


**Leader Guide**



**BREAK  
THROUGH!**

**THE BIBLE FOR  
YOUNG CATHOLICS**



saint mary's press

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# Chapter 1

## Welcome!

Welcome to the Saint Mary's Press® *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics Leader Guide*. We hope this guide will be your faithful companion as you lead your middle schoolers toward a deeper understanding of God's Word in Scripture.

Throughout this leader guide, you will find practical ideas to enhance your teaching of Scripture. But, before we explore the many options of this program, it might be helpful to present the philosophy behind the teaching of Scripture as outlined in this guide, an overview of the chapters in this guide, and a simple and basic lesson plan that can be used with the Bible character interviews strategically placed throughout *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics*.

## Bible Character Interviews

"Interviews" with important people of the Bible, from Adam and Eve in the Old Testament to the Apostle Timothy in the New Testament, can be found throughout *Breakthrough!* These interviews provide a simple way to introduce the main themes of a particular book. They are provided in order to give teachers and young people an opportunity to become familiar with Scripture through the eyes of a particular and significant person. These interviews, while fictional, are based on sound Scripture scholarship and fulfill the first letter of a simple acronym for the teaching of Scripture, PREP: **P**repare, **R**ead, **E**ducate, **P**actice.

### **1. Prepare: In order to read and understand Scripture, middle schoolers need preparation.**

We educators have heard many Scripture stories over and over. Sometimes this familiarity can impede our understanding, if we are not open to new insights. But often our familiarity means that by knowing the elements of a particular story, we can delve more deeply into its meaning.

Yet middle schoolers often are hearing much of Scripture for the very first time. Even if they have heard some Scripture stories during Mass or other liturgical celebrations, much of Scripture is literally a

closed book to them. They are coming to the story of salvation history, as told in Scripture, “cold.” And one reading, with no preparation at all, does not suffice to allow the message to sink in. Preparing middle schoolers to read Scripture requires preparation on your part.

### *Preparation for the Teacher*

This leader guide—and the following chapters in particular—can help you prepare to guide your middle schoolers in reading and understanding Scripture:

- Chapter 2: Why Read the Bible?—essential background for understanding the Sacred Scripture in God’s plan
- Chapter 3: Biblical Literacy and the Teaching of Scripture—an exploration of the goals of biblical literacy and how to work on them with young adolescents
- Chapter 4: Looking through the Saint Mary’s Press® *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics*—an explanation of each feature of *Breakthrough!*
- Chapter 5: Helping Young People to Navigate the Saint Mary’s Press® *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics*—an explanation of the special features of *Breakthrough!* designed to help young people become comfortable with finding and reading passages from Scripture
- Chapter 6: Characteristics of Middle Schoolers—information on the characteristics of preteens and young adolescents and implications for their understanding of Scripture
- Chapter 7: Teaching Scripture to Middle Schoolers—practical teaching tips for the classroom session

### *Preparation for the Young People*

Ideas for directly preparing middle schoolers to hear and understand Scripture are included in the following chapters:

- Chapter 8: Scriptural Prayer with Middle Schoolers—practical ideas for using Scripture in prayer with middle schoolers
- Chapter 9: Breaking Open the Word—a section with practical strategies for teaching Scripture and a section with reproducible masters outlining methods for using *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics* in teaching popular Scripture stories

- Chapter 10: Connecting with the Liturgical Year—a seasonal approach to Scripture, with handouts for major seasons and feasts of the Church as highlighted in the Lectionary, each with a prayer and ritual guide and each followed by a hands-on activity

## **2. Read: Middle schoolers can read Scripture.**

*Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics* has been developed with the thought that middle schoolers, with the proper preparation, can read and understand much of Scripture. As you teach a Scripture story or passage, draw the young people’s attention to the interview (if one has been given). The list of interviews for the entire Bible can be found on page 4 in *Breakthrough!*

## **3. Educate: Education is needed for understanding.**

Education is the purpose of the Study It! and Catholic Connections articles found throughout this Bible. These features help to highlight and explain the message and importance of various Scripture passages in a particular book. In a classroom setting, these features can be read aloud and discussed. Encourage your middle schoolers to read and think about these on their own when they are reading Scripture privately.

## **4. Practice: Practice means living out the message of Scripture in Christian life.**

The word *practice* in this sense means “doing.” In fact, this word comes from *praxis*, a Greek word that monks in the early Church used to describe their rule of life. “What is your praxis?” they would ask one another. In other words, “How are you living your life?” The Pray It! and Live It! articles on the pages of the *Breakthrough!* Bible are particularly geared to bringing Scripture into the lives of middle schoolers.

The last two chapters in this leader guide relate specifically to Christian life and practice:

- Chapter 11: Word and Sacrament: Scriptural Preparation for the Sacraments—a compendium of popular Scripture stories presented in popular basal texts for the Sacraments
- Chapter 12: From Here to Home: Sharing Scripture with the Family—practical ideas for encouraging family participation and family education in reading and understanding Scripture

## **A Short Lesson Plan**

A sample lesson plan using all of the elements noted thus far (the interview, as well as the Pray It!, Study It!, and Live It! articles), as well as other supplementary materials and ideas from this leader guide, might look like this:

- Scripture to be considered today: The Call of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4–10)
- Opening Song (based on the theme of answering God’s call)
- Opening Prayer (asking that we be open to hearing God’s Word today)
- Introduce Jeremiah by asking the group to look at the art on page 1250. Ask the group to describe the time of day, why Jeremiah is looking up, and what the scattering of light around him might mean. (Usually, in religious art, any kind of light refers to the presence of God.)
- Reading aloud the interview given in the Book of Jeremiah on page 1307 (two middle schoolers)
- Reading aloud the Scripture (Jeremiah 1:4–10; catechist or middle schooler)
- Silent pause and group reflection: What words or passages struck you? What was Jeremiah feeling? What was Jeremiah’s first response to God? What was his “second response”? Do our “first response” and “second response” to something asked of us sometimes differ? Why?

- Compare the reading from Jeremiah to Jesus' Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28–31). Ask the group to find this passage in their Bibles. Read the passage aloud and explain that the older son said no at first, but then changed his mind and went to work in the vineyard. So he did what his father wanted after all. Sometimes we are like Jeremiah and the older son. We might say no, but then we change our minds and do God's will.
- Discussion of Live It! article on page 1249
- Discussion of introductory material on page 1248
- Hands-on activity (See the handout "The Call of Jeremiah" [Document #: TX005864] in chapter 9 of this *Breakthrough!* Leader Guide and the *Breakthrough!* Activity Booklet, which has three pages of activities for Jeremiah's call.)
- Closing Prayer (Reread last line of Live It! article and ask for help in understanding and following our individual calls from God.)
- Within this simple structure, which follows the PREP formula, you will be offering your students the riches of Scripture that meet their needs for preparation, reading, education, and practice in Christian living.



## **On Sunday**

Religious educators and liturgists alike tell us that reflecting on and discussing the Scripture we hear proclaimed at Mass is a faith-enriching process. A religious education class might meet right after Mass on a Sunday, in which case some of the middle schoolers may have the reading fresh in their minds. However, some middle schoolers may not yet have been to Mass and thus another proclamation of the Word is needed.

## **On a Weekday**

Instead of meeting on Sunday, your middle schoolers may meet for religious education on a weekday. Or, you may be a Catholic school teacher who also meets with her or his middle schoolers during the week rather than on Sunday. In these cases, you will also need to proclaim the Sunday reading before you begin to break open Scripture.

## **Dismissal with Catechumens**

Another context for breaking open Sunday Scripture is during the dismissal catechesis for catechumens who are preparing for Baptism according to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. In many parishes, children and young people who participate in the RCIA are kindly dismissed after the homily to break open Scripture with a catechist.

## **Other Occasions**

There may be occasions when you simply gather your middle schoolers and break open the Scripture readings you heard on Sunday. Or, you may want to “break open” a Scripture reading that was not part of Sunday liturgy. Maybe you just want to read a Bible story and talk about it in your Catholic school classroom, in your religious education setting, in your home, or anywhere else. You can use the process we provide here for that purpose too! In other words, breaking open Scripture does not have to be part of a larger religious education setting. It can stand alone.

## **The Amount of Time It Takes**

The amount of time you spend breaking open Scripture depends on the setting. If you are breaking open Sunday Scripture as part of a religious education class or a Catholic school religion class, you may

spend only 10 to 15 minutes breaking open the Word before you move on to other topics. If, however, you are breaking open Sunday Scripture with young catechumens, you would spend 30 minutes or more. If you are doing this at home or in another setting, you could spend 10 to 30 minutes breaking open the readings.

The amount of time you have also affects how many of the readings you can break open. If you have 10 or 15 minutes, you will want to concentrate solely on the Gospel. We talk about the preeminence of the Gospel later. If you have more time, you may want to bring in the other readings as well as the homily.

Now that we have discussed the general notion of breaking open Sunday Scripture, we will move to the specific steps in the process.

## **Breaking Open Sunday Scripture**

Take a look at the following list of steps for breaking open Sunday Scripture and get a feel for the flow. Then read the specific directions for each step. This process, in a formal setting, is called the Liturgy of the Word. However, this does not mean that it takes place in church. The Liturgy of the Word can be celebrated wherever we gather in the name of Jesus, because he is present with us in his Word.

### **The Liturgy of the Word**

- Opening comments
- Proclamation of the Word
- Silence
- Initial question
- Initial response from middle schoolers
- Brief exegesis (interpretation of Scripture as in the Pray It! or Live It! articles in *Breakthrough!*)
- Deeper question
- Second response from middle schoolers
- Pointing outward / Live It! (as in the article in *Breakthrough!*)
- Closing prayer

The list of steps for the Liturgy of the Word provides you with an easy reference point, or template, to use anytime you break open Scripture. At the end of this section, you will find a reproducible template to use as you prepare to introduce a Scripture passage to the middle schoolers (see the resource "Breaking Open the Word" [Document #: TX005862]).

Now we will explain how to do each step and give you some examples.

**Liturgy of the Word.** The proclamation of the Word is the all-important first step. God is present in the Word and in the midst of the faithfully listening assembly. If you are breaking open a Scripture reading that was not part of the Sunday liturgy, begin with the next step.

**Opening comments.** As you begin the session, whether it's right after Mass or at another time, help the middle schoolers to focus on the Word. Some initial remarks help young people to "tune in" to breaking open the Word. Depending on the setting, you may want to include an opening prayer or a gathering ritual.

For instance, let's say you are breaking open Sunday Scripture at the beginning of a religious education class that happens right after Mass on Sunday morning. Many, but not all, of the young people heard the Gospel for the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, Luke 19:1–10, the story of Zacchaeus. You might begin your session with opening remarks like the following: "The reading for Mass today is the story of a short, little man named Zacchaeus. He was a rich, important man and also a tax collector. Tax collectors were not very popular and were sometimes even hated by the Israelites of Jesus' time, because they collected the people's money for the Romans, a foreign government. Notice what Zacchaeus does in the story."

**Proclamation of the Word.** Proclaim the reading from *Breakthrough!* (or from the Lectionary). You may invite the group to read along with you in their Bibles. *Breakthrough!* provides extra helps to understanding, which will prove useful during the session. Allow for an extended period of silence (about a minute) following the reading.

**Initial question.** The first question prompts the young people to share their initial response to the reading. The question connects with your opening remarks but is open-ended enough for various responses. Here are some examples:

- What did you notice about Zacchaeus in this story?
- What happened between Zacchaeus and Jesus?
- What was going on in this story?

**Initial response from the middle schoolers.** Give the young people an opportunity to talk about what they found interesting in the story.

## Activity for Our Lady of Guadalupe

### *Honoring Mary with Roses*

**Scripture Focus:** Luke 1:41–42. The middle schoolers will deepen their knowledge and appreciation of Mary, Mother of God, under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

**Gather the Following Items:** a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe (placed prominently in the prayer corner); two or more empty vases, placed in the prayer corner near the picture; scissors; four large sheets of red tissue paper for each young person; a stapler; green pipe cleaners, two for each young person.

**Breaking Open the Word:** Have the middle schoolers open their Bibles to the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament. Direct them to find chapter 1, verses 41–42. Remind the middle schoolers that one of our most familiar prayers, the Hail Mary, is based on these verses in Scripture.

1. Review the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe. When Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego, she told him to go to the bishop and ask that a church be built. When Juan Diego went to the bishop, the bishop asked for a sign. Juan Diego reported this to Our Lady, who told him to find the roses blooming alongside the road, even in the midst of a cold December. Juan Diego picked the roses and put them in his *tilma*, or cloak. He returned to the bishop and told him that he was given a sign. When he opened his *tilma*, out fell the roses! In addition, a beautiful portrait of Our Lady was painted inside his *tilma*. The painting still exists in Mexico City, near the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This is why we celebrate this feast of Our Lady with roses.
2. Distribute four sheets of red tissue paper to each middle schooler. Have the young people fold the sheets in half and cut to make eight sheets of 10-x-13-inch paper. (You may want to prepare by cutting the sheets prior to distribution.) Explain that they are to stack all eight sheets of tissue paper in a neat pile.

3. Holding the stack with the shorter side at the top, demonstrate how to fold the tissue paper back and forth, forming a 1-inch accordion. When the sheets are folded, have the middle schoolers trim the corners slightly to form a rounded shape.
4. Show the group how to pinch the accordion-folded paper in the middle and wrap one green pipe cleaner securely around the middle of the folded tissue paper. Bend the two ends of the pipe cleaner together after attaching it. You might want to use a staple to hold the folds of the two sides upright and together. Attach an additional green pipe cleaner to the tissue flower to make a stem.
5. Explain to the group that now they are to carefully separate and fluff the tissue paper sheets, layer by layer. This will make a large, fluffy rose.
6. Gather the group, holding their roses, for a procession to the Bible corner. You may want to play a recording of a hymn to Mary.
7. As the group gathers in the prayer corner, invite young person to place his or her rose in one of the vases placed there. Arrange the flowers so that they are distributed evenly in the vases. When every rose is placed, together pray a Hail Mary.

# Prayers for Christmas

**Scripture Focus:** Luke 2:1–14 (Midnight Mass, The Birth of Jesus), Luke 2:15–20 (Mass at Dawn, The Visit of the Shepherds), John 1:1–18 (Mass During the Day, Prologue to the Gospel of John)

## Opening Prayer

**Leader:** Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

**All:** In the name of the Father . . .

**Leader:** At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the coming of God among us. *(Briefly summarize the reading you have chosen. The reader then reads the Scripture passage chosen from Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics.)*

**Leader:** This Christmas, let us make room for Jesus in our hearts. Let us pray, “Come to our hearts, Lord Jesus.”

**All:** Come to our hearts, Lord Jesus.

**Leader:** When we prepare for your coming by our respect for our parents, guardians, and teachers,

**All:** Come to our hearts, Lord Jesus.

**Leader:** When we show kindness to others, especially to members of our own families,

**All:** Come to our hearts, Lord Jesus.

**Leader:** When we celebrate Christmas with our families and friends,

**All:** Come to our hearts, Lord Jesus.

**Leader:** When we remember those who are poor and in need this Christmas,

**All:** Come to our hearts, Lord Jesus.

**Leader:** When we participate in Holy Mass this Christmas,

**All:** Come to our hearts, Lord Jesus.

## Closing Prayer

Gather the group in the Bible corner where a Christmas stable has been set up. All the figures should be placed there except for the Infant Jesus. Choose one person, by drawing names, to carry the Infant Jesus and to place this figure in the manger. If possible, play an appropriate Christmas carol at this time.

**Leader:** When we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate that Jesus came to us as a poor little baby. Help us to remember that of all the gifts we receive at Christmas, Jesus is the best gift of all. Let us thank him for all that he has given to us by responding, “Thank you, Jesus.”

For family and friends,  
For the joy of Christmas,  
For the peace that comes from helping others,  
For showing us how to live in peace and love,  
For dying and rising for us,  
For giving us eternal life,

*Suggest that the group offer their own statements of gratitude.*

**Leader:** Let us all say Amen and Merry Christmas!

**All:** Amen! Merry Christmas!



## Activity for the Annunciation of Mary

### *Message Received!*

**Scripture Focus:** Luke 1:26–38. The middle schoolers recognize the importance of angels, God’s messengers.

**Gather the Following Items:** quiet instrumental music; a large poster on which a large set of wings has been drawn with markers; a camera or smart-phone; 8½-x-11-inch paper; a marker for each young person (The wings on the poster board should be separated so that a middle schooler can stand between them and have a photo taken, holding a scroll with words written on it. The middle schooler will then look like a messenger-angel. The Internet provides examples of drawings of angel wings. Or, a costume store may have a pair of angel wings that the young people can wear for their photos.)

**Breaking Open the Word:** Have the young people open their Bibles to the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament. Direct them to find chapter 1, verses 26–38. Explain that this passage is the announcement of the birth of Jesus. On March 25 (which is nine months before the celebration of the birth of Jesus on December 25), we celebrate the feast of this announcement made to Mary. The feast is called the Annunciation.

1. Explain that the Angel Gabriel was a messenger-angel. He came with a special message to Mary. God still sends messages today. Sometimes we have ideas to do good, or to do something special for someone, or to improve our own lives. These messages could come from the Holy Spirit, but they might also come from our guardian angel or from a messenger-angel that God has sent to us. When we have good ideas, we should pay attention to them.
2. Distribute a sheet of white paper and a marker to each middle schooler. While playing quiet instrumental music, ask the young people to think about their lives and the people they know. Ask them: “If a messenger-angel from God spoke to you today, what do you think the angel would say?” They may think of a message

of their own or use one from the Scripture passage. Remind the middle schoolers that even before he delivered his important message, the Angel Gabriel told Mary, "Don't be afraid." Explain that the message to them might be to do something special for someone, or to help out at home. Other messages from the Scripture event the middle schoolers might choose include:

- "Peace be with you!"
  - "The Lord is with you."
  - "The Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28)
  - "Don't be afraid."
3. Ask the middle schoolers to write their message in large letters on the paper. If they need more paper, ask them to attach a second sheet to the bottom of the first with clear tape. This will make a longer sheet of paper. (The middle schoolers should not write on the back of the first sheet.)
  4. Ask the young people to roll their messages up loosely so that they look like scrolls. Have each young person stand in front of the poster-board wings, holding open their scrolls so that the message can be read. Take a photo of each young person posing as a messenger-angel displaying the personalized message. (If a middle schooler does not want to share the message, it can remain rolled up as a scroll in the photo.)
  5. Ask permission to send the photos to parents. Close the session with three Hail Marys (or pray the closing prayer on the "Prayers for the Annunciation of Mary" handout [Document #: TX005877]). Remind the students that this prayer originated from the message of the Angel Gabriel to Mary.



# Prayers for Palm/Passion Sunday

**Scripture Focus:** Matthew 21:1–11 (The Entry into Jerusalem)

## Opening Prayer

**Leader:** Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

**All:** In the name of the Father . . .

**Leader:** In this Gospel, we read that Jesus was welcomed by the crowds. They were so happy that he had come to them! They cried out their praises.

**Reader:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

*Reader then reads the Scripture passage above from Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics.*

**Leader:** We too can welcome Jesus into our hearts. We too can say: “Praise to Jesus! Praise be to God!”

**All:** Praise to Jesus! Praise be to God!

**Leader:** At every Eucharist, we praise Jesus. We thank him for coming to us. We say: “Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest” (*Roman Missal*).

**All:** Praise to Jesus! Praise be to God!

**Leader:** At every Eucharist, we praise Jesus. We pray to the Father in Jesus, with Jesus, and through Jesus. In every Eucharist, we become one with Jesus.

**All:** Praise to Jesus! Praise be to God!

**Leader:** At every Eucharist, Jesus enters into our hearts. We pray, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof” (*Roman Missal*). We pray for healing.

**All:** Praise to Jesus! Praise be to God!

**Leader:** Thank you, Jesus, for coming to Jerusalem. Thank you for coming to us in every Eucharist.

**All:** Praise to Jesus! Praise be to God!

## Closing Prayer

**Leader:** Today we gave praise and honor to Jesus. We promised to honor him all during Holy Week. Let us offer this prayer of praise from the Mass, as we pray with the whole Church.

**All:**

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.

*(Roman Missal)*

(The quotations on this handout are from the English translation of *The Roman Missal* © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation [ICEL] [Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011], pages 532, 669, and 532, respectively. Copyright © 2011, USCCB, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright holder. Used with permission of the ICEL.)

