

**One-Day Retreats
for Senior High Youth**

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One-Day Retreats for Senior High Youth

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Joan Finn Connelly

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Love and thanks to our husbands and children:
Bill Braden-Whartenby and Dylan
Tom Connelly, Megan and Matthew

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Introduction

Who We Are

Let us introduce ourselves. We are Geri Braden-Whartenby and Joan Finn Connelly. Each of us is Roman Catholic with a master's degree in religious education from La Salle University, Philadelphia, and a graduate certificate in youth ministry. Geri has been a parish youth minister, a campus minister, and a parish director of religious education. She is now the director of youth services for Xavier Retreat and Conference Center in Convent Station, New Jersey. Joan has been a parish youth minister and a high school religion teacher. She is now the associate youth retreat director at Xavier Center. We each have fourteen years' experience. Together we direct over one hundred retreats a year, and we also do retreat training, and communication and conflict resolution training for adults and teens.

Our Kind of Retreat

Our retreat philosophy incorporates active-learning exercises, a sound biblical foundation, and meaningful prayer experiences. Evaluations returned to us by adult moderators of youth groups have affirmed our philosophy.

Active learning simply means “learning by doing.” In our retreats we hope to reach our objectives by having teens use their senses in a variety of ways. Active learning keeps young teens moving, knowing that they will remember much more of what they do than what they hear. A study cited in a 1995 issue of *Group* magazine reports that we remember 20 percent of what we read, 30 percent of what we hear, 40 percent of what we see, 50 percent of what we say, 60 percent of what we do, and 90 percent of what we see, hear, say, and do (p. 16).

Active learning is not all fun and games. It takes more preparation than a lecture and requires more faith and trust because the adult is not controlling the learning by feeding information, but instead is allowing the Holy Spirit to work, through the activities, in the teens themselves. With active learning you are never quite sure of the results. But if it is done well, active learning provides valuable lessons more effectively than does a more rote style of learning.

The Bible is filled with stories of active-learning experiences, each requiring trust that learners would “catch on”—for example, the stories of Abraham and Isaac, Jonah, and Noah and the flood. In Jesus we have a great teacher to follow because he used active learning strategies throughout his life. The storm on the lake, the woman caught in adultery, and the washing of the disciples' feet are examples. It was a

pretty risky teaching style, but if God can risk active learning, maybe we can too.

Another part of our retreat philosophy is providing teens with a strong biblical foundation. Each retreat incorporates time for reflection on the Scriptures. Retreatants have the opportunity to read a passage from the Scriptures, reflect on its meaning, and see how the lessons from the passage connect with their personal growth and faith journey. Providing teens with a strong biblical foundation fosters a more mature faith formation.

Each retreat begins and ends with prayer. The opening prayer sets the tone for the day. It creates an environment that encourages teens to be open to God's spirit at work in them. The concluding prayer, a guided meditation, allows teens to listen to God, something that tends to be neglected in their fast-paced lives.

Retreat Overview

Theme The theme provides the retreat director with a concise purpose for the day.

Bible Basis The Scripture cite for the message that the combined retreat activities intend to communicate is provided. The Scripture passage both supports the theme of the retreat and serves as the inspiration for creating and selecting the retreat activities. It is also hoped that the teens will come away from the retreat with an appreciation for the richness and guidance the Scriptures provide for their daily life.

Objectives The objectives expand on the theme and provide specific learning outcomes for the retreat.

Retreat at a Glance This chart is offered at the beginning of each retreat plan. It gives the director an overview of the retreat, including the time frames and materials needed for each activity.

Retreat in Detail This section of the retreat plan contains the bulk of the retreat resources. It gives detailed directions for carrying out the activities of the retreat that are listed in the Retreat at a Glance chart. The retreats vary in length but typically run about six hours, and never exceed seven hours. All the retreats include the following elements:

Welcome and Introduction

A spirit of hospitality is conveyed to the teens in the welcome and introduction. If the retreat director does not know the group, this is a good time to start building a rapport with them. In this introduction the retreat director may do one or more of the following tasks:

- Convey appreciation to the teens for taking the time to participate in the retreat.

- Share a personal story from a retreat experience and explain how it affected him or her.
- Explain the significance of a retreat. For example, we tell teens that a retreat is time away from their normal routine to reflect on their life, experience new things, quiet themselves down to be open to God's spirit, pray, enjoy being with their friends, and learn about others.
- Highlight the philosophy of a retreat.
- Communicate the housekeeping information and rules. For example:
 - Give directions to the bathrooms and other facilities.
 - Explain regulations regarding smoking.
 - Offer an explanation of what rooms in the building are available for their use and what areas outside are designated for recreation at lunchtime.
- Go over the retreat theme and schedule. Retreats are not intended to be mystery games. Informing the teens of the retreat theme and schedule demonstrates respect. Most teens are open to whatever you have planned.

On occasion we have led retreats in which after going over the theme and schedule, the teens said they had already done some of the planned exercises. Sometimes they wanted to do them again, and sometimes they preferred to do something different. Giving the teens some say in the retreat prompts a readiness to participate and a willingness to try new experiences.

- Present the retreat standards. Teens usually come to a retreat with a variety of prior retreat experiences and levels of openness. During the greeting convey that the day will be filled with fun and learning, but along with fun comes some rules. (We call them *standards* rather than rules because teens often have a negative reaction to the word *rules*.) These standards try to anticipate the usual things some teens will do to try to disrupt the retreat (thus heading them off at the pass).

Standards that we recommended include:

- What's said here, stays here.
- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Put-downs, both verbal and physical, are off-limits.
- Questions are welcomed.
- You may decline when invited to share.
- Be open and try.

Establishing standards right away gives structure and boundaries to the teens. The boundaries allow them to see that "anything does *not* go" on this retreat. Some young people come because they have to and therefore may express some resentment and resistance. Some come expecting not to participate. The standards clarify acceptable and unacceptable behavior during the retreat.

After going over the standards, ask the participants if they would like to add any standards to make the day go smoothly. Then direct them to nod if they find the standards reasonable and are willing to abide by them. Post the standards in a place where they can serve as a reminder during the retreat of what the group has agreed on.

Holding the teens accountable to the standards is important. If a standard is violated, acknowledge the violation and its consequences, and remind the young people that they agreed to follow the standards. If this is not done, the standards will not mean anything to the retreatants.

Icebreakers

Icebreakers are important. Part A of the appendix offers several to choose from, or you can use your own. Icebreakers conducted at the beginning of the retreat are meant to help relax the young people, show them that the retreat is meant to be fun as well as spiritual, and get them accustomed to working in small groups. Icebreakers conducted immediately following lunch are meant to bridge the transition between the unstructured lunchtime and the structured program. These games help the teens refocus and re-enter the spirit of the retreat.

The following guidelines will help to enhance the effectiveness of icebreakers:

- Practice them ahead of time to ensure you have all the necessary materials and are able to give clear directions.
- Have some large-group icebreakers and then some small-group ones.
- Do not use icebreakers that might embarrass some retreatants.
- Do not continue to play the games over and over. They are meant to be introductory.
- Do not be afraid to try the same icebreaker again with a new group if the first group did not like it or if it did not go well the first time. For example, we often start our retreats with the icebreaker People Upset (see part A of the appendix). It is a great large-group game that gets teens running around and intermingling. The game involves different people winding up as leader in the center of the circle. We played the game with a group we did not know well, and one teen stood in the center of the circle. We waited for him to make the next move, but he did not. A teacher quickly came over and told us that the young man was a new resident of the United States and did not speak English. We respectfully invited him back to the group and assigned another teen to continue the game. If that had been our first experience with People Upset, we may never have used it again. Not all icebreakers work with all groups. If one occasionally does not work, it may not be the icebreaker but the makeup of the group.

Opening Prayer

Simple opening prayers are provided for each retreat. They may be read aloud by the teens or by the retreat director. You may want to add a song, or you may want to allow time for individual petitions, knowing that “where two or three are gathered in Christ’s name, there he is.”

Retreat Activities

A variety of activities flesh out each retreat. These include personal reflection exercises and small- and large-group activities. You may wish to keep the same small groups throughout the retreat or to form new groups for each small-group activity. That is up to you. All the instructions needed to carry out the activities are included. Each activity builds on the previous one. The retreats usually start with light, simple activities. As the day progresses, the activities become more challenging. Therefore, we encourage you to use the activities in the order presented.

Affirmation

Going through adolescence is a tough experience. Teens need to know that they are loved for who they are and who they are becoming. Statistics show that from sixth grade to twelfth grade a young person’s self-image typically decreases. There are many reasons for this: media portrayals of the ideal person, biological changes going on inside the teenager, attraction to the other sex, and the added stress of more responsibility.

Unfortunately teens focus on negative images of themselves rather than on positive ones. To compensate for this, affirmation is built in throughout the retreats, and one specific affirmation activity is placed near the end of each retreat so that the teens can leave with positive feelings.

Closing Guided Meditation

Many teens have told us that they really like guided meditations. They say that these experiences provide some of the few opportunities they have to relax and really pray. After one guided meditation, a young man said that he really liked it. When asked why, he responded, “My father has been dead awhile, and during the meditation I got to speak with him one more time.”

Concluding each retreat with a guided meditation not only gives teens this quiet time to be with God but also shows them that God is truly present in their life.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Starting a guided meditation with progressive muscle relaxation allows the teens to calm themselves down enough to be open to the guided meditation. Several progressive muscle relaxation exercises are given in part C of the appendix.

Evaluation

Evaluation helps teens reflect on the whole retreat and what it has meant to them. A simple way to do this is to ask these three questions:

- If you had only one word to describe today, what one word would you pick?

- What is one new thing you learned today, or what is one thing that you really liked?
- What do you feel God is challenging you to do as a result of this retreat?

Helpful Hints

We have found the following strategies to be useful in making the retreat run smoothly:

- When teens are in small groups working on an assignment, alert them to the time remaining with 5-minute, 2-minute, and 1-minute signals. This helps them pace themselves so that they will not be surprised or upset when time is called.
- In some of the retreat activities, we assign teens to be leaders by calling out a certain quality or criterion, such as, “those whose birthday is closest to Christmas,” or “the person with the longest name.” A variety of measures like these increases the likelihood that during the retreat many young people will have the opportunity to be a leader.
- During break time the retreatants may choose to eat a snack. We inform them before they take their break to finish all food or drink before returning to the meeting area. Having teens eating and drinking during the retreat activities is not only distracting for them but for the retreat director as well.
- Be prepared. Gather all needed materials before the retreat. If the retreat director appears unprepared, the teens will know it. Time spent finding things disrupts the flow of the retreat and loses the teens’ attention.
- The material in this book is geared for groups of up to thirty-five participants, with the whole group often being separated into small groups. The ideal small-group size is six to eight participants. Because significant small-group activity is part of the retreat, we encourage you to use trained small-group facilitators. Trained facilitators will enhance the retreat experience for the teens. (See part D of the appendix for a list of tips you can provide to facilitators.) Facilitators can be older high school students, teachers, parents, catechists, or other volunteers. Facilitators are especially helpful for younger teens who may or may not be used to working together.

Debriefing Activities

Most of the retreat activities end with questions that can be used to discuss the meaning of that particular exercise. As alternatives to posing the questions to the large group and having volunteers answer, you could do the following:

- Have the teens return to their small groups and discuss the questions. Then invite each small-group leader to report back to the large group.
- Assign different questions to each small group and have the small-group leaders report back to the large group.

Competition Versus Cooperation

The directions for some of our icebreakers and retreat activities suggest telling the group that the first team finished “wins.” We certainly want teens to feel good about themselves throughout the retreat, and not to be put in the position of being “losers.” However, teens in the United States are used to competing, and many are motivated by rewards. The icebreakers and some of the small-group activities that appear to be competitive in nature actually challenge the teens to cooperate as a team within small groups and to engage only in mini-competition with other small groups.

We give prizes to winning teams only when doing so is necessary to the activity. When prizes are not required, we tell winning teams who ask what their reward or prize is, “You win our deepest appreciation and congratulations.” At the end of each game or performance-type activity, we applaud those who participated.

Some groups need to be motivated initially by some form of competition. If you feel that your group does not need the added motivation that competition provides, simply give instructions for the groups to accomplish the activity, and call time when they appear to be finished.

We usually remark at some point in the retreat that we enjoyed many games that did not involve declaring a winner. We try to help the young people realize that participating in an activity and working cooperatively with their team members is more important than winning.

Our Hope

Retreats have proven to be valuable and effective in the faith formation of teens. We hope that the retreats in this book prove to be an effective tool to help bring your group to a deeper faith.

Retreat 1

Celebrating Diversity

Theme This retreat addresses the issues that underlie racism and explores ways to diminish the negative effects of racism.

Bible Basis *Col. 3:10–14.* Saint Paul reminds us that all people are equal in God’s eyes. Therefore, we are to treat everyone with love, compassion, gentleness, and mercy.

Objectives The retreatants will do the following:

- define prejudice, stereotype, racism, and diversity
- examine the tendency in society to blame the victim
- appreciate their own and others’ ethnic and cultural background
- reflect on the Gospel value of unconditional love
- practice ways to reduce prejudice

Retreat at a Glance

The following chart offers a brief overview of the retreat activities, time frames, and materials needed. For more detailed information about any of the activities, refer to the directions given in the Retreat in Detail section.

ACTIVITY	TIME FRAME	SUPPLIES
Welcome and Introduction	10–15 minutes	poster with standards
Icebreakers	15–30 minutes	depends on selection
Opening Prayer	5 minutes	Bible
20/20 Vision	10 minutes	numbered cards with images
Wagon Wheel	10–15 minutes	
Culture Cake	15–25 minutes	handout 1–A, pencils, Bible
Pick Your Corner	10 minutes	
Break	10 minutes	
Universal Quality	10–15 minutes	poster with quote
Gift Giving	20–25 minutes	newsprint, marker, scrap paper, pencils, poster with names of people, poster with gifts, Bible
Labels That Limit	10–15 minutes	newsprint, marker, scrap paper, pencils
Lunch	45 minutes	
Icebreakers	15 minutes	depends on selection
Can I Get In?	15–20 minutes	newsprint, marker, Bible
Billings’ Victory Over Hate	15 minutes	
Cooperative Line Crossing	10 minutes	masking tape
Diversify Yourself	20–30 minutes	newsprint, marker
What Others Think of Me	15–20 minutes	paper, pencils
Closing Guided Meditation	20–30 minutes	instrumental music, tape or CD player
Evaluation	5 minutes	pencils, paper

Retreat in Detail

Welcome and Introduction (10–15 minutes)

Icebreakers (15–30 minutes)

Choose from among the icebreakers offered in part A of the appendix of this book, or use games of your own.

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin the prayer by reading Col. 3:10–14—Paul’s instruction on God’s universal love.

Finish with a prayer similar to this one:

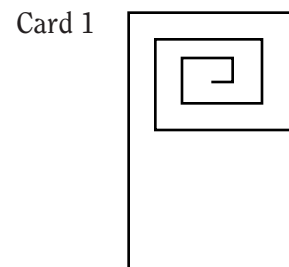
- Dear God, Saint Paul reminds us that everyone is included in your family. Yet we know that our families, schools, neighborhoods, and even our world are torn apart by prejudice and racism. We ask for the grace today
 - to see people as you see them
 - to be forgiven for the times we have judged or hurt others because of our own prejudices and fear
 - to heal us for the times we have been victims of hatred
 - to strengthen us to show love in the face of hatred and fear

God, you have graced us with the gift of diversity. All we have to do is look around at creation to see the beauty and harmony that diversity provides. Increase our sympathy, compassion, and understanding. Let us continue to appreciate all the gifts you have given us and all the gifts we see in others. May we live in unity and peace. Amen.

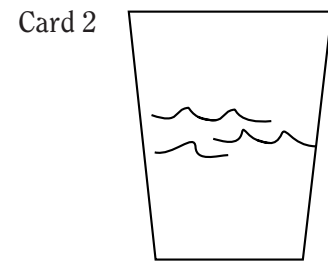
20/20 Vision Large-Group Activity (10 minutes)

This activity helps the teens realize that not everyone sees things the same way, even when looking at the same object or situation.

Recreate the images below on numbered cards or sheets of paper large enough so that they can be seen by all when held up in front of the group. Possible interpretations of each image are listed below the image:

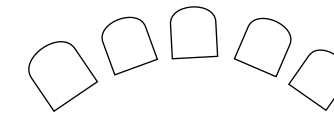


the letter *P*
a flag
a maze



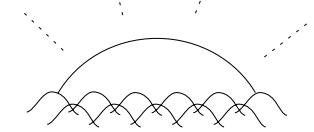
a half-empty glass
a half-full glass
an ocean through a window
an upside-down picture of flying birds

Card 3



a foot buried in the sand
gravestones
teeth

Card 4



a sunrise over mountains
a sunset over mountains
a waffle ice-cream cone
a spider

Card 5

GODISNOWHERE

God is nowhere
God is now here
God I snow here (for the skiers!)

Show the group all the illustrations and ask volunteers to state what they see in each image. Then pose these questions to the whole group:

- Why didn’t we all see the same thing in each image?
 - Who interpreted the images correctly?
 - What would we need to do in order for others to see an image the way we see it?
- Offer a conclusion like this to the activity:
- This activity demonstrates that we all have perceptions about things. Our perception of an object, a scene, an event, or even a person will not always be the same as someone else’s. We all see differently because we are all unique. Being unique is a God-given gift. Unfortunately in our society, differences are often looked at as something bad rather than as something to rejoice about.

Wagon Wheel Large-Group Activity (10–15 minutes)

In this activity the teens get to know one another better and share their experiences of diversity.

Have everyone stand. Divide the group in half. Direct one half to form a circle facing outward. Direct the other half to form a circle around the first circle, facing in.

Give these directions in your own words:

- You now face your first partner. I am going to read a question, and you are to share your answer with your partner. After you both have answered, I am going to call “Rotate,” and the outer circle is to move one person to the right so that everyone has a new partner. Then I will read another question for you and your new partner to answer.

Read the following questions one at a time. Direct the outer circle to rotate after each question:

- What’s the best place you have ever visited?
- What is one nice thing about you?

- How many members are in your family?
- Where were you born?
- What is your favorite food for lunch?
- What does your family like to do together?
- What does your family usually cook for Christmas?
- What is your favorite ethnic food?
- When did you first realize you are different from everyone else?
- Did you ever witness prejudice in action? If so, what did you do?
- Were you ever a victim of prejudice? If so, describe the experience.
- Who has modeled acceptance of others for you?
- What prejudices were you taught?

Feel free to add questions of your own. Continue this activity for 10 minutes or so. Conclude by leading a discussion of the following questions:

- How did it feel to answer these questions?
- Do you now feel a little better acquainted with one another?

Culture Cake Small-Group Activity (15–25 minutes)

This activity encourages appreciation of the rich diversity among cultures.

1. Form small groups and give each person a pencil and a copy of handout 1–A, “Culture Cake.” Offer instructions similar to the following:

- In the past you may have heard the term *melting pot* used in reference to the United States. That term was used early in the twentieth century when many immigrants were coming to this country and melting all together, in other words, becoming assimilated. Unfortunately when we melt together with others we can lose some of our individuality. Today many people use the term *salad bowl* or *culture cake* to describe U.S. culture. I prefer culture cake because each layer of the cake is special and unique and blends well together without melting or losing its original flavor.

In front of you is a piece of culture cake. Write your first name in the icing at the top, and also write something about how you got your name. Then complete the rest of the handout for your ethnic or racial group. You will get a chance to share your answers with your small group in a few minutes. Please complete the handout in silence.

2. Give everyone enough time to complete the handout. Then offer the small groups these directions:

- You will need a group leader for your discussion. The leader begins the discussion and takes notes on some of the things your group members share. Let’s have the person in each group with the longest last name be the leader. The leader first shares his or her name and any history surrounding that name. Then the leader lets everyone else share about their name. Next, the leader shares the ethnic or racial group to which he or she belongs, and then goes around the circle until everyone has shared about that layer of the cake. Continue in the same fashion until everyone has shared all their responses.

3. After the groups are finished, ask the leaders:

- Did anything that was shared in your group surprise you or other members of your small group?
- Which elements of the culture cake prompted the most discussion and sharing?
- Do you think the ethnic or racial status of the members of your group likely influences how they view themselves?

4. Call for a volunteer to read aloud Matt. 5:43–47. Conclude the activity by asking the whole group the following discussion questions (see the introduction for alternative ways of debriefing this and other retreat activities):

- What makes it easy or difficult to be nice to people whom we do not know?
- Are the people you hang around with similar to you or different from you?
- What type of love is Jesus calling us to demonstrate?
- What makes another person or group your enemy? your friend?
- If you love those who love you, what reward do you get?
- If you hate those who hate you, what reward do you get?
- How do Jesus’ teachings speak to the way our society deals with social issues such as legal cases, divorce, war, and so on?

Pick Your Corner Large-Group Activity (10 minutes)

This activity helps the teens realize that we are all a part of several different groups; some we choose to participate in, and others we are born into. The teens also see that appreciating the differences among groups can help us to break down harmful barriers.

1. Designate one corner of the room as the belonging corner, another as the not-belonging corner. Have the retreatants stand, and instruct them by saying something like this:

- When I say the name of a particular group, those who belong to that group should go to the designated corner. Those who do not belong should go to the opposite corner.

Repeat the procedure with several group names. Possible group names are girls, not girls; tall, not tall; bike riders, not bike riders; Italian, not Italian; only child, not an only child; born in the United States, not born in the United States; multilingual, not multilingual. The pairs of groups you name can be as controversial or noncontroversial as you wish, depending in part on the maturity of the group.

2. Next, ask the whole group these questions:

- What is a group?
- What are some of the groups you belong to?
- Which groups were you born into? Which did you join?
- Why are we part of groups? What are the rewards of belonging to groups?
- What are some of the disadvantages of belonging to groups?

3. Conclude the activity by using words similar to the following:

- We all belong to many groups, some by choice and some by birth. Staying only with the people who are like us can isolate us from the

rich experiences others have to share with us and can also make us afraid of others. Understanding the differences among groups can help us to appreciate the gifts each brings to humanity.

(Based on Kreidler, *Creative Conflict Resolution*, p. 162)

Break (10 minutes)

Universal Quality Large-Group Activity (10–15 minutes)

Through this activity the retreatants come to appreciate that diversity is a universal quality.

Write the following quote from the French philosopher Montaigne on a sheet of newsprint:

- There never was in the world two opinions alike,
No more than two hairs or two grains.
The most universal quality is diversity.

Have a volunteer read the quote. Then raise the following discussion questions:

- What does *diversity* mean? What does *universal* mean?
- What is Montaigne saying in this quote? Do you agree with him?
- In what ways is diversity good? In what ways might it be bad?
- What effect might diversity have on conflicts between people?
- How do you respond to people who are like you? somewhat different from you? very different from you?

(Based on Kreidler, *Creative Conflict Resolution*, p. 156)

Conclude the activity by expressing the following thoughts in your own words:

- God created diversity throughout nature. We read in Genesis how God created everything and then looked at it and called it “good.” Diversity is essential. Just think about how our world functions. It is dependent on many different types of plants, animals, and insects to make a complete, functioning ecosystem. So, too, human communities benefit from a variety of cultures, races, religions, and ethnic groups. Try to imagine what life would be like if we all looked, acted, talked, dressed, and thought the same way? What if all restaurants served only hot dogs and hamburgers, or we only had apples for a snack? It would get pretty boring after awhile. Diversity makes life interesting. Unfortunately, racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination are commonplace in this country and around the world. Although dealing with this topic can be difficult, it is vital, for the future of our society, to address it so that different cultures and countries can live and work peacefully together.

Gift Giving Small-Group Activity (20–25 minutes)

This activity introduces the term *prejudice*.

Before the retreat, write the following definition of prejudice on newsprint:

- Prejudice is an unfavorable opinion or feeling formed about something or someone without knowledge, thought, or reason.

Prepare the two posters needed in step 2.

1. Form small groups. Begin the activity by conveying the following ideas in your own words:

- The very simple task I am about to give you measures your ability to make judgments based on very limited information. Christmas is approaching, and you have a few last-minute gifts to buy. Choose the most appropriate gift for each of the following people from the options provided. Money is no object, but you can give only one of each gift. Each group needs a recorder to write down the group’s decisions and then share them aloud when everyone is done. Let’s have the recorder be the oldest person in each group. Any questions?

Give each group scrap paper and pencils for writing their responses.

2. Hang up the following two posters and read them aloud:

- *Poster 1: People to Buy For*
 - Gertrude: sixty-five years old, has five grandchildren, has been widowed for two years
 - Tony: thirty years old, truck driver, has driven a truck for three years
 - Peter: eleventh-grade student, top of his class in math
 - Chris: thirty-five years old, bank teller for the past three years, single parent
 - Sandy: forty-five years old, teacher of English
- *Poster 2: Gifts to Choose From*
 - A. Book on computer programming
 - B. Set of cushions
 - C. Makeup kit
 - D. Calculator
 - E. Two season tickets to the theater

3. After the students have completed the task, survey the small groups to record the number of groups that selected gift C for Gertrude, B for Tony, A for Peter, D for Chris, and E for Sandy.

4. Lead a discussion with the whole group based on the following questions:

- What thoughts did you have about each person, and how did this affect your choice of gift?
- Why did you make the choices you did?

5. Continue by expressing these ideas in your own words:

- Gertrude may be a senior citizen, but she likes to live in the mainstream. She travels, tries new foods, and has a new computer in her den at home. She would enjoy a new book on computer programming.

Antoinette (her friends call her Tony) is a student and drives a truck to pay her way through school. A calculator would have been a good choice for a gift.

Peter is a good student, but studies are not his only interest. He is a member of a clown troupe and is learning how to do clown makeup. A makeup kit would have been a perfect gift for him.

Chris would have been delighted to receive the theater tickets so that he and his twelve-year-old son could see some plays together. It’s hard to make ends meet on Chris’s salary, so they don’t get out much.

Santiago (Sandy for short) would have loved to receive the set of cushions. After a hard day at work, his favorite pastime is to sit and read or listen to music. He is always glad to put his feet up for a while.

Give the young people a chance to comment.

6. Next, ask:

- What assumptions did you make about the people for whom you chose gifts?

Then say something like this:

- Making assumptions and prejudging situations is something we all do. Sometimes prejudices can be harmful and can block us from seeing other important things about people or situations.

Hang up the poster with the definition of prejudice on it. Invite a volunteer to read aloud Rom. 14:5–11.

7. Conclude the activity by leading a large-group discussion of these questions:

- What does this Scripture passage say about judging others?
- How do you feel when someone misjudges you?
- What can we each do to stop ourselves from judging others?

(Adapted from Huntly, *Rich World, Poor World*, pp. 219, 223)

Labels That Limit Small-Group Activity (10–15 minutes)

This activity introduces the term *stereotype*.

Prior to the retreat, write this definition of stereotype on newsprint:

- A stereotype is a general viewpoint about a group of people that is not based in fact.

1. Introduce the activity this way:

- Jesus and the Scriptures call us to see people in ways we haven't seen them before. Often when we think of those who are rich, poor, imprisoned, sick, or in any way different from us, we judge them to be better than we are or less than we are. We tend to think of people who are different from us in terms of stereotypes; that is, we put them into a category and label them in a negative way. We don't really see them as individuals. Followers of Jesus are challenged to see people as unique and precious individuals.

Ask the whole group the following question:

- Who in the Scriptures was stereotyped and later befriended by Jesus? [Some examples are his disciples as fishermen, the Pharisees, Zacchaeus, women.]

2. Explain these instructions to the small groups:

- I'm going to read aloud several different categories of people and give you one stereotype about each category. As a small group, you are to write down two more stereotypes for each category. Each group needs a leader who will make sure everyone's ideas are heard. The leader records the group's decisions and then shares them aloud when everyone is done. Let's have the leader be the youngest person in each group. Any questions?

Give each small group scrap paper and pencils for writing its responses.

- List two stereotypes of the poor. [They don't want to work.]
- List two stereotypes of undocumented immigrants. [They take jobs from U.S. citizens.]
- List two stereotypes of prisoners. [They will commit the same crimes again.]
- List two stereotypes of the elderly. [They drive too slowly.]

After naming each category, invite the leaders to share examples of the stereotypes their group wrote.

3. At the end of the activity, pose the following discussion questions to the whole group:

- Where do stereotypes come from?
- What makes them believable or unbelievable?
- Why is it unchristian to stereotype people?

4. Display the definition of *stereotype* and ask if anyone has any questions about it. Give the small groups these directions:

- In your small group, discuss one way you might help people break the pattern of stereotyping others. Then have your group leader share your idea aloud.

Lunch (45 minutes)

Icebreakers (15 minutes)

Choose from among the icebreakers offered in part A of the appendix of this book, or use games of your own.

Can I Get In? Large-Group Activity (15–20 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is to introduce the term *racism*.

Before the activity, write the following definition of the word *racism* on newsprint:

- Racism is the oppression of racial groups; one group has control over another group. Racism combines prejudice with the abuse of power. Although prejudice can be directed toward any group, racism is usually directed toward less-powerful groups and is intended to keep them relatively powerless. Apartheid in South Africa was a manifestation of racism as was slavery in the United States.

1. Have the whole group stand and form a circle. Call for a volunteer to stand outside the circle. Give the following instructions:

- In this activity everyone except a single volunteer stands in a circle. The people in the circle are to hold hands and try to keep the volunteer from getting inside the circle. The volunteer who is on the outside of the circle must do whatever he or she can to get into the center of the circle.

Play the game until either the volunteer gets into the center of the circle or a couple of minutes have passed. Repeat with another volunteer.

2. After the game, invite the teens to sit down. Post the definition of racism and read it aloud to the group. Lead a discussion of the following questions:
 - Outsider, how do you feel now? How did it feel being on the outside of the circle?
 - Insiders, how did it feel being in the circle?
 - What strategies did the outsider use to try to get into the circle? [List these on newsprint.]
 - Did any of you insiders feel badly for the outsider? How, if at all, did you act on those feelings? What did you tell yourself that convinced you to keep the outsider out?
 - Did the people in the circle talk to one another? If so, about what? If not, why not?
3. Continue the discussion with these comments and questions:
 - Now let's compare what happened in the activity to what happens in society.
 - Who are some of the more powerful groups of people in our society?
 - Which groups are outsiders?
 - In society the circle might represent access to power, privileges, jobs, money, and so on. How are some of the strategies the outsider used (or might have used) like the strategies members of minority groups in society use to try to gain opportunities?
4. Further the discussion by expressing the following ideas in your own words:
 - In this activity the outsider could have asked politely; used an assertive strategy like giving the group a "talking to" or crawling between legs; been creative—for example, tickling people in the circle; or used force to try to break the insiders' hands apart.

Many societal comparisons can be drawn. If a girl wanted to be in an all boys' baseball league, she might use a variety of approaches to get in: ask, petition, get so good they want her to play, stage a sit-in on the baseball field.

During the civil rights movement in this country, black people originally asked for equal rights and later used assertive tactics, including mass marches and freedom rides, to gain national publicity.
5. Ask a volunteer to read Col. 3:10–14. After the reading make this comment:
 - Saint Paul reminds us that everyone is included in God's family.
 Then ask:
 - In what ways is this passage relevant to our discussion?
 - What holds people together in society?
 - What do the Scriptures say holds people together?
 - Let's focus on the majority of people who form the circle:
 - How do people with power and privilege in society keep that power and privilege from others?
 - What arguments do they use? How is this similar to what you did in this activity?
 - What's the advantage to holding on to power? the disadvantage?

(Adapted from Schniedewind and Davidson,
Open Minds to Equality, pp. 139–140)

Billings' Victory Over Hate

Large-Group Activity (15 minutes)

Read aloud the following story, taken from *USA Weekend*:

- Like a willow in the wind, the people of Billings, Mont., bend, not break. Racial and religious intolerance seems only to make the community stronger. Make A Difference Day 1994 reinforced that unity.

To understand what happened in Billings, you need some context: In 1992, rocks were thrown through the windows of homes displaying menorahs for Hanukkah. Incensed, 10,000 people put candles in their own windows to show support for the 100 Jewish residents. News of the city's reaction so moved two St. Paul, Minnesota, grade school classes that they raised \$720 selling candy to replace the broken windows.

"We need to speak up for each other," says Tom Polanski, 13, whose class in Minnesota helped victims of anti-Semitism in Montana.

Two years later, some of the \$720 bought paint for Make A Difference, *USA Weekend's* annual national day of community service. That day, 60 Catholics, Jews, Lutherans, Mormons and others united to paint and re-side Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Chapel, the crumbling home of a tiny black congregation. Fewer than half of 1 percent of Billings' 80,000 people are black. A grateful Rev. Bob Freeman, 80, says it seems the nearby railroad tracks no longer split the city racially. Other contributors to the project: anonymous private donors, the Billings Human Rights Foundation and local businesses.

The volunteers' mood was one of brotherhood, recalls Mayor Richard Larsen. "It shouldn't matter who your neighbor is. We have more people who see that now." (*USA Weekend*, 17–19 March 1995, p. 20)

Afterward lead a discussion with the whole group based on the following questions:

- What were some of the risks people faced by buying candles to put in their own windows to show support for the Jewish families?
- What were the rewards of their efforts?
- How can volunteer service efforts help to dissolve prejudices?
- Does anyone wish to share a story of how others acted against intolerance?
- What are some problems in your own city or school? What can you do to help?

Cooperative Line Crossing

Large-Group Activity (10 minutes)

In this activity the teens realize the benefits of cooperation.

Mark a line down the center of the room with masking tape. Have the teens pair up, with one person on one side of the tape and the other on the opposite side of the tape, facing each other. Then give the following directions:

- The object of the game is to get your partner to cross over the line to your side. Any questions? [The objective is for both teens to agree to cross over the line at the same time. Most likely teens will use force or bribery, like they did in the Can I Get In? activity.]

After the activity ask the whole group:

- Why did you automatically compete?
- What was the goal of the game?
- Did the other person's crossing over to your side mean you lost?
- What did you stand to gain by cooperation?
- Are there other situations in which we compete without thinking?
- What does this game say about being peacemakers?
- Can you cite examples of when Jesus used cooperation rather than competition to deal with a dilemma? [the multiplication of the loaves and fishes]

Conclude the activity by making the following comment in your own words:

- In these last two exercises, you might have thought: "I like being on the inside, it feels good"; "The outsider might feel bad, but it's only a game"; "Winning is everything, whether I get a prize or not."

Diversify Yourself Small-Group Role-Plays (20–30 minutes)

This activity teaches the retreatants various ways to diversify themselves.

1. List on newsprint the following tips on how to become more aware of the effects of prejudice in your life. Share the corresponding commentaries with the group.

- *Learn to respect yourself.* If you feel good about yourself and your accomplishments, you won't have to put others down to feel good. Realize your value in the community and your potential to make a positive impact.
- *Be open to people and situations you encounter that may not be familiar to you.* Respect new experiences, even if you don't understand them at first.
- *Be proud of your heritage.* Learn to speak your native language, do ethnic dances, tell stories from your culture's history, cook traditional foods. Help others understand that heritage.
- *Learn about other cultures.* If ignorance breeds contempt, awareness breeds acceptance. Celebrate cultural differences as well as similarities. Get to know people from other cultures; you will see that we share many of the same goals, values, and dreams. Almost all teens enjoy music, movies, sports, having fun. You can always find common ground.
- *Learn to identify attitudes and behaviors that lead to discrimination.* Understand your perceptions about people of other races or ethnic groups. Where did these attitudes come from—your family, your friends, the media?
- *Realize that we are responsible for our attitudes and actions and that we have the power to change them.* We must all take responsibility for correcting negative stereotypes that have been created by society and are being passed on to others. Don't be afraid to tell your friends that you don't appreciate hearing negative comments about different groups.

- *Avoid extremist groups that preach hatred toward others.* People are more alike than they are different. We all share the same basic needs.
- *Follow the Golden Rule.* Treat others as you would like to be treated.

2. Next, form small groups. Give each small group a scene to discuss and design a role-play around it. Here are some possible role-play scenes:

- Your friend says he doesn't want to go to a certain shopping mall because too many blacks shop there.
- A friend puts down a Muslim girl because she always wear a scarf.
- You want to talk to a girl you met in math class, but she's talking to two other girls in Spanish, and you don't understand the language.
- At a school dance, you are asked to dance by a girl or boy who is Vietnamese American, and you are a Euro-American.
- You are a team captain for a touch football game in gym class. It's your turn to pick your last player, and three people are left: an African American, a Euro-American, and an Asian American. You've never seen any of them play football.

Direct the groups to decide on an ending to their scene in which they reduce prejudice. Invite them to perform their role-plays.

3. After each role-play, ask the performing group these questions:

- What did you learn from doing your role-play?
- How did you decide on the ending for your role-play?

4. Conclude the activity by asking the whole group the following questions:

- How might the victim in each role-play feel?
- Would this happen in real life? If so, how?
- What else could be done in this situation?

(Adapted from Club Connect, Race Relations Kit)

What Others Think of Me Affirmation (15–20 minutes)

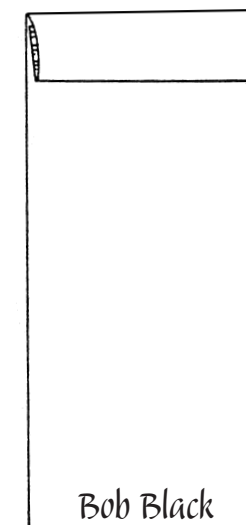
In this activity the teens learn how others see them.

Give everyone a long sheet of paper, 3-by-8 inches or so, and instruct them to write their name at the bottom and a one-word self-description at the top.

Then have them fold the paper down from the top twice in order to conceal their descriptive word. The paper should look like the example in the margin.

Now have the teens exchange sheets two or three times so that they lose track of their own paper. Direct each teen to write, at the top of the paper he or she was given, a one-word description of the person named at the bottom. Tell the teens not to unfold the sheet and look at the person's own self-description.

Ask the teens to be honest, constructive, and as positive as possible about the person they are describing. (If they don't know the person at all, they should leave the paper blank.) The top of the sheet should again be folded down before the sheets are exchanged for another round. Repeat the process until the sheets are full of one-word descriptions of the teen named at the bottom.



When the teens get their own sheet back, give them a few minutes to unfold it and look over their list. Then ask them if anyone wrote the same one-word description that they wrote for themselves. Or invite them to share a description that surprised them.

(Adapted from Rice, *Up Close and Personal*, p. 91)

Closing (20–30 minutes) Guided Meditation

Begin the meditation with a progressive muscle relaxation exercise (see part C of the appendix for suggestions). If possible, play soft instrumental background music. Then continue with the following guided meditation. Pause for a few seconds at each ellipsis (. . .).

- Standing up for your values and the rights of others is not always easy. We have a need to belong, and we don't like to be rejected. No one does. Jesus knows that. He was always standing up for others.

The people he helped were sometimes embarrassed but always appreciative. Jesus had to stand by his values, and he invites us to do the same.

Imagine yourself on a desert road back in the time of Jesus. . . . The air is hot and dry. . . . There's a slight wind every once in a while that kicks up the dirt and sand. . . . Behind you is the village you just left, and in front of you are fields worked by farmers. . . . This is their means of survival, their livelihood. . . . As the sun covers the field of wheat, the stalks appear golden. . . . You stop to admire the beautiful scene. . . . There is no one working today because it is the Sabbath. . . . It is the Lord's day. . . . The Law states that no one is to work on the Sabbath. . . .

In the distance you see a small group of people gathered, looking at the field. . . . As you get closer, you hear them arguing about something. . . . You recognize some of the people. . . . The farmer and his wife who own the field look distressed. . . . Two of the local Pharisees—the town officials—are there arguing with the farmer and his wife. . . .

You now see Jesus and two of his Apostles approach the group. . . . The farmer and his wife look relieved to see Jesus. . . . As you get closer, you see and hear the cause of the discussion. . . . Stuck in a ditch in the field is the farmer's ox. . . . You hear the animal cry in pain. . . . Why isn't anyone doing anything you wonder? . . .

Now you are next to the crowd and can hear the conversation. . . . The farmer wants to help the ox out of the ditch. . . . The Pharisees claim that doing so would be work, and no one is permitted to work on the Sabbath. . . . That takes you by surprise. . . . Surely helping an injured animal could not be considered work. . . . It is mercy. . . .

Now everyone turns to Jesus for his opinion. . . . Jesus says it is not against God's Law to help a suffering animal. . . . The Pharisees storm away in anger. . . . The farmer and his wife are relieved. . . .

Jesus invites you to walk with him and discuss what just happened. . . . Jesus asks you: "What do you think I should have done—what I did, walk away, or wait until the Pharisees left and

helped the farmer in private?" Spend a few minutes talking with Jesus. [Longer pause.]

Tell Jesus about a time when you were a victim of prejudice. Describe what helped you through it. [Longer pause.]

Tell Jesus about a time when you helped someone else who was being victimized. [Longer pause.]

If you could change one situation in your life, which one would you change and why? [Longer pause.]

Would you like to talk to Jesus about anything else before he goes? [Longer pause.]

Jesus says: "I know what it's like to be rejected. . . . But that doesn't mean rejection defeated me. . . . In many ways it made me a stronger person. . . . When I felt really down, what got me through was prayer. . . . God is always with me, strengthening me, and I am with you. . . . Always believe in yourself and your values."

Before he leaves, Jesus wants to give you a sign of friendship to strengthen you. . . . Feel Jesus make the sign of the cross on your forehead as he says, "This is for the gift of wisdom." . . . Feel him make the sign of the cross on your eyes as he says, "This is for the gift to see each person as I do." . . . Feel him make the sign of the cross on your mouth as he says, "This is for the gift to speak the truth." . . . Feel him make the sign of the cross on your hands and say, "This is for the gift to build a world of harmony and peace." . . .

Jesus leaves now. . . . He walks back down the road toward the village. . . . Now you sit down on the side of the road, close your eyes, and say a little prayer of thanks: "Jesus, thank you for showing me the way to live through rejection without being defeated. It still hurts at times, so please continue to guide me. When I do stand up for myself or another, I truly feel courageous and heroic. Guide me in all things. Thank you for being my special friend and guide."

When you open your eyes, you will no longer be sitting on the road but back here in this room. When you are ready, slowly open your eyes and come back.

Evaluation Large Group (5 minutes)

After the guided meditation, direct the teens to reflect in writing on the following questions. Invite them to answer aloud if they feel comfortable doing so.

- If you had only one word to describe today, what word would you pick?
- What is one new thing you learned today, or what is one thing you really liked? (It could be something we did or something someone said.)
- What do you feel God is challenging you to do as a result of this retreat?