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# Hands-on Ideas

for ministry with young teens

**H E L P**

Heads-up | Easy | Low-Cost | Purposeful

Maryann Hakowski and Joyce Schoettler Jennings

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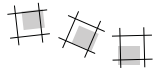
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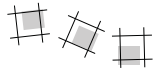
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# Introduction

*Hands-on Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens* is one of seven books in the HELP series—a collection of **H**eads-up, **E**asy, **L**ow-Cost, and **P**urposeful activities for young adolescents. These strategies are designed to be used as part of a comprehensive youth ministry program for grades six to eight. The strategies can stand alone or complement a religious education curriculum.

The other books in the HELP series are as follows:

- ☉ *Community-Building Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Family Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Holiday and Seasonal Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Justice and Service Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Prayer Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Retreat Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*

These books are helpful resources for anyone who works with young adolescents in a church or school setting. They can provide a strong foundation for a year-round, total youth ministry program whose goal is to evangelize young adolescents and support them in their faith journey.

## Overview of This Book

*Hands-on Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens* may be used by a coordinator of youth ministry, a director of religious education, catechists, teachers, a parish youth ministry team, or any adult who works with young teens. Ownership of the book includes permission to duplicate any part of it for use with program participants.

The book's strategies are organized into three parts:

- ☉ **Part A: Reflection and Discussion Strategies** contains activities for personal reflection, self-disclosure, and affirmation.



- ⊙ **Part B: Active Learning Strategies** includes a variety of activities for learning and reviewing factual material.
- ⊙ **Part C: Prayer and Faith-Building Strategies** is a collection of ideas for prayer and reflection that engage young teens at many different levels.

### **Format of the Strategies**

Each strategy begins with a brief description of its purpose. The next element is a suggested time for the activity. This is flexible and takes into account several variables, such as the size of the group, the comfort level of the participants, and whether you want to include a break. Use the suggested time as a starting point and modify it according to your circumstances. It is a good idea to include time for a break within the longer strategies.

Next is a description of the size of the group that the strategy was written for. Most of the strategies work with a range of group sizes. If your group is large, be sure to recruit enough adults to help with logistics and supervision. A good rule to follow is that for every six to eight young teens, one adult should be present.

In some strategies a section on special considerations follows the one on group size. It includes things such as notices about remote preparation requirements and cautions to pay special attention to a particular developmental issue of early adolescence.

A complete checklist of materials needed is the next part of the presentation of every strategy. A detailed description of the strategy's procedure is then provided, followed by alternative approaches. Those alternatives may be helpful in adapting the strategy to the needs of your group.

Frequently included is a list of scriptural passages that may be used with the strategy for reflection or prayer. The list is not exhaustive; a Bible concordance will provide additional citations if you want to add a more substantial scriptural component to a strategy.

The final element in each strategy offers space for keeping notes about how you might want to use the strategy in the future or change it to fit the needs of your group.

### **Programming Ideas**

The strategies in this book can be used in a variety of ways. Consider the following suggestions:

- ⊙ The program coordinator, catechists, teachers, and coordinator of youth ministry may collaborate to plan youth meetings and special activities that use strategies from this and other books in the HELP series.

- ⊙ Schoolteachers may use ideas from this and other books in the HELP series to supplement their day-to-day curriculum and to add a fun dimension to classroom learning processes.
- ⊙ Many of the strategies in the HELP series can be adapted for use with multi-generational groups.

### **Standard Materials**

Many of the items in the materials checklists are common to several strategies in the series. To save time consider gathering frequently used materials in convenient bins and storing those bins in a place that is accessible to all staff and volunteer leaders. Some recommendations for how to organize such bins follow.

#### **Supply Bin**

The following items frequently appear in materials checklists:

- ⊙ Bibles, at least one for every two participants
- ⊙ masking tape
- ⊙ cellophane tape
- ⊙ washable and permanent markers (thick and thin)
- ⊙ pens or pencils
- ⊙ self-stick notes
- ⊙ scissors
- ⊙ newsprint
- ⊙ blank paper, scrap paper, and notebook paper
- ⊙ postcards
- ⊙ notepaper
- ⊙ envelopes
- ⊙ baskets
- ⊙ candles and matches
- ⊙ items to create a prayer space (e.g., a colored cloth, a cross, a bowl of water, and a vase for flowers)

#### **Craft Bin**

Many of the strategies use craft activities to involve the young people.

Consider collecting the following supplies in a separate bin:

- ⊙ construction paper
- ⊙ yarn and string, in assorted colors
- ⊙ poster board
- ⊙ glue and glue sticks
- ⊙ fabric paints
- ⊙ glitter and confetti

- ⊗ used greeting cards
- ⊗ beads
- ⊗ modeling clay
- ⊗ paintbrushes and paints
- ⊗ crayons
- ⊗ used magazines and newspapers
- ⊗ hole punches
- ⊗ scissors
- ⊗ stickers of various kinds
- ⊗ index cards
- ⊗ gift wrap and ribbon

### Music Bin

Young people often find deep and profound meaning in the music and lyrics of songs, both past and present. Also, the right music can set an appropriate mood for a prayer or activity. Begin with a small collection of tapes or CDs in a music bin and add to it over time. You might ask the young people to put some of their favorite music in the bin. The bin might include the following styles of music:

- ⊗ *Fun gathering music that is neither current nor popular with young teens.* Ideas are well-known classics (e.g., *Overture to William Tell*, *Stars and Stripes Forever*, and *1812 Overture*), songs from musical theater productions, children's songs, and Christmas songs for use any time of the year.
- ⊗ *Prayerful, reflective instrumental music, such as the kind that is available in the adult alternative, or New Age, section of music stores.* Labels that specialize in this type of music include Windham Hill and Narada.
- ⊗ *Popular songs with powerful messages.* If you are not well versed in popular music, ask the young people to offer suggestions.
- ⊗ *The music of contemporary Christian artists.* Most young teens are familiar with Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, and Steven Curtis Chapman. Also include the work of Catholic musicians, such as David W. Kauffman, Steve Angrisano, Bruce Deaton, Sarah Hart, Jesse Manibusan, and Jessica Alles.

### Other Helpful Resources

In addition to the seven books in the HELP series, the following resources can be useful in your ministry with young adolescents. All the books in the following list are published by Saint Mary's Press and can be obtained by calling or writing us at the phone number and address listed in the "Your Comments or Suggestions" section at the end of this introduction.

Catechism Connection for Teens series, by Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart and Ed Kunzman (1999).

*That First Kiss and Other Stories*

*My Wish List and Other Stories*

*Better Than Natural and Other Stories*

*Straight from the Heart and Other Stories*

*Meeting Frankenstein and Other Stories*

The five books in this collection contain short, engaging stories for teens on the joys and struggles of adolescent life, each with a reflection connecting the story to a Catholic Christian belief. Each book's faith connections reflect teachings from a different part of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

*The Catholic Youth Bible*, edited by Brian Singer-Towns (2000). The most youth-friendly Bible for Catholic teens available. The scriptural text is accompanied by hundreds of articles to help young people pray, study, and live the Scriptures.

*Faith Works for Junior High: Scripture- and Tradition-Based Sessions for Faith Formation*, by Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart (1993). A series of twelve active meeting plans on various topics related to the Scriptures and church life.

*Guided Meditations for Junior High: Good Judgment, Gifts, Obedience, Inner Blindness*, by Jane E. Ayer (1997). Four guided meditations for young teens, available on audiocassette or compact disc. A leader's guide includes the script and programmatic options. Other volumes in this series, called *A Quiet Place Apart*, will also work with young teens.

*Life Can Be a Wild Ride: More Prayers by Young Teens*, edited by Marilyn Kielbasa (2001). A collection of over 230 prayers by and for young adolescents in grades six to eight.

*Looking Past the Sky: Prayers by Young Teens*, edited by Marilyn Kielbasa (1999). A collection of 274 prayers by and for young adolescents in grades six to eight.

*One-Day Retreats for Junior High Youth*, by Geri Braden-Whartenby and Joan Finn Connelly (1997). Six retreats that each fit into a school day or an afternoon or evening program. Each retreat contains a variety of icebreakers, prayers, group exercises, affirmations, and guided meditations.

*Prayers with Pizzazz for Junior High Teens*, by Judi Lanciotti (1996). A variety of creative prayer experiences that grab young teens' attention. The prayers are useful in many different settings, such as classes, meetings, prayer services, and retreats.

*ScriptureWalk Junior High: Bible Themes*, by Maryann Hakowski (1999). Eight 90-minute sessions to help bring youth and the Bible together. Each session applies biblical themes to the life issues that concern young teens.

### **Connections to the Discovering Program**

The Discovering Program, published by Saint Mary's Press, is a religious education program for young people in grades six to eight. It consists of fourteen six-session minicourses. Each session is 1 hour long and based on the principles of active learning.

The strategies in the HELP series cover themes that are loosely connected to those explored in the Discovering Program, and can be used as part of a total youth ministry program in which the Discovering curriculum is the central catechetical component. However, no strategy in the series presumes that the participants have taken a particular course in the Discovering Program, or requires that they do so. The appendices at the end of this book list the connections between the HELP strategies and the Discovering courses.

### **Your Comments or Suggestions**

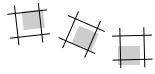
Saint Mary's Press wants to know your reactions to the strategies in the HELP series. We are also interested in new youth ministry strategies for use with young teens. If you have a comment or suggestion, please write the series editor, Marilyn Kielbasa, at 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320; call us at our toll-free number, 800-533-8095; or e-mail the editor at [mkielbasa@smp.org](mailto:mkielbasa@smp.org). Your ideas will help improve future editions of these books.

## **Part A**

# Reflection and Discussion Strategies

The hands-on ideas in this section include strategies for affirming young people, helping them understand themselves and one another, and giving them tools to interact effectively with others. Some of the activities involve creating things, some are simulations, and others are simply designed to take advantage of young teens' need and desire to keep moving.





# Build Your Star

## A Reflection Exercise on Identity

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**OVERVIEW**

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In this reflection exercise, the young people build a unique star that represents five elements of who they are. This is a good exercise to use in conjunction with a lesson on personal giftedness or service.

### **Suggested Time**

15 to 30 minutes

### **Group Size**

This strategy works well with groups smaller than twenty-five people.

### **Special Considerations**

This activity may not work with young teens on the lower end of the age spectrum. The connection between shapes and colors of triangles and personal characteristics may be difficult for some to understand.



## Materials Needed

- ☀ paper plates, one for each person
- ☀ scissors, one for each person
- ☀ pens or pencils
- ☀ markers
- ☀ pastel gel pens
- ☀ glue sticks, at least one for every two people
- ☀ a variety of colored paper, metallic paper, wrapping paper, textured paper, and so forth
- ☀ a Bible

## PROCEDURE

*Preparation.* Cut out at least one of each type of triangle from the list below. Use different colors and types of paper for the triangles. The basic triangles are these:

- ☉ equilateral: three equal sides, three equal angles
- ☉ isosceles: two equal sides, two equal angles
- ☉ scalene: all sides are unequal
- ☉ obtuse: one angle is larger than ninety degrees
- ☉ acute: all angles are less than ninety degrees
- ☉ right: one angle is ninety degrees

You can make the triangles different sizes, but in the end you should be able to create a star on a paper plate with the triangles and have the corners of the bases touching each other.

1. Give each young person a paper plate, a scissors, and a pen or pencil. Have available markers, pastel gel pens, glue sticks, and a variety of papers. Tell the young people that they are going to create a star that represents five different parts of themselves. Explain that you will lead them through a reflection about the five parts of their personality. Based on the reflection, they will design a triangle that represents each part of themselves.

2. Show the teens the triangles you cut out before the session. Discuss the characteristics of each: angle size, line length, and so forth. Also explore with the teens the character traits that a certain triangle might symbolize. For example, the equilateral triangle might represent balance in a certain area. The scalene triangle—a triangle of three unequal sides—could represent a variety of interests, and so forth.

Tell the young people that you will talk about a variety of personal characteristics, and as you mention each one, they are to decide on a color and triangle

shape that represents that part of them. Lead them through the following reflection. Allow time between each section for all the participants to complete their triangle before moving on to the next section. (Note: Pastel gel pens work nicely for writing on dark paper.)



Start with your physical self. Are you short? tall? lanky? bulky? Are you athletic? a couch potato? somewhere in between? Choose a paper that represents your physical traits then cut your triangle accordingly. Write “physical” on the triangle and put it on your paper plate.

Another side of your personality is your emotions. What color represents you emotionally? What kind of triangle represents your emotions? Are your emotions up and down? Do you consider yourself even-tempered? Do people know by looking at you what you’re feeling? What paper and type of triangle best shows this side of you? Cut it out, write “emotional” on it, and put it on the plate with the other one.

Your social side is another part of who you are. Think about your life with your friends and family. Is it what you want it to be? Do you have lots of friends or few? Do you spend enough time with your friends, or do you want more time with them? Do you do anything socially with your family? What color represents your social side? What shape of triangle represents it? Cut out a triangle, write “social” on it, and set it on your plate.

Think about your intellectual self. Do you feel like you are intelligent? Do you use all the brain power you have? Do you feel your brain power is working with you? Do you see yourself as low on the intelligence scale? What color and what type of triangle represents this side of you? Cut it out, write “intelligence” on it, and set it on the plate with the others.

The last side of your personality is your spiritual side. Spirituality includes your values, dreams, hopes, questions about life, and your relationship with God. What color will you choose for this side? And what kind of triangle represents your spirituality? Cut it out, write “spiritual” on it, and put it with your other triangles.

**3.** Note that each person now has a paper plate and five triangles. Explain that they are to create a star by gluing their triangles onto the plate. The only rule is that each triangle must connect at its base to another triangle. The young teens should each write their name in the middle of the star.

Allow time for them to finish the task and compare results. You may want to display the stars in the meeting space for a while for everyone to observe and enjoy.

4. Make the following points in your own words:

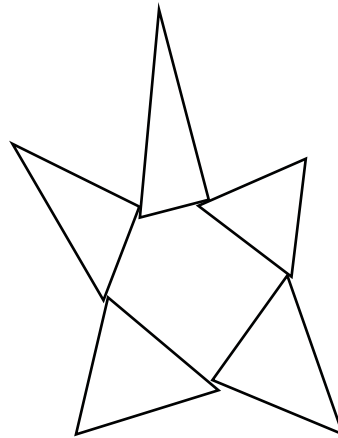


You are a star in God's eyes. The star you created represents the kind of star you think you are. Each person is unique. Who you are today is not the same person you are likely to be tomorrow. We are always changing, evolving, growing into the wonderful person God intended for us to become. Our job as stars is to let our light shine for all to see.

Conclude the activity by reading Matt. 5:14–16.

**ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

- ⊙ If you are using this activity with young teens who are unfamiliar with triangle types and characteristics, do not confuse them by introducing geometric language. Simply cut out the triangles in different shapes and describe them without naming them.
- ⊙ If you think the young people would be willing to do so, invite them to share their stars and tell others in the group why they chose the colors and shapes of triangles that they did. This alternative requires a high degree of trust among group members.
- ⊙ You may want to create a sample star so that you can demonstrate how the triangles should fit together.

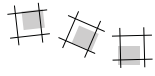


- ⊙ Use small paper plates, poke a hole in the top of each, string a piece of yarn through, and use the stars to decorate a holiday tree in the meeting space.
- ⊙ Create a banner of the scriptural text "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14) or "Let your light shine" (Matt. 5:16) to decorate your meeting space. Attach the stars to the banner.

**NOTES**

Use the space below to jot notes and reminders for the next time you use this strategy.





# Life in a Bag

## An Introduction Activity

### OVERVIEW

This self-disclosure exercise invites the young people to introduce themselves to one another using objects and symbols that represent them. It is a good activity for the beginning of a year or for a retreat.

### Suggested Time

This activity takes place over two or more sessions. It will take 30 to 45 minutes to decorate the bags and 2 to 5 minutes for each person to present the contents of his or her bag at a subsequent session.

### Group Size

This strategy can be done with any size group. However, if the group is larger than ten people, consider having a few people present their bag each week until everyone has had an opportunity to introduce themselves.

### Materials Needed

- ☀ a paper grocery bag for each person
- ☀ craft items such as scissors, glue, markers, paints, crayons, string, yarn, old magazines and newspapers, stickers, lettering, and so forth
- ☀ a Bible

## PROCEDURE

*Preparation.* Create your own “life in a bag” by decorating the outside of a grocery bag with your name and other basic facts about yourself. Use words, pictures, lettering, small objects, and anything else that will let the viewer see who you are.

Put several items inside the bag that identify you, such as a family picture, items that represent important events or hobbies, or things that reveal your personality.

1. Give a paper grocery bag to each young person and make craft supplies available. Display the bag you created before the session to give the teens an idea of what you are looking for. Do not show them the contents of the bag at this time.

Explain that they are to decorate their grocery bag in a way that will show other people a little about who they are. Allow about 30 minutes for the decorating process. Keep close track of time; an activity such as this one can go on for a long time if allowed to.

2. When everyone has decorated a bag, introduce yourself by unpacking the contents of your own bag. Show each item and explain its connection to your life. You may want to pass some objects around the group.

Tell the young people to take their own bag home and fill it with things that will help others get to know them. They can also continue decorating their bag if they want to do so. They should not show others what is in their bag until it is their turn to introduce themselves.

3. At the next gathering, ask for volunteers to unpack their bag and introduce themselves to others. Allow no more than 5 minutes per person.

4. Close each introduction segment by reading Ps. 138:1–3,8 and giving special thanks by name for the people that shared part of themselves with the group.

## ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- ⊙ This activity can be done in one session or on a retreat by asking the young people to cut out pictures from magazines and newspapers that represent them and place them in the bag. If you choose this option, use lunch bags instead of grocery bags.
- ⊙ If the young people already know one another, have them draw names and create a “life in a bag” for someone else. They should put items in the bag that describe or symbolize what they already know about the person.

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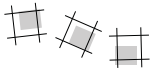
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**NOTES**



☉ Post the bags and use them as collectors for affirmation notes, secret pal exchanges, or small gifts.

Use the space below to jot notes and reminders for the next time you use this strategy.



# Being Michelangelo

## An Exercise in Perspectives

### OVERVIEW

This upside-down painting activity teaches perseverance, patience, tolerance, and appreciation for other people's perspectives and talents.

### Suggested Time

30 to 45 minutes

### Group Size

This strategy works best with twenty-five or fewer participants.

### Materials Needed

- ☀ a book containing photographs of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and a brief biography of Michelangelo
- ☀ 11-by-17-inch paper, one sheet for each person
- ☀ masking tape
- ☀ crayons or markers
- ☀ tables or desks
- ☀ a Bible

**PROCEDURE**

*Preparation.* Prepare a short summary of the life and works of Michelangelo.

1. Display the photographs of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, with Michelangelo's depiction of the creation of Adam and Eve. Briefly introduce Michelangelo as a Renaissance artist and tell the young teens a little about his life and his art. While you are talking, you may want to show the young people pictures of other works that may be familiar to them, such as the Pietà or the statue of David. Be sure to tell the young people how Michelangelo painted most of the Sistine Chapel ceiling while lying on his back.

2. Explain to the young people that to gain perspective on Michelangelo's unique talents, patience, endurance, and perseverance, they are going to attempt to create as he did.

Give each person a sheet of paper, four pieces of masking tape, and a variety of markers or crayons. Direct them to lie on the floor and tape the paper under a desk or a table. Explain the following rules:

The task is to create a piece of art from the same position that Michelangelo did, that is, while lying on your back.

The artwork should contain as much detail as possible.

The entire paper must be filled with color. If you draw a figure or an object, you should also color in the background.

Allow 15 to 20 minutes for this task, depending on the young people's energy and enthusiasm.

3. After time is up, invite the young people to remove the paper from the desk or table and share it with the rest of the group.

4. Lead the group in a discussion around the following questions:

What have you learned about Michelangelo that you can apply to your own life?

As an artist Michelangelo went above and beyond the ordinary. Have you ever had to go above and beyond the ordinary? Explain what you did and the feelings you experienced.

Who in your life has a talent that you do not possess? What is your attitude toward that person's gift?

What talent do you have that is unique? How do you feel about this gift? How do other people show appreciation for it?



**ALTERNATIVE  
APPROACHES**

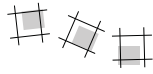
5. Conclude the activity with a prayer of praise to God for everyone's talents. It takes many people with many different talents to make a difference in our world. Close by reading Psalm 150.

- ⊙ Instead of individual pieces of paper, tape a strip of butcher paper underneath each table. Assign as many young people to work under one table as can fit comfortably. Have them create a mural on a biblical theme, such as creation or the journey through the desert.
- ⊙ This activity is especially effective—albeit considerably messier—if you use real paint. Use tempera paints, but be sure to have soapy water and a sponge handy.
- ⊙ If painting under tables or desks is not possible, have the young people create their artwork using the hand opposite their preferred hand.

**NOTES**

Use the space below to jot notes and reminders for the next time you use this strategy.





# Pass the Bag

## A Biblical Affirmation Exercise

### OVERVIEW

Most young teens love to hear good things about themselves, but many rarely get that chance. This affirmation exercise familiarizes them with scriptural values, increases their vocabulary, and builds their self-esteem.

### Suggested Time

45 to 60 minutes

### Group Size

This activity works best with groups of ten to twenty-five people.

### Materials Needed

- ☀ Bibles, one for each person
- ☀ newsprint and markers
- ☀ masking tape
- ☀ paper lunch bags or plain popcorn bags, one for each person
- ☀ pens or pencils

**PROCEDURE**

- ☀ 2-by-4-inch pieces of paper, enough so that every person in the group has one paper for each person in the group including themselves
- ☀ 4-by-6-inch index cards, one for each person

*Preparation.* Write the following scriptural citations on newsprint and post it in the meeting space.

- ☉ Matt. 5:1–10
- ☉ Rom. 12:9–21
- ☉ 1 Cor. 12:4–11
- ☉ 1 Cor. 13:3–13
- ☉ Gal. 5:22–26
- ☉ Eph. 4:25–32

In each paper bag, put the number of small pieces of paper equal to the number of participants in the group; that is, if you have twenty people in your group, put twenty pieces of paper in each bag.

1. Form the participants into six small groups or pairs. You may want to consult another volume in the HELP series, *Community-Building Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*, for creative ideas for forming small groups.

Give each person a Bible and each group a sheet of newsprint and some markers. Assign to each group one of the passages listed on the newsprint that you prepared before the session. Tell them to look up the passage and make a list of the positive qualities of a follower of Christ. They may need to think hard about what quality a passage is referring to. For example, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph. 4:26) means that a follower of Christ is forgiving, reconciling, and does not hold a grudge.

Allow about 10 minutes for the groups to list the Christian qualities from their assigned passage on newsprint. Some groups may need help from you or another adult.

2. As the groups finish the task, give them some masking tape and have them post their newsprint on a wall so that everyone can see the lists. Gather the young people in a central location. Review each list and point out the variety of positive qualities that a follower of Christ possesses. Be sure that the following qualities are on the lists:

- |               |              |                 |             |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| ☉ loyal       | ☉ just       | ☉ truthful      | ☉ prudent   |
| ☉ honorable   | ☉ faithful   | ☉ joyful        | ☉ wise      |
| ☉ dependable  | ☉ loving     | ☉ compassionate | ☉ forgiving |
| ☉ responsible | ☉ kind       | ☉ generous      | ☉ patient   |
| ☉ hopeful     | ☉ helpful    | ☉ fair          | ☉ gentle    |
| ☉ courageous  | ☉ respectful | ☉ honest        |             |

3. Give each person a bag and a pen or pencil. Pass around some markers and tell the young people to write their name on their bag. Call their attention to the slips of paper in their bag. Explain the following directions in your own words:



Take one slip of paper from your bag. Choose three words from the lists on the wall that describe your character strengths and write them on the paper. Put a star on your paper, fold it, and put it back in the bag.

When I give you a signal, pass the bag to your left. Look at the name on the bag you receive, pull out a slip of paper, choose three qualities from the list that describe that person, and write them on the slip. Think carefully about the person whose bag you have. Do not be afraid to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in choosing the best words for that person. Do not put a star on this or any other slip, but fold it and put it back in the bag.

Follow the same procedure for every bag that comes to you until you get your own bag back.

4. When the bags have returned to their owners, give the young people time to read the contents of their bag. They might want to tally the characteristics and compare them with the ones they wrote about themselves in the first part of the exercise.

5. While the young people are reading their notes, distribute one 4-by-6-inch index card to each person. When they are finished reading, ask them to complete the following sentence-starters on the index card. They should not write their name on the card.

- ⊙ Something I liked about this activity is . . .
- ⊙ Something I didn't like about this exercise is . . .
- ⊙ The quality others see in me that surprised me is . . .
- ⊙ A quality I would like to develop more in myself is . . .

6. Collect the cards. Encourage the young people to take their bag home to remind themselves of the good qualities other people see in them.

Close by reading 1 Thess. 5:13b–23.

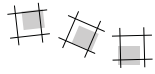
**ALTERNATIVE  
APPROACHES**

- ⊙ Some young people may be conscious of others identifying their handwriting. If this is true in your group, suggest that they print or write with the hand they do not usually write with.
- ⊙ Personalize the closing scriptural passage by inserting a name or names of people in your group between exhortations. For example:
  - ⊙ Be at peace among yourselves, Rashid and Bryan. And we urge you, Vanessa, Haley, and Jana, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. Jerome, Tiffany, and B.J., see that none of you repays evil for evil . . ." (adapted from 1 Thess. 5:13b–15).

**NOTES**

Use the space below to jot notes and reminders for the next time you use this strategy.





# **Wander and Ponder**

## A Reflection and Dialogue Activity

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### **OVERVIEW**

This activity invites the young people to spend quiet time pondering life's questions and then dialogue with another person about them. While doing so, they move from place to place, as Jesus moved from city to city on his journeys, teaching people how to find answers to those questions. This is an ideal activity for a retreat or youth gathering.

### **Suggested Time**

45 to 60 minutes

### **Group Size**

This activity works with any size group as long as adequate supervision is available.

### **Materials Needed**

No special materials are required.

**PROCEDURE**

*Preparation.* Plan a route for the group that will take them away from the building and back in the time you have available for this activity.

1. Announce that the object of the next block of time is to “wander and ponder.” Mention that Jesus walked from place to place during his ministry. Sometimes he walked alone, like when he went off by himself to pray. At other times he had conversations with people, as he did on the road to Emmaus.

Explain that you will present the participants with a question or two at the beginning of the walk. After that you will simply be the timekeeper, making sure that each part of the process is given about one quarter of the time available. Outline the following process in your own words:



During the first quarter of the walk, think silently about the question. Do not talk to anyone else.

When I call time, pair up with someone and talk about the question. Challenge each other to go deeper into the question and see different perspectives. Ask your partner questions such as, “Why do you think that?” or “What experience in your life makes you believe those things?” Share life experiences and faith stories from your own life, but make sure your partner gets a chance to share also.

At the third signal, wander silently again and ponder the conversation between you and your partner. What does it mean to you? How does it help your faith? Do you need to change? If so, how?

At the fourth signal, walk and talk to your partner about anything related or not related to the original question. At this point we will return to our meeting place.

2. Present one or two of the following questions to the group, or make up your own questions to correlate this activity with your current lesson, theme, or liturgical season. Suggest that they repeat the question a number of times to themselves as they begin their walk. This will help them get into a reflection mode.



What does God look like?

What question would you like to ask God?

Why is God and church so important to so many people?

What happens after death?

Is there life after death?

Where is heaven, and what is it like?

Where is hell, and what is it like?