

**Scripture Walk Junior High**  
**Bible Themes**

Bible-Based Sessions for Teens

Maryann Hakowski

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*To the teens of  
Holy Spirit Parish, Virginia Beach, Virginia,  
and  
Saint Nicholas Church, O'Fallon, Illinois,  
who dared to bring the Scriptures to Life*



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# Introduction

## The Reason for the ScriptureWalk Series

The Bible is one of the best-selling books of all time, yet so many copies sit on the shelf collecting dust. Why is this? Perhaps because so many people misunderstand the Bible's purpose. It is more than a dictionary or encyclopedia of faith. It is more than good storytelling or a collection of historical trivia. It is not "just an old book written by a bunch of old guys," as one teen told me!

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

### Bringing the Scriptures to Life

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

### The Bible and Evangelization

When we make the Bible come alive, it is one of our primary sources of evangelization. Let's look at some of the principles of evangelization and how they help us understand how to use the Bible with young people.

***Evangelization is dynamic.*** We cannot just hand a Bible to young people and say, "Here, read this." We must approach the Scriptures with a sense of enthusiasm and anticipation and fun so that the young people will too.

***Evangelization occurs through relationships.*** We need to spend time with young people so that we can understand how their experiences connect with the teachings of the Bible.

***Evangelization takes place where people are.*** We need to take the Bibles beyond the classroom and the church library and into the school

lockers and gym bags and rooms at home and ball fields and fast-food restaurants, because these are the places where the Bible must be lived to make sense to our young people today.

***Evangelization takes time.*** Reading the Bible takes practice. Loving the Bible takes a lifetime. We want young people to get into the habit of spending time with the Bible. Only then can they begin to proclaim the Scriptures with their life.

## The Origins of These Sessions

The eight sessions in this book were originally designed for the junior high youth group at Holy Spirit Parish in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where I served as pastoral associate for three years. We already had a vibrant senior high youth group. A team of teens planned and facilitated the meetings around themes of interest to youth. I encouraged them to include the Scriptures whenever possible.

To meet the needs of our junior high young people, we decided to start a junior high youth group. We took a decidedly different approach by starting with the Scriptures, and then making the connection to the lives of the young people.

While some parents expressed doubts that a Scripture-based program would appeal to the young people, we felt that the active-learning approach was the key to our success. Our young people had a yearning for the Gospels, which surprised and moved us. We met once a month, on a Monday night, but at the time I left the parish, both parents and young people were calling for more frequent meetings, at least twice a month.

## The Goals of *ScriptureWalk Junior High: Bible Themes*

*ScriptureWalk Junior High: Bible Themes* has four goals:

- That the sessions invite the young people to "break open" the Scriptures
- That the activities are fun and engaging
- That the sessions experiment with a variety of prayer forms
- That each meeting differs from the one before it

## The Structure of *ScriptureWalk Junior High*

The *ScriptureWalk Junior High* manuals are structured on the principle of active learning. Each 90-minute session includes activities to build community, engage young people in discussion, and introduce

them to creative forms of prayer. A discussion of the principle of active learning and the activities that flow from it follows.

### **Active Learning**

We retain only a small percentage of what we see and hear, but when we experience something, when we engage all the senses and the entire person, we learn and remember so much more.

Young adolescents are not the “sit still and learn” types. In fact they are not “sit still” types at all. They have a lot of energy to burn and need constructive outlets for harnessing it. The variety of activities found in this book promote an active-learning model. When we use active-learning methods, rather than telling young people what they have learned, we ask them what they learned from an activity they just completed.

### **Community-Building Activities**

Community-building activities, such as games or icebreakers, are opportunities for the young people to learn names, to stretch, and to be introduced to a session theme. For example, in session 7, “The Spirit’s Promise,” the young people hunt for clues to learn more about the Holy Spirit. In session 8, “Coming Home,” a deck of cards is used as a vehicle to mix the group and start a discussion on forgiveness.

In the community-building activities, it is important to include everyone. Pay attention to two key tasks: (1) giving clear directions and (2) following up the activity with a group discussion or a short interactive presentation that enables the young people to discover what they have learned.

### **Dynamic Discussions**

Leading dynamic discussions is an important part of active learning. You will find that discussion flows naturally from the thought-provoking activities in the sessions. For example, in session 4, “Being Thankful,” the participants go from *A* to *Z* listing the many blessings God has given, which leads into a discussion on being thankful. In session 3, “Journey,” they navigate a real obstacle course, then discuss how God can help them navigate the obstacles in their life.

Some of the discussions are designed for pairs, others for small or large groups. The discussion activities usually offer specific, open-ended questions so that the young people are encouraged to answer with more than one-word responses. Discussion gets easier as your group members meet more frequently and become more comfortable sharing with one another. If your group members need more time to adjust to sharing, offer to let them write down their answers before sharing.

As a general rule, try to assign people to small groups for discussion rather than let them choose their own groups. When asked to find their own groups, they tend to remain in cliques, making it harder to build community. Sharing in pairs may be more appropriate the first few times you gather, and then you can ease them into group discussions.

### **Powerful Prayer Services**

By exposing young people to a variety of prayer experiences, we expand their personal repertoire of ways to approach God. Some forms of prayer found in this book include guided meditation, symbols, music, storytelling, video, quiet prayer, shared prayer, and traditional prayer.

The prayer experiences often use objects to appeal to the young peoples’ concrete imaginations. For example, in the session 1 activity “The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation,” the young people use flashlights to bring light into their prayer. In the session 2 activity “Praying with Change,” they use coins to pray about their use of God’s gifts.

Pay particular attention to the setting for prayer. If possible have a separate space away from your regular meeting space for other activities.

### **Scripture Connections**

Each session uses several Scripture passages to offer insight into the session theme. These Scripture passages are given at the beginning of most activities. Generally directions for reading a passage or passages are given within the activity. Sometimes a passage is adapted or paraphrased for some use within an activity. And occasionally the passage simply provides a scriptural connection for the activity that is not explicitly mentioned. For further reflection additional Scripture passages relating to the theme are included at the end of each session.

### **Family Connection**

Each session includes a section at the end called “Family Connection.” It gives a short, family-based follow-up idea for the session. Some of the activities include affirmation, prayer, discussion, and community service. You may wish to share these ideas in a parent meeting, send them home in a newsletter, photocopy them for the participants, or simply suggest them to the young people at the end of a session.

### **Optional Activities**

Each session also includes an optional activity that can be used in several ways:

- as a substitute for a session activity
- as a way to make the session longer
- as a follow-up activity

Look over this optional activity in advance to see if it fits your needs.

## **Suggestions for Program Leaders**

### **A Bible for Every Teen**

At the first session, make sure everyone in your youth group or class has a Bible. Don’t just assume that they already own one. There is a good chance they do not. Having a few Bibles to share every time your group meets is not good enough. If we want young people to spend time with the Bible and make it part of their life, they must each have their own. We want their Bible to look worn and dog-eared. That will mean that it is being read and is traveling with the young people throughout their day and week and not just being dusted off now and then.

Use a Catholic edition of the Bible 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.

### Where and When Should I Use These Sessions?

The most natural place to use the *ScriptureWalk Junior High* sessions is in junior high youth group meetings, which is what they were originally designed for. However, with a little creativity, you can find many other uses for the sessions or for the activities within each session. Consider these uses:

- as part of your religious education program
- as part of a weekly Scripture study group
- as a component of a miniretreat
- as a supplement to the reflections included in *The Catholic Youth Bible*
- as a recipe book from which you can pick and choose individual parts to add pizzazz to your Scripture class
- as a homily help when you are preparing to celebrate liturgy with junior high young people

The order of the session themes in this ScriptureWalk volume loosely correspond to the calendar as well as the liturgical year. Thus, for example, the theme of the first session, "Living in the Light," is an appropriate theme to begin a new program year, and the theme of session 7, "The Spirit's Promise," would be appropriate at the end of the year near the feast of Pentecost. The themes also reflect the changing dynamics of a group as the participants continue to meet each month and grow more comfortable with discussion.

### What Group Size Works with These Sessions?

The time estimates for the session activities 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.

### Comprehensive Youth Ministry

The *ScriptureWalk Junior High* sessions are designed to be used as part of a comprehensive or total youth ministry program. This model acknowledges that a well-rounded program for youth includes educational, social, service, and spiritual opportunities. This resource aims to meet these needs as follows.

**Educational.** This material is catechetical, but uses an informal teaching model. The sessions introduce and reinforce knowledge of the Scriptures, invite young people to spend more time reading the Bible, and explore issues critical to young people today.

**Social.** These sessions are an opportunity for young people to gather and share their faith in a nonthreatening environment. Designed with variety and a sense of surprise, the activities are meant to be fun. Many of them also build and strengthen community.

**Service.** The Gospel messages call young people to look beyond themselves to serve God and others. Some sessions invite the young people to serve others during the meeting. Others ask the young people to reflect on or discuss their approach to poor and lost people in today's society.

**Spiritual.** Prayer is one of the three critical components in each session, yet spirituality is not confined to one activity. It is woven throughout the various activities. The young people are challenged to take the messages they learn from the Scriptures and weave them through their own life.

### Session Leaders

The sessions in this manual do not need to be led by professional ministers. They are designed to be used by volunteers with a minimum of training. They contain complete directions that when followed will help ensure a successful session. They do require preparation, though. Whoever is leading them must be sure to read the session over several times and think through the particulars of their situation. To help you plan, each session includes several materials needed lists—one overall list for the whole session and an individual list for each activity. Also included with each session is a checklist of other necessary preparations.

These sessions are also a good place to involve your high school youth leaders. At Holy Spirit Parish, older teens facilitated the small groups and the adult leaders introduced, facilitated, and processed each activity. Appendix B, "Guidelines for Small-Group Leaders," is offered to help your group leaders facilitate small groups.

### The Bible Is a Library, Not a Book

The Bible is filled with many different types of writing. God is revealed not only in narrative but also in poetry and drama, in epic stories and letters. We have a tendency sometimes to stick with what we know well. But if we preach only from the Gospels, we miss out on the inspiration of the letters later in the New Testament. If we read only the New Testament, we miss out on the richness and texture of our roots in the Old Testament.

The Bible is not homework for a speed-reading class. The Bible isn't just the study notes for the big Catholic exam in the sky that we'll all have to pass some day, or even a program to store on the desktop of a computer. The Bible is to be sampled and savored and read over again and again.

There is no right or wrong way to read the Bible. Some people read it from cover to cover. Others drop in here and there as the Spirit inspires them to turn the pages. These sessions do not give young people a formula on how to read the Bible. It is an intensely personal decision. My hope is that young people may begin to look at the Bible as a companion for the journey—a place that they can return to again and again—to search for guidance, to celebrate, to find comfort, and to constantly learn.

One of the most amazing things about the Bible is that we can read the same Scripture passage over and over again and yet we continue to be inspired in different ways. Take, for example, the parable of the prodigal son. Sometimes when we read this Scripture, we are the prodigal in need of forgiveness from God and others. Another time we might be the father, the one who reaches out with forgiveness. Yet another time we might be the other brother, the one who just cannot let go of a grudge. And on a particularly rough day, we might feel like the pigs. Even the Scriptures can have a sense of humor.

Understanding that the Bible contains many different styles of writing is part of interpreting the Bible's message in its proper context. Interpreting each passage of the Bible in its total context is central to the way Catholics understand the Bible. For an excellent overview of how Catholics interpret the Bible, read the article in appendix A, "What the Scriptures Say . . . and Don't Say: Reading the Bible in Context."

## A Few Words on the Lectionary

For many Catholics—including young people—exposure to the Bible comes primarily at Mass, when the Scriptures are read from the lectionary. Each Sunday in the lectionary includes three readings and a psalm. The first reading is typically from the Old Testament and is selected to relate with the Gospel reading. The psalm usually complements the first reading and the Gospel. The second reading is from one of the letters of the Apostles. The third reading is taken from one of the four Gospels.

At the end of each session, you will find a list of lectionary references so that you can match the themes of the sessions with different Sundays of the year. This will be particularly helpful if your youth group bases each of its meeting themes on the readings of the previous Sunday, or if the religious education department at your parish uses a lectionary-based program.

## Making the Scriptures Come Alive for You

If we want young people to spend more time with the Bible, we must do the same—and not just when we look up a passage while preparing for a youth group meeting.

Try to find time before your session to read and reflect on the Scripture passages you will be using. This way, your introductions and process time will be less "textbook" and more from the heart. You can also make a point of reflecting on the lectionary readings before or after weekend liturgy at your parish.

Read the Scriptures.

Proclaim the Scriptures.

Remember that you may be the only Gospel the young people in your group ever hear.

My prayer is that the Scriptures come alive through you,  
that the Spirit inspire your ministry,  
and that you may see the Gospel in the lives of your young people.

## Suggested Resources

An overwhelming number of resources for studying the Bible are available. I have reviewed many of them and recommend the following resources to leaders and groups using *ScriptureWalk Junior High*:

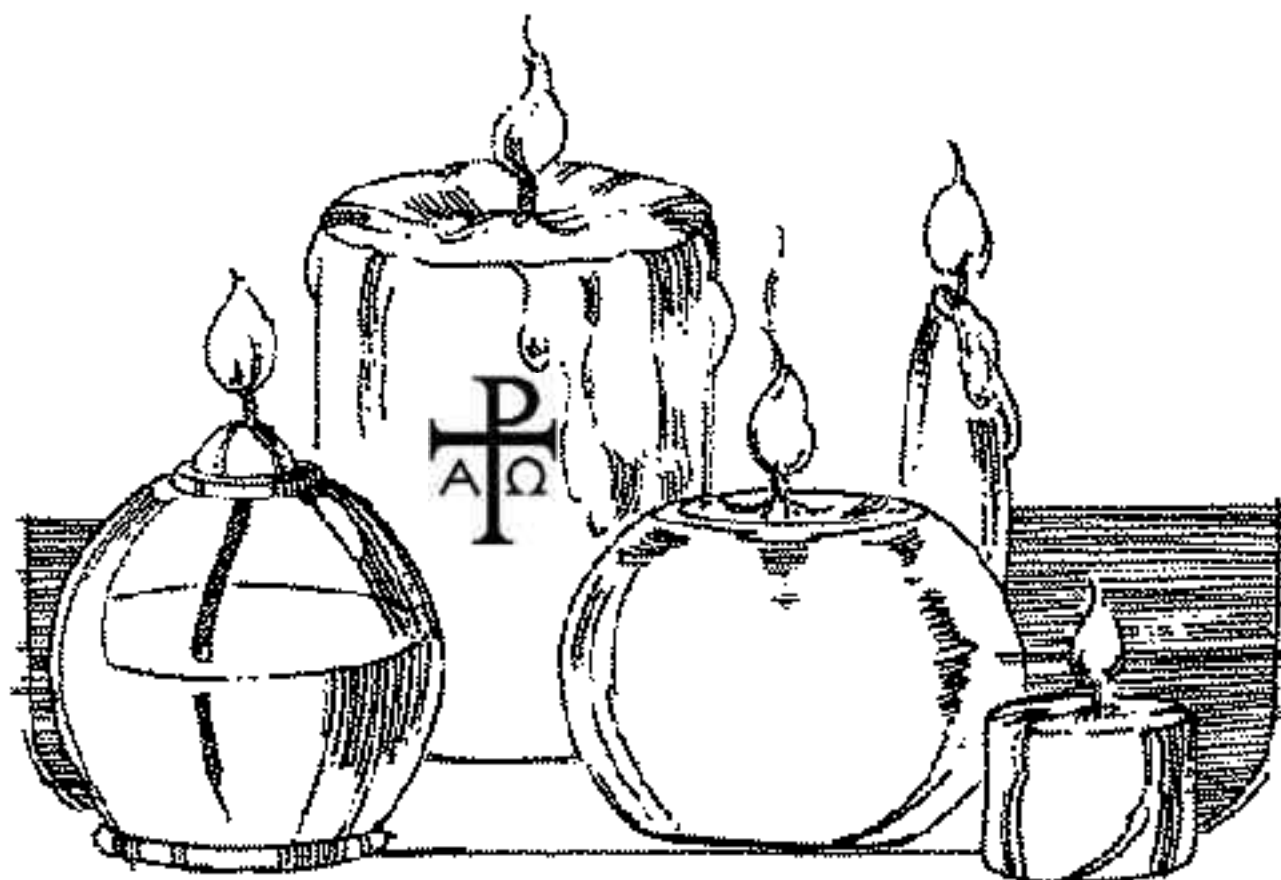
- Achtemeier, Paul J., gen. ed. *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. [San Francisco]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996. Provides helpful information on people, places, and concepts in the Bible.
- Bergant, Dianne, and Robert J. Karris, gen. eds. *Collegeville Bible Commentary*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 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.
- Catucci, Thomas F. *Time with Jesus: Guided Meditations for Youth*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1993.
- Hamma, Robert M., ed. *A Catechumen's Lectionary*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988.
- 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.
- Sanchez, Patricia Datchuk. *The Word We Celebrate: Commentary on the Sunday Lectionary. Years A, B, and C*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1989.
- Scripture from Scratch: A Popular Guide to Understanding the Bible*. Cincinnati: Saint Anthony Messenger Press. A monthly newsletter.

# Living in the Light

## Objectives

This session has three objectives:

- To help the young people recognize Jesus as the light for all the world
- To invite them to choose to walk in the light
- To challenge them to be light for others



## Background on the Session Theme

In this session Jesus, the light for the world, calls us to recognize and celebrate the light that shines in each of us. The reading from Matthew 5:14–16 (used in the activity “We Can Be Light for Others”) is a tremendous affirmation for each of us. It is as if Jesus took a giant spotlight and placed it on each person and said, “Look at this great, wonderful person I have created.” Yet this light comes with responsibility. We cannot hide or squander it. We need to share it, to spread it to others.

Young people often struggle with self-worth. They can have a difficult time recognizing their gifts and talents. We, as adults, need to help them coax that flicker of faith into a mighty flame—one that shines for Christ.

Another passage used in this session, Psalm 27, tells us, “The LORD is my light and my salvation” (verse 1). We acknowledge Jesus as the light that guides our way. We recognize that it is only through following God that we will be saved, that we will overcome the darkness in our world. Isaiah 9:2 tells us that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. We live in a world where darkness often surrounds us, where sometimes the light must struggle to shine.

But we have a choice. We can choose to remain in the dark or to walk in the light of Christ. Youth today can easily get caught up in the culture of death—from violent video games to dark music to gruesome movies. We can help them choose the light of Christ and gain courage to share that light with others.

## Schedule at a Glance

### Session Activities (Total session time: 90 minutes)

- Introduction (5 minutes)
- Light-Hearted Icebreaker (10 minutes), a small-group icebreaker
- Walking in Darkness (20 minutes), a small-group discussion
- The Lord Is the Light that Never Goes Out (15 minutes), a reflection and snack break
- We Can Be Light for Others (20 minutes), a reflection and small-group discussion
- The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation (20 minutes), a large-group flashlight prayer

## Materials Needed

This is a list of materials needed for all the activities in this session, except the optional activity:

- flashlights, one for each person
- index cards
- different-colored markers
- Bibles, one for each person
- a pair of scissors
- large pieces of black construction paper, two for each small group
- transparent tape
- chalk, one piece for each small group

- a sheet cake decorated with a lighthouse and the Scripture passage “The LORD is my light and my salvation” (Psalm 27:1)
- trick birthday candles (those that reignite after you blow them out)
- matches
- a knife
- forks, plates, and napkins, one of each for each person
- a cross
- pens or pencils
- copies of handout 1–A, “We Are the Light of the World,” one for each small group

### Other Necessary Preparations

- For activity B.* Identify Scripture passages that include the word *light*. You will need one for each small group. Some examples are given in activity B.
- For activity C.* Tape together side-by-side two pieces of black construction paper for each small group.
- Review the optional activity at the end of this session and consider whether you would like to use it in some way, for example, in place of another activity, as a way to extend the session, or as a follow-up activity.

## Session Activities

### Activity A Introduction (5 minutes)

*Materials needed.* flashlights

1. Before the youth enter the meeting room, dim the lights, leaving just enough light to find a seat. Leave flashlights in various places around the room, but give no instructions. Observe what the young people do with the flashlights—whether they ignore them, turn them on, shine them at one another, make patterns with the light on the ceiling, and so on.

2. Introduce the session in these or similar words:
- Are you afraid of the dark? Most of us are old enough to know that no monsters lurk under our bed, yet most of us feel better when some light is on in the room. When you enter a dark room, what is usually the first thing you do? Turn on the light? Why? When you came into our room tonight, what did you do with the flashlights? Did you want to shed some light on the matter?

Light is a symbol of hope. Nightlights help us feel safer. Lighthouses once guided ships lost at sea. Christmas lights celebrate the birth of Christ. Fireworks excite and surprise, and candles on a birthday cake cause us to sing. We light candles to celebrate our faith and pray to God.

Light has been an important part of people’s faith, from the early worshipers who prayed to God in the sun to Catholic Christians today who light candles at Mass on Sunday. In this session we will learn more about Jesus, the light for the world. We will be challenged to choose a path of light rather than to walk in darkness, and we will be called to be light for others.

### Activity B Light-Hearted Icebreaker (10 minutes)

*Related Scripture passages.* passages that include the word *light*, for example, Isaiah 9:2; Psalm 27:1; Matthew 5:14–16; John 1:5; Ephesians 5:8

*Materials needed.* index cards; different-colored markers; Bibles, one for each person; a pair of scissors

*Before the session.* Identify Scripture passages that include the word *light*. You will need one for each small group. Some examples follow:

“You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

“The LORD is my light and my salvation” (Psalm 27:1).

“Let your light shine before others” (Matthew 5:16).

“Live as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5).

“The people who walked in darkness / have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9:2).

Estimate how many people you will have in each small group. Assign one passage to each small group and divide it into as many segments as there are members of the small group. Include the citation with the last phrase. For example, if five people are in a group, you might divide the following phrase as marked: “The Light shines / in the darkness, / and the darkness / did not overcome / it” (John 1:5). Write each segment of a passage on a separate index card, using the same color of marker for each segment. Repeat the process for each Scripture passage that you chose, but use a different-colored pen for each passage. After you have created cards for all the Scripture passages, scramble all the cards.

1. Introduce the session with comments like the following:
- Our meeting tonight is about light, how Jesus is the light of the world. As we begin our meeting, I would like you to think a little about the theme of light and how important it is in our life.
- Divide the young people into small groups based on your estimate of how many people would be in each. Distribute at random the cards that you prepared before the session. Be prepared to cut a card or two in half if you don’t have enough. Of, if you have too many cards, give one or more people two cards.



2. Ask the young people to find people whose cards have words that are the same color as the card they hold. When they think they have everyone together, they should unscramble the phrase and stand in order with their cards.

3. Ask each group to find their passage in the Bible and read before and after the verse to discover its context. Ask them to spend 5 minutes discussing the meaning that the Scripture passage might hold for them.

4. Ask a spokesperson from each small group to share what her or his group discovered.

### **Activity C Walking in Darkness (20 minutes)**

*Related Scripture passage.* Isaiah 9:2

*Materials needed.* Bibles, one for each person; large pieces of black construction paper, two for each small group; transparent tape; chalk, one piece for each small group

*Before the session.* Tape together side-by-side two pieces of black construction paper for each small group.

1. Read aloud Isaiah 9:2 and introduce this activity with comments along the following lines:

- In this Scripture passage, we hear about people who lived in darkness. In today's world we also live surrounded by darkness. We often call these influences sin or the temptation to sin. This is how evil finds its way into the world. We need to become more aware of the darkness all around us so that we are better able to stay away from the darkness and rather walk in the light.

2. Give each small group a piece of chalk and the black construction paper that you prepared before the session. Assign each group a different aspect of modern culture that they are most likely to be familiar with. Some possibilities include music, magazines, newspapers, video games, movies, and television.

3. Direct each group to brainstorm examples of darkness from its assigned category. For example, one group might name a movie that glorifies violence, or another might name a song with racist lyrics. Let each group select a recorder to write with the chalk its examples of sin on the black paper. Make sure each group has at least ten examples before moving on.

4. Gather everyone together and talk about the different examples of darkness from the lists. Solicit specific examples of how these sins can be avoided. Close by reminding the young people that they have a choice, and they can choose to walk in the light rather than walk amid the darkness in our world.

### **Activity D The Lord Is the Light that Never Goes Out (15 minutes)**

*Related Scripture passage.* Psalm 27:1

*Materials needed.* a sheet cake decorated with a lighthouse and the Scripture passage, "The LORD is my light and my salvation" (Psalm 27:1); trick birthday candles (those that reignite after you blow them out); matches; a knife; forks, plates, and napkins, one of each for each person

1. Place trick birthday candles on a sheet cake that you have had decorated with a lighthouse and the Scripture passage, "The LORD is my light and my salvation" (Psalm 27:1). Light the candles.

2. Ask for a volunteer from the group to come forward and try to blow out the candles. When this person fails to keep the candles blown out, ask a second person to come forward and try to blow out the candles.

When this person also fails, ask the participants how they can compare the candles to the way Jesus lights up our life every day. Make the point that even when we struggle with darkness, Jesus is the light who will never go out.

3. Then take a snack break and enjoy the cake.

### **Activity E We Can Be Light for Others (20 minutes)**

*Related Scripture passage.* Matthew 5:14–16

*Materials needed.* Bibles, one for each person; a cross; pens or pencils; copies of handout 1–A, "We Are the Light of the World," one for each small group; different-colored markers

1. Direct everyone to regather into their small group. Give each teen a pen or pencil and provide each small group with a copy of handout 1–A, "We Are the Light of the World."

2. Proclaim Matthew 5:14–16. Then introduce this activity with comments along the following lines:

- This passage tells us that the light of Christ shines so bright that it shines through each of us. Jesus says we, too, are the light of the world. It is our call to spread the light of Christ through our words and actions.

3. Direct the young people to each think of one way—through words or actions—that they can be the light of Christ for others. You may want to give them a few examples. Then tell them to choose a candle on their group's copy of the handout, color it in with a marker, and write around or near their candle's flame their idea for how to share the light. Suggest that they also sign their name to the handout.

4. After the young people are finished, tell them that you will hang their “We Are the Light of the World” posters where members of the parish can see them.

### Activity F **The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation (20 minutes)**

*Related Scripture passage.* Psalm 27:1

*Materials needed.* a Bible; flashlights, ideally one for each person (collect as many as you can, or ask the young people to bring one of their own), including a large one for the leader

1. As you usher the young people into the area you plan to use for prayer, hand each of them a flashlight, directing them to keep it *off*. Have them sit in a circle. Darken the lights in the prayer space, and turn on one large flashlight.

2. Begin by reading Psalm 27:1. Ask the young people to think of one prayer that they would like to offer tonight, asking God to send light to someone in need—someone in their family, at school, or anyone throughout the world. Go around the circle and ask each teen, one at a time, to offer a brief petition or prayer. After a person offers a petition or prayer, he or she may turn on his or her flashlight.

3. After all have had a chance to pray, reflect on how dark the room was before the prayer and how bright it is after they called on God. Encourage the young people to continue turning to God and asking God to shine on their life.

### Optional Activity **Light Catchers (30 minutes)**

*Related Scripture passage.* 1 John 1:5

*Materials needed.* red, yellow, and orange tissue paper; several pairs of scissors; waxed paper; Mod-podge shellac; medium-size paint brushes; 5-by-5-inch slips of paper, one for each person; pens; red pipe cleaners, one for each person; glue; a hole puncher; red yarn

*Before the session.* Cut sheets of red, yellow, and orange tissue paper into 1-by-1-inch pieces. Cut enough 12-by-12-inch sheets of waxed paper so that each teen has one sheet. Make a sample light catcher to show the young people before they begin the project (see the step-by-step directions below).

1. Introduce this activity with comments like the following:
- During the next part of our meeting, you will have a chance to let your light shine to cheer up our parish shut-ins by making light catchers for them. Please do a really nice job with them because they will mean a lot to people, especially those who rarely get visitors or gifts. This is a way you can be the light of Christ to people you have never met.

2. Show the participants the sample light catcher that you created before the session. Distribute a sheet of waxed paper to each person, set out the other supplies, and give the young people the following step-by-step directions on how to make a light catcher:

- Cover the center of your sheet of waxed paper with squares of tissue paper, making sure the squares overlap only a little bit, creating a stained-glass effect.
- Use a paint brush to cover the work with a thin layer of Mod-podge shellac. Allow it to dry.
- On a 5-by-5-inch slip of paper, write “God is light and in him there is no darkness (1 John 1:5).” Punch a hole in the end of the slip.
- Shape a pipe cleaner into a heart and glue it on top of the stained-glass creation.
- Trim the excess waxed paper and tissue paper around the outside edge of the heart.
- Punch a hole in the top of the heart and put a piece of red yarn through the slip of paper and the heart, to use as a hanger.

## Scripture References

### Additional Scripture Passages

*Genesis 1:1–4.* Let there be light.  
*John 3:19–21.* Come into the light.  
*John 8:12.* “I am the light of the world.”  
*John 12:35–36.* Walk in the light.  
*1 John 1:5.* God is light.

### Lectionary Readings

*Cycle A*  
 Third Sunday of Ordinary Time  
 Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time  
 Fourth Sunday of Lent

*Cycle B*  
 Fourth Sunday of Lent  
 Third Sunday of Advent

*Cycle C*  
 Second Sunday After Christmas

## Session Follow-Up

### Family Connection

Suggest to the young people that they try the following activity at home. Make copies of the directions to send home with them.

Send family members (of all ages) on a scavenger hunt through their home to find items that represent light or shed light. Some examples: a flashlight, a candle, a nightlight, a lamp, a penlight, Christmas lights, a sparkler, matches, a skylight, a sun catcher, a sunflower.

Gather the items together (if possible) on a table with family members sitting around the table. Ask each person to choose an item and make up a prayer to go with it. This is often called common-object meditation.

Two prayer examples follow:

Lord, help me be like this sun catcher, willing to catch the light of Christ and allow Jesus to shine through me to others.

• • •

Lord, help me be like this sparkler, full of surprise and excitement and willing to light up the world for others.

When everyone is finished, read together Matthew 5:14–16. Close with a family affirmation, identifying ways your family is light for others.

## We Are the Light of the World

