


**Scripture Walk Senior High
Youth Themes**

Bible-Based Sessions for Teens

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Saint Mary's Press
Christian Brothers Publications
Winona, Minnesota

 Genuine recycled paper with 10% post-consumer waste.
Printed with soy-based ink.

From Nora:

Thank you Barry, Amy, Tom, Patrick, Therese, Eric, Kathy, Jan, Ursula, Lee, and Monica for all the learning and laughing together.

A special thank you to the teenagers at Saint Joseph's Parish, Penfield, New York, and Holy Trinity Parish, Webster, New York, especially the youth leaders and GROOP staff, for their insight.

Thank you to Michael Theisen for walking with me through this and for his encouragement, and to the Bradbury family.

From Michael and Nora:

We are indebted to the writing and publishing team of *The Catholic Youth Bible* for their commitment to and understanding of young people, which has made all of this possible. Thank you for your great effort.

The publishing team included Brian Singer-Towns, development editor; Mary Duerson, copy editor; Barbara Bartelson, production editor; Hollace Storkel, typesetter; Stephan Nagel, art director; Alicia María Sánchez, cover designer; pre-press, printing, and binding by the graphics division of Saint Mary's Press.

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The article in appendix A is reprinted from "What Scripture Says . . . and Doesn't Say: Reading the Bible in Context," by Margaret Nutting Ralph. It was first printed in *Scripture from Scratch: A Popular Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press), March 1996. Used by permission of the author.

The Study It and Live It icons used throughout the book and the illustrations on pages 16, 25, 34, 44, 54, 62, 71, and 80 were created by Sam Thiewes.

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Printed in the United States of America

Printing: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Year: 2007 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99

ISBN 0-88489-608-0

*"And the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14a).
To Mary, Christopher, David, and Rachel for incarnating the Word in
our home and in my heart.*

Michael (Dad)

*To Monica, Gregory, and Catherine for hugs and knock-knock jokes and
testing out the good Samaritan story. To Greg for love and patience.*

Nora

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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 Scripture 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: Youth Themes*

ScriptureWalk Senior High: Youth Themes 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 important issues in their life
- 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 themes that concern senior high youth today. The themes were chosen based on a survey of Catholic youth that asked which topics they would most like to explore in the Bible. 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. 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 quickly locating the 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, we 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 stand on its own and 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 young leader might decide to use the Pray It component from the friendship session to conclude a youth group meeting on friendship.

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 30 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, each component begins with a materials needed list and, when appropriate, a list of other necessary preparations. Be sure to look for 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 in which 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.

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 contextualist approach, see the article in appendix A, "What the Scriptures Say . . . and Don't Say: Reading the Bible in Context."

Suggested Resources

An overwhelming number of resources for studying the Bible are available. We have reviewed many of them and recommend the following resources to 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.

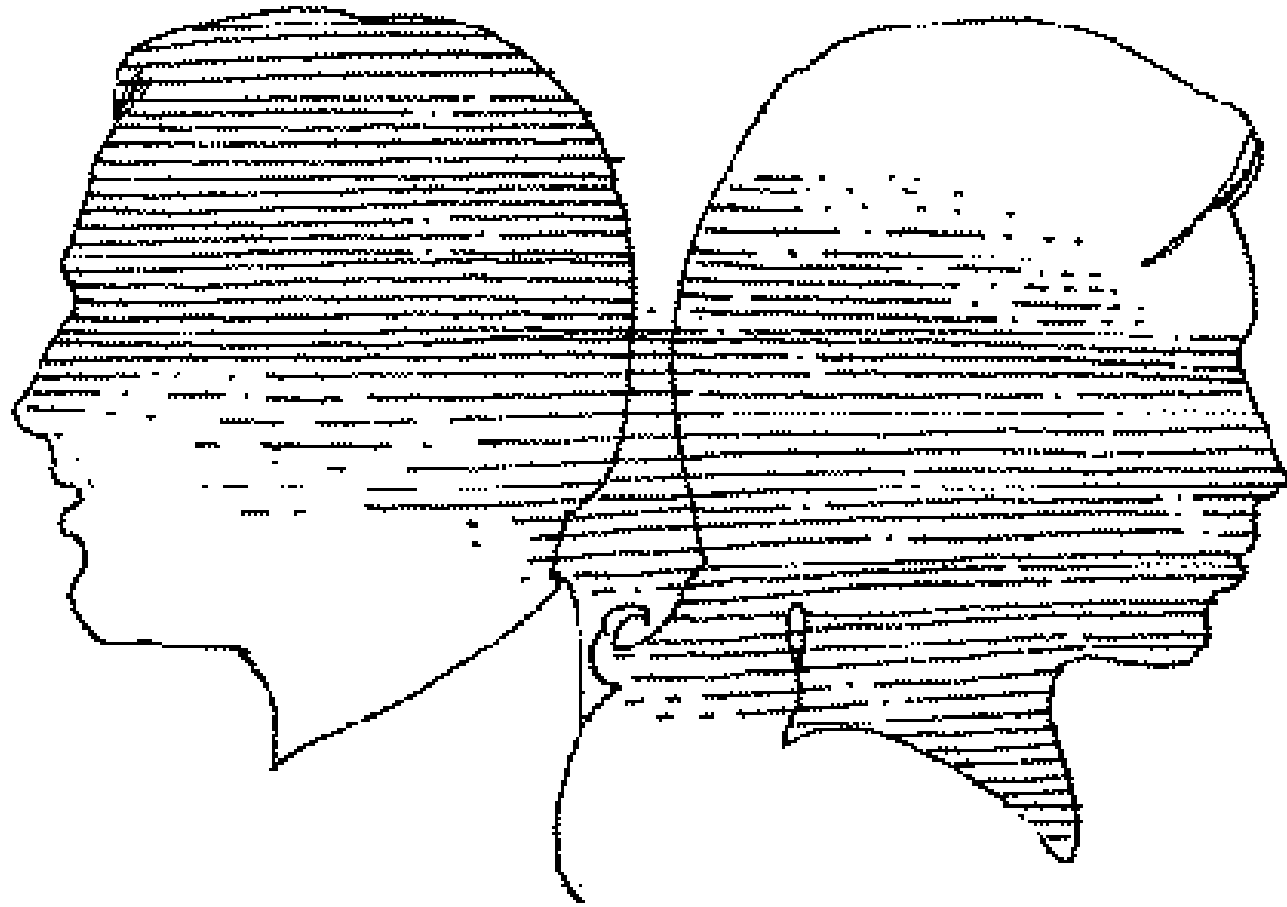
Singer-Towns, Brian. *The Bible: Power and Promise*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1997. This course from the Horizons series contains five sessions introducing the Bible. Use some or all of the course with your group before using *ScriptureWalk Senior High*.

Contextualism Versus Fundamentalism

Anger

Ephesians 4:25—5:2

Anger is a common and troubling emotion, not only for young people but for many adults too. We often seem to deal with anger with hurtful outbursts of angry words or violent actions. Or we submerge our anger and let it eat at us in unhealthy ways. However, the Bible calls us to embrace a healthy and virtuous response to anger: to acknowledge and even confront the situations that cause us anger but to avoid reactions that cause division, distance, and hurt. In this session we let the biblical vision challenge the young people to look for healthy ways to express their anger.



Study It

Healthy Responses to Anger (45–55 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Bibles, one for each person
- buttons of different sizes and colors, at least two for each person
- pens or pencils
- slips of paper, two 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 p. 12 of the introduction for options).

Step 1

Opening Activity (10 minutes)

Begin by explaining to the participants that this session is about anger and how Christian believers are called to deal with it. Add that the group members will look at their “anger buttons”—the things in life that tend to make them angry quickly, such as being caught in a traffic jam, being let down by friends who don’t return repeated phone calls, or seeing someone mistreat a child. Share with them your own anger buttons.

Tell the young people to think of one or two of their own unique anger buttons, the things that really make them mad or get their goat. Pass out pens or pencils and a couple of slips of paper to each person. Instruct the participants to write one of their anger buttons on each slip. Explain that their responses will be shared with the group later.

After a minute or so, invite everyone to share what they wrote on each slip of paper. When all are done sharing, place an assortment of real buttons in the middle of the group and let everyone pick a real button as a symbol of the anger buttons they just shared. Tell them to hold on to their button for the rest of the session. Gather the slips of paper for use later in the session.

Step 2

Proclamation (5 minutes)

Invite the young people to think of the situation that their anger button represents as they listen to a reading from one of the New Testament letters describing what Christian community life should be. Direct the young people to open their Bible to Ephesians 4:25—5:2 so that they can follow along as the passage is proclaimed. When everyone is quiet and ready, proclaim Ephesians 4:25—5:2, or if you have asked a student to do so, instruct him or her to begin.

**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, if you haven't already done so. Have the group members refer to Ephesians 4:25—5:2 in their Bible, as necessary.

- What word or phrase from the passage stood out as you listened to the reading?
- Which line or verse seems to most challenge our society's way of handling anger? Why?
- Do most people you know handle anger in healthy ways? Explain.

Step 4 Commentary (5 minutes)

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

- This passage in the Letter to the Ephesians is part of a larger section giving advice on Christian living. The whole letter emphasizes Christian unity, and this particular passage calls on the readers not to allow sinful anger to divide the community. The author says it is okay to feel angry. Anger is a normal and appropriate human emotion—even Jesus felt it. The important thing is what we choose to do with our anger. The author says we should not allow the sun to set on our anger, which is a way of saying that we should not allow our anger to fester and build up to a level that might cause an outburst of extreme emotion or resentment. This is the point at which anger turns from a potentially constructive emotion to a potentially destructive one.

The reading goes on to stress some practical and helpful ways to release our anger so that it does not get the better of us and turn destructive. The author advises us to be kind, honest, and forgiving of one another (4:32). These suggestions were probably as counter-cultural to the people of Ephesus as they are to us today. Forgiving a person who has hurt us has never been easy. It requires us to step back, to take a larger look at the situation from a different or more detached perspective. From that perspective, thoughts or comments like, "He did that on purpose because he hates me!" might change into questions such as, "I wonder what's causing him to do these things?" When this happens, it is easier to let go of hurt and bitterness and to move toward the virtues of kindness and forgiveness.

In the Gospels Jesus often asks questions of people who challenge him or even accuse him of breaking the religious laws of his time. In this way he uses his anger for constructive change. His questions usually lead the other person toward conversion, that is, a change of heart. Remember the people who tried to trap Jesus by bringing him the woman caught in adultery? Instead of berating them for their mean-spiritedness, Jesus responded with an implied question, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). Or in the parable of the good Samaritan, instead of accusing his listeners of being narrow-minded or prejudiced, he asks, "Which of these three . . . was a neighbor to the man?" (Luke 10:36). Asking questions, rather than attacking or



accusing others, is a good strategy for helping us to move beyond anger toward mutual understanding and, eventually, reconciliation.

A Christian's responses to angry situations should reflect those of Jesus. In the passage from Ephesians, the author concludes by asking us to "be like Christ." We are called to be "children of the light" and to shed light on the situations and feelings that are building up angry emotions within us. Speaking "the truth to our neighbors" (Ephesians 4:25) is a call not to ignore the things that make us angry but to address them in a positive way. Only then will we be able to let go of our anger, forgive those involved, and move on with the work of following Jesus. It is only through this ability to let go and forgive that we can control whether the sun will set on our anger.

Step 5 Application (15-25 minutes)

Use the following questions to involve the participants in further discussion on how Ephesians 4:25—5:2 applies to their life. You may wish to rephrase or add to these questions to tailor them to your group.

- Which stories from the Scriptures show Jesus being angry? What is the cause of his anger?
- How easily do you get angry? Do you tend to hold in your anger? Do you express it by getting even? Or do you try to reconcile with the other person and mend the relationship?
- Share an incident from the previous week when you were controlled by anger. Share a time when you controlled the anger. What made the difference in how you reacted to each situation?
- How hard is it for you to forgive people who have hurt you? Can you share a time when you forgave someone who hurt you deeply?
- What positive models for dealing with anger do we see in the media today? What negative models do we see?
- As a group create a list of ways for dealing with anger positively.



Live It

Anger Buttons (15–30 minutes)

This activity focuses on the choices we can make when situations provoke us to anger.

Materials Needed

- the buttons from step 1 of the Study It component
- the slips of paper on which the participants wrote their anger buttons from step 1 of the Study It component
- a box
- pens or pencils
- masking tape

Step 1

When doing this component as an independent activity. If you are doing this component independent from the other session components, you will need to have the young people fill out slips of paper with their anger button situations, as described in step 1 of the Study It component. Also, at the beginning of this step, you may want to proclaim Ephesians 4:25—5:2 and share the commentary in step 4 of the Study It component.

Direct everyone to put a piece of masking tape on both sides of their button and to write “Virtue” on one side and “Vice” on the other. While they are doing this, put all the slips of paper with the anger button situations in a box. When they are done, ask everyone to stand in a circle about an arm’s length away from the person on either side of them.

Pass the box around the circle, directing everyone to each draw out a slip of paper. Select someone to begin and tell them to flip their button in the air. If it lands on the “Virtue” side, ask them to share a healthy, Christian response to the scenario on their slip of paper. If it comes up “Vice,” they must suggest an unhealthy, sinful response to the same scenario. Feel free to gently challenge any response that you think is incorrect. Ask the group for alternate suggestions if needed.

After the person shares her or his response, everyone should take one step forward, toward the center of the group, if the response was healthy, or one step backward, away from the center, if it was unhealthy.

Moving around the circle in order, repeat this process until everyone has had an opportunity to go once. If you have time and if more scenario slips are in the box, start over with the first person.

Step 2

Ask the group members to look around the circle and connect hands with anyone they can reach without moving their feet. Invite them to comment on what they notice. It is hoped that they will observe that sinful responses to anger distance us from one another and create division; whereas healthy responses to anger bring us closer together.

Step 3

Summarize the previous exercise by saying something like the following in your own words:

- Life is like this exercise because it is often in the flip of a moment that we choose to respond to a situation in a healthy or an unhealthy manner. The more we are aware of our personal anger buttons, the better equipped we are to respond in virtuous ways when those buttons are pushed. In addition, the more we try to live out our faith, which is marked by the practice of forgiveness, the healthier all our anger responses will be and the less likely that the sun will set on our anger.

When doing this component as an independent activity. If you are using this component as an independent activity, you can extend it by having the group members brainstorm other situations that cause people their age to get angry. After listing these situations on newsprint, spend a few minutes discussing responses that would bring about a Christlike resolution to them.

Alternative Approach

Anger in the News

This alternative approach can replace the Live It component. Bring in newspapers from the current week and divide them among the participants. Tell them to find and cut out one or two articles about people responding angrily to some situation. When everyone is ready, invite them to share their findings with the group. For each article invite the participants to discuss the following questions:

- What are some healthy responses to the situation? What are some unhealthy responses?
- What effect did the people’s angry response described in the article have on their family, their community, or other people involved? Could the outcome have been different? How?

After all the stories have been discussed, ask whether the majority of situations were resolved in healthy or unhealthy ways. Help the young people explore why that might be so.



Pray It

Forgiveness Meditation (15 minutes)

Materials Needed

- a candle and matches
- copies of handout 1–A, “The Prayer of Saint Francis,” one for each person (or write the prayer out on newsprint for all to see)
- Bibles, one for each person
- a flashlight
- a tape or CD player, and a recording of reflective instrumental music (optional)

Prayer Directions

Begin by asking the young people to locate Ephesians 4:25—5:2 in their Bible. Set the mood for a quiet reflection by placing an unlit candle in the center of the group and darkening the room. Using a flashlight, read the following script slowly and prayerfully, pausing briefly at the ellipses (. . .). You may wish to play a recording of soft, instrumental music while you are reading the meditation.

Leader: When we speak or act in darkness, we speak and act alone.
[Light the candle.]

Leader: But when we speak or act in the light, we are never alone.
[Pause.]

Leader: Let us listen together, as children of the light, to God speaking to and through us.

[Instruct the group members to take turns reading one verse of the Scripture reading Ephesians 4:25—5:2. Designate who should begin. Pass a flashlight if needed. If you have more group members than there are verses, ask for volunteers to take turns reading the verses.]

Leader: Close your eyes and breathe deeply. . . . Relax. . . . Imagine that your entire life is being lived out in one full day. The sunrise brings with it your birth into a world full of wonder, mystery, and love. . . . With each hour that passes, you age another couple of years. . . . By midmorning you are beginning school . . . making friends . . . discovering the meaning of your feelings and emotions. . . . Pick a significant event that happened to you in your early childhood and relive it for a moment in your mind. . . .

As the afternoon begins, you enter the later years of childhood and begin your teenage years. . . . You experience many changes in your body . . . your friendships . . . and within your mind. . . . Think about an important event that occurred during your young teen years and reflect on it for a moment. . . .

As the afternoon wears on, you come to the last few hours of daylight . . . the last couple of years of your life so far. . . . Look over the last year, especially the last few months, and search out the people or situations that occupy your thoughts. . . . Focus on the people and events that have hurt you, that still tug at your emotions.



. . . . Silently name or picture in your mind one or two situations or people that still anger you.

As you keep these faces and situations in your mind, notice that the sun has started to set . . . that night is approaching, and with it darkness draws near. . . . You experience an urgency to work out the anger that controls part of you . . . to let go of the hurt that has been caused . . . to forgive the people who were involved. . . . You want to do this because you know it must be done before the sun sets . . . before darkness prevails. . . .

Spend a few quiet moments now with God. Talk to God about what you need in order to let go of the anger, the hurt, or the pride that is blocking you from the promise of peace. . . . *[Pause for a minute or two while individuals reflect.]*

As the sun gets ready to set, let go of the picture you have in your mind . . . let it drift away into the darkness. . . . Feel inside you the strength that returns after letting go of that heavy burden. . . . Enjoy the peace you now have in your mind. . . .

Slowly open your eyes and focus on the light of the candle that is before you. . . . Look deep within the light of the flame and see the God who gladly takes away the burden of your anger. Let God lighten the load of worry and concern from your mind. . . . *[If you wish, allow for a few minutes of spontaneous prayer or petitions. When the group members finish their prayers or petitions, pass out handout 1–A, “The Prayer of Saint Francis.”]*

Leader: Let us slowly say together the Prayer of Saint Francis.
[If necessary turn on the room lights for the participants to read the prayer. You may also invite them to sing the prayer.]

Leader: *[After finishing the Prayer of Saint Francis]* Let us conclude by sharing with one another a sign of peace.

Session Follow-Up

Family Connection

Invite the participants to take their anger button home and explain its symbolic meaning to their family. Suggest that they ask each member of the family to name two or three personal anger buttons—other family members can help out if someone gets stuck! Then tell them to encourage their family to talk about how they might help one another to respond in a healthy, life-giving way to each situation. Send home extra copies of handout 1–A, “The Prayer of Saint Francis,” so the family can pray it together to end their sharing.

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 anger over the next several days by reading the passages and reflecting or journaling on the questions.

The Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love,

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much

seek to be consoled, as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

(David Schiller, editor, *The Little Book of Prayers*, pages 192–193)