as members of the Body of Christ. During the sessions of this course, the content, the concerns, and the conflicts of the students' life are discussed within the context of gospel values. These values include the ones found in the four Gospels, which honor the norms of Judaism found in the Ten Commandments as well as Jesus' command of universal charity.

Although young people often know what they value and what is right, they, like all people, fail to act consistently on their knowledge. But failure,

mistakes, and sins are not irreversible. Failure and mistakes are opportunities to learn and to improve. This course shows young people that sins are failures that summon God's forgiveness and call them to reconciliation and to a deepening of compassion.

The Theology of This Course

The young people taking this course have been baptized into the death and Resurrection of Christ. They have been given the gifts of the good news of Jesus, of God's abiding love, of eternal life, and of faith. The church seeks to offer them a faith-filled environment that proclaims that God has moved toward them and that they can seize the gift of God's friendship.

These realities may not be evident to young people. Young adolescents may, in fact, be far more aware of a society that is anything but faithful, hopeful, and loving. For many young people, the local church may seem like a boring, adult gathering whose mission and ministry do not remotely interest them. For such young people, perhaps, the small assembly of students and teacher who meet to discuss, think, play, and pray together for this course can be a reminder of the church that at once comforts and challenges them.

Though the church often makes statements about morality and moral issues, this is not the great message it is called to deliver. The church is called, rather, to announce repeatedly the memorial acclamation, "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again." The task is to make that conviction of believers a reality for the students, to validate it in everyday life. In this course the students are summoned and challenged to become alert to the presence of God's grace.

This course invites young people to consider their own life—the sometimes boring, sometimes threatening, sometimes challenging occurrences of every day. It asks them to see how their life squares with the life of Christ. It urges them to place Christ at the center of their concern. It helps them to identify what makes their moral actions Christian actions.

This Course and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

All Discovering courses rely on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a primary resource and a guide to theological accuracy. The *Catechism* can also serve as a valuable source of both information and inspiration for the teacher. We encourage you to review and reflect on certain sections of the *Catechism* as you prepare to teach.

This course focuses on the students' growing self-awareness and responsibility for making decisions. It seeks to help them make decisions based on the values of Christ and of the Catholic community that supports them. The *Catechism* discusses the demands of Christian and Catholic morality in the context of our human dignity as free and responsible people, created by God, redeemed by Christ, and guided by the Holy Spirit.

The *Catechism* provides ample information about living a moral life as a Catholic. Part 3, "Life in Christ," addresses the moral life in general. The

first section of this part discusses the human vocation from the Catholic point of view, which is a major concern of this course. In paragraphs 1846 to 1853, the *Catechism* defines sin. Then, in paragraphs 2052 to 2557, it discusses the Commandments in depth. This lengthy exploration of the Commandments provides accessible information about moral issues that may come up for discussion and debate as you teach this course.

Teaching This Course

Each course in the Discovering Program consists of two components: a teaching guide like this one that fully describes the course goals, objectives, content, and session plans, and a companion student booklet. The booklet is not a conventional textbook, in that the students are never expected to read it outside of the sessions. In fact, substantial reading is never required as a regular feature of the learning process. Nor does the booklet look like a textbook; for instance, it contains no recognizable chapters as one would expect in a standard text. The student booklet for each Discovering course, rather, is to be used only in conjunction with the session plans described in the teaching guide. It is effective in this way because of the following features:

- The booklet provides a kind of running summary of the themes and essential information that are presented through the engaging session plans. This gives students a record of what they have learned in the course. It is also a helpful feature when a student misses a session; at the next session, you can ask him or her to briefly review relevant pages from the booklet.
- The booklet uses sidebars related to the main topics to draw the young people further into the material and enrich their learning. You may use the sidebars in any way that seems appropriate—perhaps as discussion-starters, topics for journal entries, or simply focal points for a brief silent reflection.
- The booklet includes an occasional personal reflection or journal-writing activity that students are asked to complete quietly on their own.
- The booklet presents activities designed for use in small groups—such as discussion-starters, role-plays, and vignettes.
- Finally, the booklet's attractive design—using original art, bold colors, interesting type, evocative photos, and so on—is intended to support the total learning process.

Student Booklet Sidebars

The student booklet includes a number of quotes, brief stories, and bits of interesting information that are not central elements of the course content. Set off graphically from the other booklet materials, these sidebars are generally not referred to in the session plans. They are included in the booklet to spark the students' interest and imagination. As you prepare for each session, reflect on the sidebars and decide if you wish to use any of them in your teaching.

Student Booklet Bound into the Teaching Guide

For your convenience and easy reference, a complete copy of the student booklet for *Making Decisions* is bound into the back of this guide. You may find it helpful to tab or mark the booklet pages related to a given session as you prepare to teach it. That will make it easy to flip back and forth between the guide and the booklet.

Student Booklet Pages in the Session Plans

As a visual aid, reduced versions of some student booklet pages are reproduced in the left-hand margin of the session plans. Such pages appear at the beginning of the related instructions. If more than one booklet page is involved in an activity, only the first of those pages is reproduced in the margin.

Prayer Experiences

Establish a prayer area within the room where you will meet with your group. This area will become a focal point for a time of prayer during each session. An enthroned Bible in a designated place in the prayer area attests to the importance of the Scriptures and of shared prayer. Items such as a candle and a plant or flowers are recommended for the enthroned Bible.

Prayer opportunities end each session. Everyone is called to prayer through simple words and actions, such as lighting a candle, moving to a new location in the room, asking for silence, or playing music conducive to silent reflection. These simple gestures help settle everyone down and center them for reflection and prayer.

The Bible

Some of the scriptural excerpts in this course are cited as adapted. Such passages generally have been adapted to make the language more accessible and to avoid exclusive language.

Teaching Strategies

Each session in *Making Decisions* is designed to help young people identify, clarify, and practice decision-making skills. The students begin with their own experience or with experiences typical of others their age. They learn how to identify their decision-making style and their motivation. They work with a three-step process for making decisions, and they grapple with gospel values against which they can measure their choices. Finally, for the times when their decisions lead to painful consequences, they explore a process that leads to reconciliation.

This course employs open-ended dilemmas, opportunities for symbolic expression and prayer, and activities that invite personal application and quiet reflection. All these approaches can help the students become more aware of and responsible for the decisions they are already making.

In leading group discussions, try to direct the more abstract questions—the why and what if questions—toward the students who are most able to handle them. On the other hand, use concrete, specific questions for those whose thinking seems less cognitively mature. Keep in mind that the young people are developing according to their own internal clock, and each of

them is capable of fully participating at his or her own level. Tailoring questions to each person at his or her level of cognitive maturity offers each an opportunity to succeed at that level.

The activities of this course occasionally explore areas that may be sensitive to the students. Assure the young people that at no time are they required—either directly or by subtle persuasion—to disclose anything they do not wish to. Also assure them that the private ideas they are asked to record in the student booklet are for their eyes only. In discussing areas of moral fault or sin, take particular precaution to keep the discussion on the issues themselves; absolutely do not mention specific persons.

Create a welcoming and comfortable environment for the group by making the room in which you meet less formal than the typical classroom with rows of desks. At the same time, keep the environment conducive to learning. For example, you might want to rearrange desks or chairs in a circle. When setting up small-team activities, try to allow enough space between teams so that they do not disturb one another. Also, when asking the students to take time out for private reflection, try to provide enough space so that they can find a truly private place they can claim as their own. Proximity is often distracting or intimidating.

Before teaching each session, read the plan and become comfortable with the learning strategies. Note the materials and preparation required. If your group is scheduled to devote more than an hour to any session, or if your teaching preference or the learning style of the students requires changes in the step procedures, consult the optional exercises suggested at the end of the session plan.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Curriculums take on greater clarity, direction, and purpose if they are described in terms of their goals and objectives. This observation is based on a commonsense principle: We have a difficult time getting somewhere if we do not know where we are going. Educators who design learning experiences must identify their destination as a first step in determining how to get there. The statement of goals and objectives is a practical way to identify the desired outcomes for a program.

In the Discovering Program, goals and objectives are used in the following ways.

Goals. Goals are broad statements of what we wish to accomplish—learning outcomes we hope to achieve. The coordinator's manual for the Discovering Program provides the goals for all the courses in the curriculum. Each course within the total program also includes a statement of its goals. The goals often have an idealistic quality, inviting the teacher to reflect on how the course relates to the personal and faith development of the young people. At the same time, the course goals are realistic, measurable, and attainable. As a teacher, at the end of the course, you should be able to look back and determine if you have in fact achieved the course goals.

Objectives. Objectives are statements that define how to get to the goals. They name specific tasks that must be accomplished if the goals are to be achieved. The coordinator’s manual identifies the objectives for each course in the curriculum. Each course, in turn, supplies a clear statement of objectives for each session in the course.

The Goals and Objectives of *Making Decisions*

Goals

The goals for this course in the Discovering Program are as follows:

- that the students understand the elements involved in making decisions
- that the students learn and apply a decision-making process grounded in Christian values and commitment
- that the students recognize and appreciate the necessity for Christ-centered reconciliation

Objectives

Each session has its own objectives, which will help realize the course goals. The objectives of *Making Decisions* that follow are phrased as tasks for the young people.

Session 1: “I Can Decide”

The students will do the following:

- identify their decision-making styles
- explore the relationship between decisions and consequences
- practice identifying consequences of decisions

Session 2: “I Am Responsible”

The students will do the following:

- understand three levels of motivation for making decisions: “me first,” “I’m afraid,” and “I’m responsible”
- follow a three-step process for making decisions

Session 3: “I Am Guided by Values”

The students will do the following:

- identify the forces that influence their decisions
- identify five values that guide their decisions
- explore the concept of the imaginary audience
- identify people in their cheering section
- understand how to handle situations that negatively influence their values and decisions

Session 4: “I Choose Christian Values”

The students will do the following:

- identify specific behaviors and attitudes that reflect Christian values
- identify the values they share with their community and culture
- recognize the relationship between their decisions and the values of the Scriptures and of the Tradition of the church

Session 5: "I Forgive and Ask Forgiveness"

The students will do the following:

- identify the Commandments as guides to leading a moral life
- identify and practice skills related to reconciliation
- recognize the place and value of forgiveness in human relationships

Session 6: "I Am on the Way"

The students will do the following:

- review the course
- identify a personal goal
- determine specific steps toward realizing that goal



SESSION

1

I Can Decide



AN OVERVIEW OF THIS SESSION

Objectives

The students will do the following:

- identify their decision-making styles
- explore the relationship between decisions and consequences
- practice identifying consequences of decisions

Session Steps

This session uses pages 1 to 4 of the student booklet and includes the following steps:

- A. the student booklet activity “It’s Up to You” and an introduction (10 minutes)
- B. the student booklet activity “Pick and Choose” (15 minutes)
- C. an exercise on identifying consequences (20 minutes)
- D. the student booklet activity “You Are at My Side” and a closing prayer (15 minutes)

BACKGROUND

Young adolescents are new at making meaningful decisions. In their elementary years, they expected adults to make most of their decisions for them. As they go through their early teens, they begin psychologically to move away from the authority figures on whom they once depended. At the same time, they move toward their peers, some of whom will question the authority of many adults they once willingly obeyed. Young people need to move into the larger world, and they do so in the company of others their age whose tastes and preferences often seem to overstate their newfound sense of independence.

Although they bring with them little experience of making independent decisions, young adolescents may not feel ill equipped to handle the challenges of the autonomy they seek. In fact, they often complain that their parents treat them like babies. Some protest that their parents never let them do or decide anything, whereas all their friends are free to do as they wish.

Responsible parents, on the other hand, frequently bemoan the lack of guidance offered to their children outside the home. They see the dangers that seem to beset junior high students, they recognize their young adolescents as vulnerable, and they often feel that they are raising their children without support.

This course opens by acknowledging that young people already make decisions and will continue to seek to participate meaningfully in choosing the direction of their life. Young people are often unaware of the degree of control they can exercise over their own life. This first session is designed to help them realize that they not only can decide, but must, and that they must decide responsibly. It also reveals that the effective exercise of the power to decide depends on one's ability to discern and then accept the consequences of decisions.

The session begins with an introduction in which the students meet the teacher and one another. The students then engage in an activity that helps them discover their decision-making style or styles. Next, they consider past decisions they have made, decisions that are over and done with but may still reverberate with consequences, perhaps as yet unacknowledged. The students first revisit these decisions and determine how they arrived at them. Then they begin an exploration of the consequences of decisions that are typically made by young adolescents.

This session aims to help the students move from a position of going along, getting along, or bumbling along to a stronger position of recognizing their own responsibility to see ahead, think ahead, and plan ahead. It guides them through the first steps toward identifying the extent to which they are in control of their decisions and the necessity of accepting responsibility for decisions and their consequences. This simple recognition and admission provides a strong foundation for the rest of this course.

The session ends by inviting the students to think about a decision they anticipate they will need to make in the near future, and asks them to place that decision in God's keeping.

PREPARATION**Materials Needed**

- blank name tags (optional)
- markers
- student booklets, one for each student
- blank self-adhesive labels, one for each student
- pens or pencils
- newsprint
- masking tape
- index cards, at least four for each student
- a Bible, a pillow or a Bible stand, a table and a cloth, a cross or a statue, a live plant or other item from nature, and a pillar candle and matches (These items are referred to in subsequent materials needed lists simply as an enthroned Bible.)
- a recording of instrumental music, and a tape or CD player (optional)

Other Necessary Preparations

Prepare to lead this session by doing the following things and checking them off as you accomplish them:

- For step C.* Prepare for a presentation on identifying consequences, as directed in step C.
- If you wish to change the procedure to better fit your teaching preferences or the learning style of your group, see the Options section at the end of this session plan.

Teacher Prayer

As part of your preparation time, consider Jesus' words "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I am here among you" (adapted from Matt. 18:20). Then offer the following prayer, or a similar one in your own words:

Lord, we will soon be gathered in your name. Sometimes I wonder, How did I get myself into this? Sometimes I think, What a wonderful opportunity! Help the students and me love and appreciate one another as we go along. Remind me not to take myself too seriously, for this is our work, yours and mine. Let us all be mindful that we are gathered in your name, and you are here among us. Amen.

PROCEDURE**A. Booklet Activity: "It's Up to You," and Introduction (10 minutes)**

1. Ready the room ahead of time and then greet the students individually as they arrive.

If the students do not know one another, use the following icebreaker: Have each student write on a name tag, using a marker, her or his name and three “favorite things” in her or his life. The students might include their favorite TV show, food, or free-time activity. Next, invite each student to introduce herself or himself and tell about her or his choices. After everyone has introduced themselves, ask whether they had a difficult time deciding what to write on their name tag.

2. Introduce this course by telling the group that in it they have an opportunity to explore many facets of decision making. If you used the icebreaker, connect that experience to the focus of the course.

3. Distribute the student booklets, blank self-adhesive labels, and pens or pencils. Tell the students to write their name on the label and stick it on the cover of their booklet. Then ask the students to turn to page 1 of the booklet, and read to them the brief course introduction titled “It’s Up to You.”

4. Point out that because this course includes opportunities for discussion, the group will need a set of ground rules to facilitate a good exchange of ideas. Solicit the students’ ideas about what rules might be required, and summarize them in positive statements. Check to see that they include the following guidelines:

- Everyone deserves respect; therefore, no put-downs are allowed.
- One person speaks at a time; everyone else listens.
- Everyone makes an effort to contribute positively to each activity.

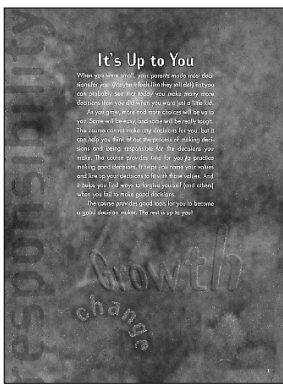
Write the guidelines on newsprint and mount the newsprint in the classroom for this and subsequent sessions.

5. Observe that the early-adolescent years are filled with important decisions about choosing friends; about participating in sports and other after-school activities; and about balancing schoolwork, free-time activities, jobs, and responsibilities around home. Tell the students that this course aims to help them become more thoughtful and responsible decision makers—and therefore happier people.

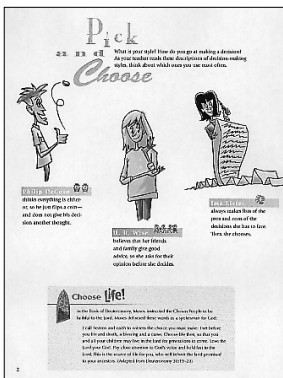
Note: Save the classroom discussion guidelines compiled in step A for the remaining sessions of the course.

B. Booklet Activity: “Pick and Choose” (15 minutes)

1. Give each student four index cards. Ask the young people to write on each card one significant decision they have made recently that relates to one of these four areas of their life: church, school, family, and friends. Urge them to think broadly and to try to identify one decision for each area. It might be necessary to distinguish decisions that are relatively important and those that are not. For example, deciding not to hang around with someone



Booklet page 1



Booklet page 2

who seems to get you in trouble is a serious decision, whereas deciding between chocolate and strawberry ice cream is not.

Give the students 2 or 3 minutes to think about and record their decisions. Consider also doing this task yourself and sharing the results with your students when appropriate.

2. Direct the students to “Pick and Choose” on pages 2 to 3 of their booklet and read aloud the descriptions of styles of decision making listed there. Be aware that the names of the decision makers in these descriptions consist of plays on words, and your inflection while reading them can bring some levity to the activity.

After reading all the descriptions, offer a simple decision-making situation and invite the students to suggest how each character would resolve it. For example, if the situation concerns what to wear to the first important school event of the year, the characters in the booklet might respond as follows:

- Philip DeCoin would just make a quick decision and not give it another thought.
- U. R. Wise would talk to an older brother or sister who knows more about putting together a wardrobe.
- Ima Lister would go at the process in an orderly way, listing the possibilities and picking one.
- C. Mefollow would find out what everybody else is wearing.
- Candy Side would trust her own taste and instincts and confidently choose.
- Willy Wait would be dithering around in his bedroom 2 minutes before the event.
- Bea A. Butterfly would keep her friends waiting while she changed from one outfit to the next.

3. After thoroughly exploring the decision-making styles, tell the students to return to the decisions they wrote on their index cards. Direct them to decide which character most accurately reflects their process for making each of those decisions. Assure them that it is all right to write down the name of a different character (reflecting a different decision-making style) for each decision.

4. To help the young people begin to see that their decision-making styles can and sometimes must change according to the decision that needs to be made, ask questions such as the following:

- ▶ Which styles seem to work best for important decisions you make?
- ▶ Which styles work best for you when you make decisions that are not so important?
- ▶ Which style does not seem to work at all for you?

Then ask questions about decision-making styles in general, such as these:

- ▶ Which styles seem the least helpful for most people? [the styles of C. Mefollow, Willy Wait, and Bea A. Butterfly]
- ▶ Which styles are okay for simple or unimportant decisions? [the styles of Philip DeCoin and C. Mefollow]

- ▶ Which styles seem better for important and complicated decisions? [the styles of U. R. Wise, Ima Lister, and perhaps Candy Side; if a student chooses Candy Side, ask her or him to explain this selection)

5. Close this discussion by observing that the students may have discovered for the first time that they have a specific decision-making style or styles, or they may have discovered reasons to question or affirm the particular style or styles they are now using. Remind them that as they grow they will be confronted by bigger and tougher decisions. Note that this course provides some strong and dependable decision-making tools that can help them become responsible choosers.

C. Exercise: Identifying Consequences (20 minutes)

Before the session. On newsprint draw a diagram like the one in the notes at the end of this session plan. For this diagram include only the circles, arrows, and plus and minus signs; do not include the sample decision and consequences. You also might want to complete a similar diagram for a sample decision of your own, in order to gain some idea of the process used in this activity.

1. Note that big decisions, such as some of those the students have just identified, are big precisely because they carry significant consequences. Be sure the young people understand that a consequence is something that follows from, or is the result of, an action or decision.

2. To prepare the students to identify individually the consequences of their own big decisions, work with them as a group to identify the consequences of a simple decision. Suggest a relatively nonthreatening decision, such as, “Get extra help in English class.” Write this decision in the large circle in the center of the diagram you prepared before class. In one of the first smaller positive (+) circles, write a positive consequence proposed by the group, such as, “My grade will improve.” In one of the first smaller negative (-) circles, write a negative consequence proposed by the group, such as, “My classmates will think I’m stupid.” From each of those consequences, elicit another set of positive and negative consequences, filling in the next set of smaller circles labeled with a plus sign and a minus sign. Continue filling in consequences, pointing out that each new consequence must result from the one immediately preceding it—that is, consequences of consequences cannot leapfrog back to the original decision.

The diagram can become as sprawling and large as time and imagination allow. The point is to engage the students in considering consequences and help them appreciate how far-reaching consequences can be.

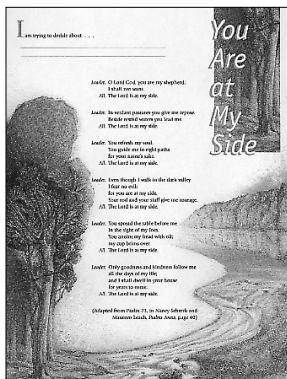
3. For further practice using this diagram, instruct the students to form small teams and find a place for their team on the floor in the room. Give each team a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Assign each team a decision

or have each team agree on one, and direct each team to create a diagram of possible consequences for that decision. Consider using or adapting these possibilities:

- ▶ Jim decides to go along with a plan to embarrass a substitute teacher during math class.
- ▶ Bill decides not to join in on a plan to embarrass a substitute teacher during English class.
- ▶ Charlotte, a seventh grader, decides to date a junior at the high school, who has his own car.
- ▶ Anna decides it is all right to swear when she's hanging out with her friends.
- ▶ Carlos decides to help his mom do the janitorial work at his school, even though he is embarrassed to be seen with her.
- ▶ Milly is the only girl who has decided to go out for the junior high hockey team.

Announce a 5-minute time limit. Emphasize that this activity is intended to help the students practice considering consequences. Circulate among the students and help those who seem to need it.

4. When time is up, tell the teams to tape their diagram on the wall, and lead a discussion of the range of consequences the teams discovered.



Booklet page 4

D. Booklet Activity: “You Are at My Side,” and Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

1. Gather the students, with their booklet and their pen or pencil, near the enthroned Bible. Briefly recall that in this session they had a chance to identify their decision-making style or styles and to learn that decisions can have many consequences that affect them and others.

2. Give each student a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Ask the students to make a decision about something they want to or think they should do, and to write that decision near the center of their newsprint. Emphasize that their decision can be one that they want to make, or it can be one that someone else—a parent, a teacher, a coach, or whoever—is urging them to make. Also emphasize that the students need not immediately act on their decision but that they can begin to think carefully about it.

Refer to the newsprint diagrams completed in step C. Direct the young people to follow the same outlining process as they privately consider the consequences of their decision. Express confidence in their ability to think through the consequences of decisions they make. Tell them they will have 5 minutes to complete this task individually.

When everyone understands the instructions, signal them to begin. You may want to turn on instrumental music selected to create an environment conducive to quiet reflection.

3. After the students complete their work, direct them to “You Are at My Side” on page 4 of their booklet. Light the candle in the prayer space and give the students time to complete the sentence at the top of the page. Then comment that Psalm 23 is a prayer that expresses confidence in God as a shepherd who is always at their side. Lead the students in praying the litany adapted from Psalm 23 in their booklet, pausing for them to respond with the words, “The Lord is at my side,” after you read each verse.

4. Bring the session to a close with a prayer in your own words similar to this:

► O God, we know that we need never be alone because you are at our side. Stay with us as we face decisions in our life. We place our life and our decisions in your hands now and forever. Amen.

5. As the students leave, collect their booklets and the consequences diagrams they created on newsprint. (The students’ diagrams may be private, so be sure to dispose of them after class.)

OPTIONS

After reading the session plan, you may choose to do some things differently or to make additions to an activity. Consider your time limitations first and then the following optional approaches.

For step A. In part 1 of this step, ask the students to list on their name tag three future fantasy decisions rather than three favorite things. For instance, they might list a trip they would like to take, what they would do if they won the lottery, and what kind of hero they would like to be.

For step C. To help the students understand the variety of decision-making styles, put the name of each character reflecting a decision-making style on a separate slip of paper and put the slips in a hat or box. Ask the young people to take turns drawing out one of the slips and then acting out how that character might decide about one of the situations offered in part 3 of this step. After each performance invite the rest of the group to guess the character behind the decision-making style (for example, Willy Wait).

For step C. Offer the students an opportunity to make a shared decision that relates to a large social issue. Ask the group to choose a single issue they care about, such as drug use, the widespread acceptance of cheating, the need to recycle, or the presence of gangs in community parks. Use a large sheet of paper to work together to make a decision about this issue and to create a diagram of consequences for that decision.