


ScriptureWalk Senior High Discipleship

Bible-Based Sessions for Teens

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*To my mom, who helped me see things from the other point of view,
and my dad, who asked, "What would Jesus do?"*

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Introduction

The Reason for the ScriptureWalk Series

The search for both meaning and mystery is a powerful quest with young people, especially as they begin to form their own personal worldview during adolescence. As young people journey through this stage of life, they begin to ask important spiritual questions, such as How did life start? Why do bad things happen to good or innocent people? What is my purpose? Where is God? and even, Is God?

In the search for answers to these questions, the Bible shines like a beacon. Within the Bible's pages, God's word sheds light on both the meaning and the mystery of life. The more young people are assisted in reading and reflecting on the powerful messages contained in the Scriptures, the better equipped they will be for the spiritual journey, both individually and communally.

Vatican Council II opened the doors for Catholics to read and study the Bible with renewed fervor. In the last few decades, parish Scripture study groups have sprung up across the country as Catholic adults began to enthusiastically explore the Bible. However, the Catholic scriptural renewal has yet to fully flower among Catholic young people, partly owing to a lack of resources designed to engage Catholic young people in Bible study and reflection. The ScriptureWalk series is designed to help fill that gap.

Bringing the Scriptures to Life

God speaks to us through the Bible whomever we are and wherever we are and whatever age we might be. The Bible is a source of strength and a source of challenge. The Scriptures have an incredible power to transform our life. If we invite the Scriptures off the written page and into our life and heart, we cannot help but be changed in a radical way. *The ScriptureWalk Senior High* sessions in this book will help you in making the Bible come alive for your senior high youth.

The Goals of *ScriptureWalk Senior High: Discipleship*

ScriptureWalk Senior High: Discipleship has four goals:

- That the young people study the Bible using a group process that is consistent with Catholic scriptural interpretation
- That the young people apply the Bible's teachings to their life as young disciples

- That volunteer youth or adult leaders use the session components in a variety of settings
- That the young people are motivated to read and reflect on the Scriptures as a part of their regular prayer life

In addressing these goals, this volume of the ScriptureWalk series contains eight sessions on topics connected to discipleship. Empowering young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ is an important priority for Catholic youth ministry. It is a named goal in *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1997). The discipleship themes in these sessions were chosen based on a survey of Catholic youth leaders. The Bible passages used with each theme were carefully selected to speak authentically to the topic.

The Structure of *ScriptureWalk Senior High*

All the *ScriptureWalk Senior High* books give group leaders a great deal of flexibility in how they use the session components. Each session is divided into three separate but interrelated components. These components can be used together to create a 90-minute session on a particular theme, they can be used separately to enhance other events, or they can be combined in various ways to create new activities. To facilitate this independent use, each of the three components starts on a new page and has its own list of needed materials, unless no special materials are required. When appropriate, special instructions are included for using a component as an independent activity. Each component is also designated by a special icon. The icon appears at the top of every page containing directions for that component. This will help in locating directions for a specific component. The icons with descriptions of the three components follow.



Study It

The first component of every session in this book is called Study It and takes 45 to 60 minutes. The Study It component is essentially a five-step Bible study process on the session theme. The steps are described more fully in this introduction, in the section titled "Leading the Study It Component."



Live It

The second component of each session is called Live It. It consists of a 15- to 30-minute activity engaging the young people in the session topic in an active and thought-provoking way. The Live It component can lead them to better understand how the Bible's teaching on the topic can be lived out today.

In addition to the primary activity, I have included an alternative approach for the Live It component. It gives you an option to consider using with your group. Like the primary activity, it engages the young people in a fun and active way, but it is described in less detail. After you have looked over the primary activity, consider the potential of the alternative approach for fitting your group's interest.



Pray It

The third component of each session is Pray It, a 10- to 15-minute prayer service on the theme of the session's Scripture passage. The prayer services use guided meditation, shared prayer, music, silence, and reflective readings. The Pray It component gives the young people an opportunity to bring their insights and concerns to God in prayer.

Suggestions for Program Leaders

Where and When Should I Use These Sessions?

The active-learning techniques and small-group discussions of *ScriptureWalk Senior High* sessions make them ideal for use with either high school youth groups or catechetical programs. The sessions are arranged alphabetically by topic. They do not build on one another, so you can use them independently whenever your group wants (or needs!) to study a particular topic. Or you can use all eight sessions as a semester course on life issues. You can create 60- to 90-minute (or even longer) sessions by using one, two, or three of the components.

Keep in mind that each of the three session components can be used independently. This allows for great flexibility in how you use them. For example, a group of young people meeting after school for an hour-long Bible study might use only the Study It and Pray It portions of a session. Or a parish youth ministry coordinator might choose to use all three components of a session as one integrated activity during a retreat. In still another setting, a leader might decide to use the Pray It component from the discipleship session to conclude a youth group meeting on discipleship.

Consider how you might use the *ScriptureWalk Senior High* components in the following settings:

- Catholic high school religion classes
- youth group meetings
- retreats
- parish religious education classes
- Confirmation preparation classes
- leadership training sessions
- mentor programs
- intergenerational activities

What Group Size Works with These Sessions?

The time estimates for the session components are based on a group size of ten to fifteen young people. However, by slightly adjusting the session plans, they can be used with groups as small as five or as large as sixty. For example, when doing a discussion exercise with a large group, invite only a limited number of participants to share their thoughts. Or break the large group into smaller groups. Look over the session plan in advance to determine which activities will work better with a large group and which will work better with small groups.

For discussions in the Study It components, it is important to work in groups of five to eight young people, thus allowing everyone more opportunity to share their thoughts on the Bible passage and the

discussion questions. If you are doing several topics from *ScriptureWalk Senior High* with the same large group, you may want to keep the small discussion groups consistent from session to session to encourage deeper sharing over time.

What Bible Should I Use?

Ideally, every person participating in *ScriptureWalk Senior High* will have his or her own Bible to use. This can help the participants become more comfortable in using the Bible. Use a Catholic edition containing both the Old and New Testaments. Avoid translations that use archaic language (like the King James version) or paraphrasing (like the Living Bible). The New American Bible and the Catholic edition of the New Revised Standard Version are good choices.

We strongly recommend using a youth-friendly study Bible such as *The Catholic Youth Bible*, published by Saint Mary's Press. Such Bibles commonly contain helpful background articles and introductions to individual books of the Bible that can enrich the participants' knowledge and discussion.

Leading the Study It Component

The Study It component is the heart of each *ScriptureWalk Senior High* session. It has a consistent five-step format. The steps are explained below with suggestions for leading each one.

Step 1: Opening activity

Each session starts with a catchy, short activity introducing the participants to the session theme. The activities are simple and take 10 minutes or less. If your group is large, the opening activity could be done as a large group. Or you could break the group into small groups of five to eight before the opening activity and have the young people stay in their group for the whole Bible study. You can designate a young person in each group as its facilitator. Or you may wish to have young adult or adult facilitators.

Step 2: Proclamation

In this step the Scripture passage chosen to address the session topic is proclaimed. Proclaiming the Scriptures is different from simply reading them. Proclamation implies an intentional reading, done with feeling and conviction. You may proclaim the reading yourself, or you may ask a participant to do it. If you have a large group that has already divided into small groups, assign and prepare a reader for each group. Give the person or persons proclaiming the passage some time to practice. Be sure the person proclaiming the passage in each group does not disturb the other groups by reading too loudly.

Have group members follow along in their Bible while the passage is being read. Although reading along in this way would not be appropriate in a eucharistic liturgy, it is appropriate and even desirable for a Bible study.

Step 3: Initial reaction

In this step the young people briefly react to the Scripture passage they have just heard. Believers are convinced that God does speak to us through the Bible. An age-old practice for helping us listen to what God is saying is to listen for words, phrases, or stories that strike a chord within us. Three or four reflection questions in this step help the young people do that. Emphasize that the questions have no right or wrong answers. And do not try to force the discussion of them to go on too long. Usually, 5 to 10 minutes suffice.

If your group is large and you have not already divided it into small groups, do so for this step. Each discussion group may have five to eight people. The young people will work in these small groups for this discussion and the final discussion in step 5.

Step 4: Commentary

After the initial reaction to the Scripture passage, the leader presents a brief commentary on the passage. The commentary gives background on the passage's historical situation and the church's interpretation of it. This sets the stage for the application step, in which the young people apply the passage to their life today. The commentary helps them make this application in light of the church's understanding of the passage, rather than entirely based on their personal interpretation.

You can deliver the commentary in several ways:

- Read it out loud to the group as it is written.
- Photocopy it and give a copy to each participant to read over silently, or ask one person to read it out loud while the others follow along.
- Present it in your own words. Write the major points out on newsprint to add emphasis.
- If you have formed small discussion groups, designate a reader in each group and give her or him a copy of it to read aloud.

Regardless of the method employed, this step should be short and simple, no more than 5 minutes.

Step 5: Application

The final step is a sharing exercise in which the group's initial reaction and the commentary are connected to the experience of young people today. Depending on how comfortable the participants are with one another, and on how talkative they tend to be, this step can last 15 to 25 minutes. Allow enough time for the young people to really grapple with the implications of the biblical message.

Given your knowledge of the young people in your group, before the session, review the discussion questions in this step and decide which ones to ask and which ones to drop. Rephrase or add questions if you think doing so might spark discussion better.

Challenge each participant to search for her or his personal answers to the reflection questions. Do not allow a few participants to dominate the discussion. One good strategy for involving everyone is to first ask the participants to journal or reflect quietly on a question or set of questions for a couple of minutes. Then invite them to share their reflections out loud. This allows the more introverted members time to formulate their responses and encourages the extroverted members to think more deeply about their answers.

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare!

Prepare for a session by reading over its components and deciding which ones to use. Become familiar with the commentary in the Study It component. If necessary, look up additional background in a Bible commentary or a Bible dictionary (see the resources at the end of this introduction). Be sure to gather the necessary supplies and take care of any other preparations. To help you with this, when appropriate, each component begins with a materials needed list and a list of other necessary preparations. Be sure to look at these lists for each component that you are using.

Put Together a Supply Box

Many of the same materials are needed for each session. You can save time by collecting these materials in a supply box and having it on hand for each session. We recommend that the box include the following items:

- Bibles, one for each person
- pens or pencils
- markers
- scrap paper
- newsprint
- several pairs of scissors
- a candle and matches
- a tape or CD player, and recordings of reflective instrumental music
- masking tape
- a Bible concordance
- a Bible commentary

Involve the Participants

When conducting *ScriptureWalk Senior High* sessions or activities, use young people in leadership roles as much as possible. One of the best ways to learn about something is to teach it to others. So as you prepare for a session, consider ways participants can be invited to lead parts of each component. You might ask them to proclaim a reading, lead a prayer experience, or conduct a group discussion. Any of the session readings or directions can be photocopied for this purpose. When group members are involved, they are more likely to learn and grow.

Adapt the Components to Fit Your Group

Like individuals, each group is unique. To use a session exactly as it is written may not be the most effective strategy for your group. While preparing for the session, think of the unique traits of your group members. Which session questions, activities, or prayers seem to speak to them and their life situations? Which do not? Can the latter be altered or adjusted to make them relevant? Often, slightly changing the wording of a question or adding a step to an activity can make the difference between a successful group experience and an incredibly successful group experience!

Set Up an Appealing Environment

Even the most prepared group leader will have a difficult time getting the group members involved if the meeting environment is uncomfortable, uninviting, or distracting. Take time to evaluate your physical environment:

- Provide sufficient light. The room should be neither too bright nor too dark.
- Avoid areas with continual distractions: doors being opened and closed, phones ringing, or people walking by.
- Consider having snacks and beverages available for participants before the session or during a break.
- Arrange the chairs for small groups in a circle to reflect the idea that everyone in the group is on equal ground.

Also notice the relational environment. Make the participants feel welcome. Actions like the following can make a big difference:

- Warmly greet the participants by name.
- Help group members learn and use one another's names throughout the session.
- As new people enter the group, invite the current members to welcome and orient them.

Session Follow-Up Ideas

ScriptureWalk Senior High provides two tools to help the young people continue their reflection after the session, either individually or with their family. The first tool is a short section at the end of each session called Family Connection. This section gives a simple, family-based follow-up idea for the session. You may wish to send the ideas home in a newsletter, photocopy them for the participants, or simply suggest them to the young people at the end of the session.

The second tool is a bookmark containing five Scripture passages and related questions for individuals to use for reflection or journaling after each session. A different bookmark has been created specifically for each session. They are grouped together in appendix B of this manual. Photocopy the bookmarks for your group. Note that many of the Scripture passages on the bookmarks are also connected to informative articles in *The Catholic Youth Bible*, published by Saint Mary's Press.

Interpreting the Scriptures

ScriptureWalk Senior High uses a contextualist approach to interpreting the Scriptures. Contextualism is one of two very different approaches that Christians take in interpreting the Scriptures. The other approach, often referred to as fundamentalism, views all the stories and information in the Bible as historical and scientific fact. For example, a fundamentalist approach insists that God did in fact create the world in six 24-hour days.

Contextualism Versus Fundamentalism

Like the fundamentalist approach, the contextualist approach believes the Bible is true and without error in teaching the things God wants us to know for our salvation. But the contextualist approach does not insist that all the stories and information in the Bible must be interpreted as historical and scientific fact. A contextualist approach keeps in mind the literary genre or style of a particular book, the cultural background of the inspired author's original audience, and the church's ongoing teaching about the particular passage. For example, someone approaching the creation stories with a contextualist approach would recognize that the inspired author was using a mythic type of literature to teach that God is creator of all that is and that human beings have a responsibility toward God, creation, and other people. Given the literary genre, someone using this approach would not look for a scientific explanation in the story of how the world was created.

The Catholic church embraces and teaches the contextualist approach to the Scriptures, and, as mentioned above, it is used in *ScriptureWalk Senior High*. This approach to reading and interpreting the Scriptures requires more of the reader than does taking the stories literally, word for word, but it leads to more accurate and faithful interpretation. For more background on the Catholic understanding of the Bible, see the article in appendix A, "Reading the Scriptures as a Catholic."

Suggested Resources

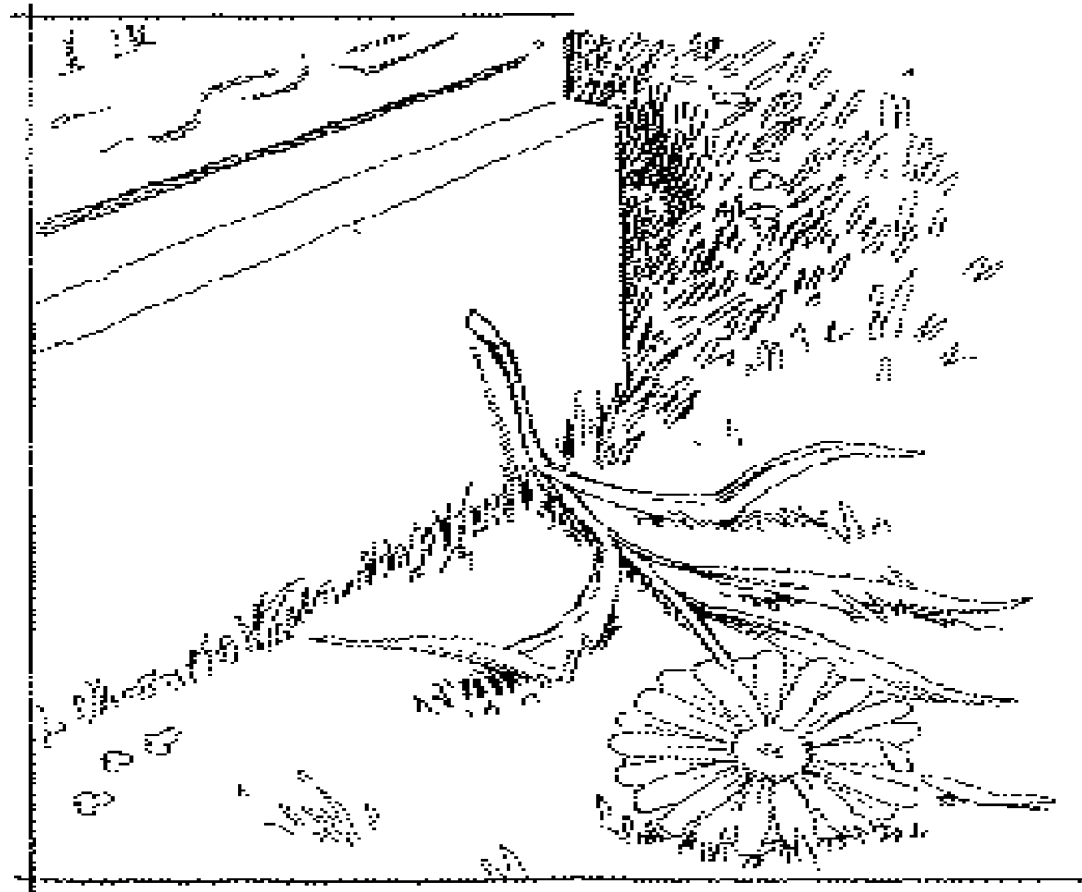
An overwhelming number of resources for studying the Bible are available. The following resources are recommended for leaders and groups using *ScriptureWalk Senior High*:

- Achtemeier, Paul J., gen. ed. *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. [San Francisco]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996. Provides helpful information on people, places, and concepts in the Bible.
- Bergant, Dianne, and Robert J. Karris, gen. eds. *Collegeville Bible Commentary*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989. Gives detailed information and interpretation for each book in the Bible.
- The Bible Library for Catholics*. Liguori Software, 800-325-9521. This computer CD-ROM has three complete Catholic translations of the Bible, Nave's Topical Index, search software, and more.
- Kohlenberger, John R., III, ed. *The Concise Concordance to the New Revised Standard Version*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Bible concordances show all the places selected words and themes can be found in a particular version of the Bible.
- Ralph, Margaret Nutting. "And God Said What?" *An Introduction to Biblical Literary Forms for Bible Lovers*. New York: Paulist Press, 1986. A wonderful introduction to interpreting the Bible from a contextualist approach.
- Singer-Towns, Brian. *The Bible: Power and Promise*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1997. This course from the Horizons series contains five sessions introducing the Bible to senior high students. You may wish to use some or all of the course with your group before using *ScriptureWalk Senior High*.

Death

John 11:1-44

For Christians the central mystery of our faith revolves around death and resurrection. This session focuses on the raising of Lazarus. The story of Lazarus is a promise that offers young people a new perspective on death. It reveals not only the grief and loss that accompany death but also the hope that comes from knowing Christ's triumph over death. This story can help young people understand that for Christians death is an experience of both grief and hope.



Study It

Roll Away the Stone (45-60 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Bibles, one for each person
- fine-tip markers, one for each person
- a basket of small stones, at least one stone for each person

Before the Session

- If you plan to have a student proclaim the Scriptures in step 2, tell him or her ahead of time so that he or she can practice.
- Decide how you will present the commentary in step 4 (see page 12 of the introduction for options).

Step 1

Opening Activity (10 minutes)

Explain to the young people that this session is about death, our responses to it, and what our Christian faith tells us about it. Give everyone a fine-tip marker and invite them each to choose a stone from a basket of small stones. Tell them to imagine that in sixty or seventy years, their little stone will be their headstone and that because the stone is so small, they will be allowed just one word on it as a memorial of their life. Invite the participants to think about their life. Ask: "At the end of your life, how do you hope to be remembered? What one word will you write on this stone?" If the group is slow in starting, offer the following suggestions: loving, successful, forgiving, wife, husband, grandpa, grandma, faithful, generous, caring, strong, joyful.

Give everyone a little time to think and to write their word on their stone. Then invite them to share their word with the group if they wish. It is more important that everyone be given a chance to consider the question than to have everyone answer out loud.

Step 2

Proclamation (5-10 minutes)

Direct the young people to open their Bible to John 11:1-44 so that they can follow along as the passage is proclaimed. When everyone is quiet and ready, proclaim John 11:1-44, or if you have asked a student to do so, instruct her or him to begin.

Optional activity: Character assignments

This passage's length and structure lends itself to a dramatic reading involving several people. You may wish to select people in the group to read each of the following parts: narrator, Mary, Martha, the disciples, Jesus, and Thomas.

Step 3

Initial Reaction (10 minutes)

Lead a brief discussion using the following questions. If your group is large, break it into small groups of five to eight people for this step.



Suggest that the group members refer to John 11:1–44 in their Bible, as necessary.

- What word or phrase from the passage stood out as you listened to the reading?
- What questions or feelings does this Scripture passage raise for you?
- What attitude do you find most young people have about death? Is it an attitude of fear? denial? anger? hope? curiosity?

Step 4 **Commentary (5 minutes)**

After the discussion deliver the following commentary in the manner of your choice (see page 12 of the introduction for options):

- This passage from John’s Gospel is a wonderful story. It is a story of loss and restoration, of letting go and unexpectedly receiving again. Hidden inside the story is a second story—the story of Jesus, the savior.

In this passage we hear of sickness and death, of sisters who loved and lost their brother, of sisters who cared for their brother as he fell ill and stayed with him as he died, of sisters who placed their brother’s body in the tomb and mourned him. Anyone who has lost someone they love knows the sorrow that Mary and Martha experienced.

But this story is different. This story does not end with sorrow. The sorrow is only the beginning of this story. Jesus’ surprise answer to Martha’s profession of faith and to Mary’s tears is a miracle. “Take away the stone” [11:39]. “Lazarus, come out” [11:43]. Jesus is life! *That’s* the story.

The Gospel of John is poetic, rich in drama and symbolism; its form is quite different from that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In these Gospels, Jesus often teaches about God’s Reign through parables. But the Gospel of John focuses on Jesus’ relationship with God and his relationship with his followers through miraculous signs. The raising of Lazarus is one of those miraculous signs unique to the Gospel of John—it is not repeated in the other Gospels. This passage reveals Jesus’ close relationships with those he loves. It also reveals his intimate relationship with God, who gives him power over death. The story reveals what Martha has proclaimed, “You are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world” [11:27].

Through great irony this story also reveals that life and death are intimately connected. Unbelievably, by raising Lazarus, Jesus signs his own death sentence. Jesus’ returning to Judea and raising a man from the dead so stirs the people that the Pharisees and the high priest are worried that the Romans will destroy the Jews. In the verses that directly follow this story, the Pharisees and the high priest decide to arrest and kill Jesus to save the people. Chapter 11 is meant to prepare the reader for chapter 20. The story of Lazarus’s death and resurrection is meant to prepare the reader for Jesus’ own death and Resurrection.

John’s Gospel was written for a diverse community—Jews, Greeks, and Samaritans. The community of John was also under scrutiny and received criticism from many directions, including



from the Pharisees and other Christians whose beliefs differed from theirs. The power of this story must have given the people of John’s community strength and hope. It is a story that also gives us strength and hope in knowing that Jesus is the Resurrection and the life. The death of those we love will cause us sadness as the death of Jesus’ loved ones caused him sadness. But we also know that death is not the end for those who believe!

Step 5 **Application (15-25 minutes)**

Use the following questions to involve the participants in further discussion of how John 11:1–44 applies to their life. You may wish to rephrase or add to these questions to tailor them to your group.

- Does it seem strange to you that Jesus waited to go to Lazarus? If you had a friend who was dying, what might keep you from visiting right away?
- Jesus tells his disciples, “Those who walk during the day do not stumble” [11:9]. What do you think he means by this? Name some ways to walk during the day. What are some of the ways people today choose to “walk at night” [11:10]?
- Thomas and the other Apostles expect to be killed along with Jesus when they go back to Judea. If you were Thomas, do you think you would have gone with Jesus? Why or why not? Have you ever believed in anyone or anything so much you were willing to die for them or it?
- It is Jesus’ mission to reveal the Father. In turn it is our mission as Jesus’ disciples to reveal the Father and the Son. How do you reveal God?
- Martha believes wholeheartedly in Jesus and that her brother will eventually rise again. Do you feel strong in your belief about life after death, or is it hard for you to feel certain about that?
- Why, do you think, does Jesus weep?
- What is the most important part of this story for you?



Live It

Ripples (30 minutes)

This activity focuses on the deaths the participants have experienced and how God can and does act in the most difficult times in our life.

Materials Needed

- newsprint and markers
- masking tape
- string
- pens or pencils
- index cards, two for each person

Before the Session

- Title a sheet of newsprint, “Death of,” and write under that the following list: parent, sibling, friend, other relative, famous person, acquaintance, someone else. Post the sheet in the room.
- Write the following questions on a second sheet of newsprint and post it in the room:
 1. What gifts did this person have? What did you learn from him or her? What positive memories do you have of this person?
 2. What have you learned from this person’s death? How are you different because of the loss?
- Create a set of three concentric circles on the floor formed with string or tape, the largest circle being about 6 feet in diameter.

Step 1

When doing this component as an independent activity. If you are doing this component as an independent activity, you may want to proclaim John 11:1–44 and share the commentary from step 4 of the Study It component.

Ask the participants to look at the newsprint titled “Death of” and to think of people they knew who have died. Then ask them to choose one person whom they would like to reflect on. Distribute pens or pencils, and index cards. Direct the young people each to write on the blank side of an index card the name of the person they have selected and to draw a symbol representing her or him. The symbol could be something that they remember about the person, like a smile for someone who was happy or a peace sign for someone who was peaceful. Or the symbol could be an object that represents that person, like the hat she or he wore or the chair she or he liked to sit in. Give the participants a few minutes to complete this task.

Direct the young people to write on the lined side of the card responses to the questions you listed on the second sheet of newsprint. Again give the young people a few minutes of quiet to write their responses.



Step 2

Explain that the circles on the floor represent the effect that the death of the person on their card has had on their life. Ask the young people to listen to the following descriptions and place their card, symbol side up, in the appropriate ring:

- The outer ring represents people whose death has affected our life a little. Whether or not we knew them well, their death made us pause to consider our own life, the people whom we love, and what death means.
- The middle ring represents people whose death affected us more deeply. Their death may have made us more aware of our faith, or it may have made us more aware of the things in life that are really important. This death may have caused us either to question our beliefs or to embrace them more fervently.
- The center ring represents people whose loss hit at the core of our being. To lose them changed who we are, the way we think about ourselves, and even the way we live. We will be different now that these people have died.

Let the participants take their time placing their card in one of the rings, encouraging them to give careful consideration to their choice.

Step 3

Invite the participants to share with the group the symbol they drew on their index card. To extend the activity, have the young people share their responses to the questions. If your group is large, let the young people do this sharing in small groups of five to seven. If you have time, ask the participants to make up another card and place it in one of the rings.

Summarize the exercise by making the following points in your own words:

- The rings are like the ripples formed when you throw a stone in a pond. The ripples are highest at the point where the stone first strikes the surface. Similarly, the closer contact we have had with a person, the more his or her death can affect us.
- Jesus knows what it is like to lose someone he loves; he knows the pain and loss we feel.
- The circles are also like ripples in time because both Lazarus and Jesus died and rose almost two thousand years ago. Although we didn’t experience their lives personally, the ripples continue to spread and touch our lives and the lives of millions of people.

Alternative Approach

Remember Me

This alternative approach can replace the Live It component. Ask the participants to design a memorial for someone they know who has died. They should first decide what kind of memorial it would be: a service, a statue, a park, a scholarship, an event, and so on. Once they have decided on the type of memorial, direct them to write or draw specific plans for it.

After they finish lead a discussion with questions like the following:

- Why did you choose this type of memorial?
- How does the memorial reflect the life and legacy of the person who died?
- How would the memorial affect the friends and relatives of this person?



Pray It

Seeds of New Life (15 minutes)

Materials Needed

- a small table
- a candle and matches
- a plastic foam cup filled with potting soil, one for each person
- Bibles, one for each person
- seeds, one for each person

Before the Session

- Set a table in the center of the room where the group will gather, and place on it a candle, matches, and plastic foam cups of potting soil, one for each person.

Prayer Directions

Ask the young people to open their Bible to John 12:24–25. Give each participant a seed. Dim the lights and light the candle. Ask the young people to hold the seed in their hand and to focus on it while you read the following reflection. Read slowly and pause briefly between paragraphs.

- This seed that you hold in your hand was once a part of a living, growing plant. The plant began from another seed. The plant grew and flowered in the miraculous way that all plants do.
It withered and died, and that appeared to be its end, but here in your hand is a tiny part of that dead plant. This little seed, nothing much to look at now, is a symbol of God's promise of resurrection.
We know that when we plant this seed, it will come to life again. Like Lazarus placed in his tomb, like the people we love who have died, like each of us at the end of our life, we must die to come into eternal life with God.
In the Scriptures Jesus says, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" [John 12:24]. So it was with Jesus; he died and came to life again. So it is with us; we will die and rise again. So it is with this little seed.
This seed will go into darkness, under the soil, and grow toward the warmth and the light until its resurrection is evident to all who see.
Let this seed be a reminder of Jesus' promise, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" [11:25–26].

Invite the young people to take a cup, plant their seed, and return to their place. Then read aloud John 12:24–25. Tell the young people to hold their cup in one hand and raise their other hand over it in blessing as you offer this prayer or a similar prayer in your own words:

- Lord, we ask your blessing on these seeds. Let them remind us of your promise of eternal life. Help us to know that as surely as this seed will come to life again, we will rise to be with you in heaven. Strengthen our faith. Help us always to remember that like Mary and Martha and their brother, Lazarus, the people whom we love are not lost to us, that you, the God of healing and hope and restoration, will bring us together again. We pray in the name of Jesus, the risen Lord. Amen.

Session Follow-Up

Family Connection

Invite the participants to take home their index card or cards and seed cup and share them with their family. Suggest that they ask a parent or the whole family to share favorite memories about a family member or friend who has died.

Daily Reading and Reflection

Scripture Walk Bookmark

Distribute to the participants the bookmark for this session, found in appendix B. Point out that the bookmark has scriptural passages and questions on it. Invite the young people to deepen their understanding of the scriptural teaching on death and resurrection by reading the passages and reflecting or journaling on the questions over the next several days.

