
BUILD UP OR BREAK DOWN

An Edge Night on Virtue and Sin

LEADER OVERVIEW

We are given freedom by God to make choices in our lives. These choices are either good or bad. But that does not mean that God leaves us on our own with no assistance to combat the powers of evil and our temptation to sin. He gives us incredible tools that, when practiced and prayed for, can help us to build up ourselves and those around us into virtuous people.

A virtue is “a habitual and firm disposition to do the good” (CCC 1803). There are human virtues that are obtained through our practice and deliberate action and four of these have been identified as the cardinal virtues. The first cardinal virtue is prudence which helps mankind, through reason, to figure out what is good. Justice, the second cardinal virtue, helps us to give to our neighbor what is due to him. Fortitude helps us in difficult circumstances, as we pursue the good, and helps us to resist obstacles and overcome hardships to defend the good and the just. Finally, temperance helps us to do things in moderation and to properly use created goods. (CCC 1806-1809)

There are also theological virtues that are directly related to God and “infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life” (CCC 1813). There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and love. Faith helps us to believe in God and all that He has said and revealed and to bear witness to the faith, both of which are necessary for salvation. Hope is the virtue by which we desire heaven and see it as the fulfillment of our desire for happiness. It sustains us during times of trial and helps to purify our lives so that we can attain salvation. The greatest of all the theological and cardinal virtues is charity, or love. By this virtue “we love God above all things for his own sake and our neighbors as ourselves for the love of God” (CCC 1822). The virtue of love binds together all the other virtues and its fruits are joy, peace, and mercy. (1 Corinthians 13, CCC 1812-1829)

We are also given the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit which sustain the moral life and helps us to follow the Holy Spirit. There are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. There are twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity. (CCC 1830-1832)

All of these virtues and gifts are given to us to protect us and help us to overcome sin. Sin is “an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity” (CCC 1849). Sin is broken into two categories. Lesser sins which weaken charity and our love of God, called venial sins and grave sin which destroys charity in our hearts and severs our relationship with God, called mortal sin. Mortal sin is a sin that is of grave nature, done with full knowledge, and with full consent. Sin clouds our judgement and affects everyone. It also tends to reproduce itself and build upon itself. We can also participate and be responsible for the sin of others in times that we support or fail to condone the bad behavior of others. (CCC 1852- 1869)

God’s mercy is endless. He desires for us to be good and virtuous people and gives us so much help and support in our lives. Even in the times that we fail and fall into sin, He is there to welcome us back with loving arms through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

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EDGE NIGHT OVERVIEW

GOAL

The goal of this Edge Night is for the youth to come to a greater understanding of what virtue is and what sin is. They will also learn what it looks like to live a life of virtue and why they should want to live a life of virtue rather than a life of sin.

SUMMARY

The Edge Night begins with a Gather game where the youth will have an opportunity to build something and to destroy it. The Proclaim dives into the different virtues as well as what sin is and the varying degrees of sin. The Break gives the youth an opportunity to discuss and discern virtues in real life. The Edge Night ends with a Send giving the youth an opportunity to reflect on the will of God and living a virtuous life through the guidance of an examination of conscience.

MAIN IDEAS

- All of us are called to live lives of virtue which is “a habitual and firm disposition to do the good.” Someone who lives a virtuous life performs good acts and gives the best of him or herself. A virtuous person tends towards what is good, chooses what is good, and does good things through concrete actions. (CCC 1803)
- Sin is an offense against reason and truth. It goes against our very creation and is a failure to love God and our neighbors. It stems from unhealthy attachment to certain goods and it wounds the nature of a person and the community he or she lives in. (CCC 1849)
- It is up to us to choose whether to live a virtuous or a sinful life. It is up to us, with the help of the Church, to form our consciences and to learn what is right and wrong in the moral life.

ENVIRONMENT

At the front of the room, divide the space in half. On one half write the word “virtue” and on the other half write the word “sin.” Write the definition of both on poster board and then put up signs with words that pertain to either virtue or sin. For example: joy, hope, happiness, wholeness, patience, or death, destruction, slavery, etc. Also create visuals that represent the wholeness and goodness of virtue and the death and destruction of sin. For example: happy photos of families or friends, sunshine, flowers, or people crying, people hurt, or destroyed buildings, etc.



MEDIA

Life Teen Video Support May 2015: “Armor of God” (lifeteen.com)
Edge Video Support March 2017: “Captives” (lifeteen.com)



SCRIPTURE

John 10:10; Romans 3:23; Galatians 5:22-23



CATECHISM

1803-1832, 1849-1869, 2656-2658, 2822-2827

Notes:

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EDGE NIGHT OUTLINE

GATHER

Edge Night Introduction (5 min)

Welcome the youth, introduce any youth there for the first time, and begin in prayer. Give a brief overview of the topic of the night using the following as an example:

In our lives, we have the freedom to make choices. God gave us the great gift of free will to make decisions in our lives that will either lead us to build up ourselves and those around us or to tear ourselves and others down. While it may seem like it should always be easy to do what is good, sin can cloud our judgement and can make it hard to make right decisions. But we have also been given many tools to combat sin and to live holy and virtuous lives. It is just up to us to choose to fight for what is right, to choose to do what is good, and to avoid what is evil.

To Build or to Break (20 min)

Before the Edge Night, gather a large amount of cardboard boxes - moving boxes, shoe boxes, etc. This game is played in two teams.

1. Divide the youth into two teams.
2. Team One uses all of the cardboard boxes to build some sort of structure. They decide where in the room to build it and what they want to build.
3. Time how long it takes Team One to build their structure.
4. Next, instruct Team Two to come in and destroy the structure by throwing soft dodgeballs at the structure.
5. Time how long it takes Team Two to destroy the structure.
6. Then, instruct Team One to rebuild their structure. They can move its location and change its design if they desire to.
7. Time how long it takes Team One to build it and note any changes they made.
8. Instruct Team Two to come in and destroy the structure again, but this time allow Team One to defend their structure by hitting away the soft dodgeballs with pool noodles.
9. Time how long it takes Team Two to destroy the structure.

After these two rounds bring the groups back together and use the following questions for a large group discussion:

- Did it take longer to build or destroy? Why do you think that is?
- Builders, did your strategy of building and location change the second time around? Why?

- How were things different once you knew that the destroyers were coming?
- How do you think this can relate to our lives?
- Is it easier to build people up or to tear them down?
- Is it easier and less time consuming to seek to be a good person or to fall into sin?

PROCLAIM

“Build Up or Break Down” Teaching (15 min)

This teaching can be found on pages 48 to 51.

BREAK

Video: Captives (5 min)

Play the video “Captives” from the *Media Suggestions*.

Which Virtue? (10 min)

Break the youth into their small groups, discuss any thoughts or reactions to the video, and use the “Which Virtue?” handout found on the *March 2017 Edge USB* and online at lifeteen.com under Edge Support: *March 2017* to lead the activity.



SUGGESTIONS

Have a list of all the cardinal and theological virtues in a visible spot for the youth to refer to. If necessary, give them a brief recap and definition of each virtue.

SEND

Thy Will Be Done (20 min)

Bring the youth back to the large group and begin this time of prayer with the following introduction:

Everytime we pray the Our Father we ask for God’s will to “be done on earth as it is in heaven.” God has a loving plan for our lives. He wants to lead us through every decision we make. When we pray we should ask for clarity from God so we can follow His will and desire it. It is important, too, that we don’t only think about the will of God but that we also act upon it in faith, hope, and charity. The theological virtues inform our prayer and all of our actions. We pray in faith, putting our hope in God, and it is all drawn together in love. The love we have for God, the loving will of the Father in our lives, and the love we show in our actions to the people in our lives. (CCC 2656-2658, 2822-2827)

When we begin to live out the will of God in our lives and seek to be virtuous people, it is important that we are always aware of the choices we are making. A great way to reflect on our actions and

At this time hand out grade specific examinations of consciences which can be found on the *March 2017 Edge USB* or online at lifeteen.com under Edge Support: *March 2017*. Have the youth spread out and take some time to read through the examination and give them pens or pencils to use to write on their sheets of paper and to reflect on where they struggle, but also where they are the strongest.

After all the youth have had an opportunity to do this reflection, bring them back to the large group and close in a prayer asking for an increase in virtue and all the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit for the youth to live virtuous lives following the will of God.



Have a priest present during the Send to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation for any of the youth who desire to go.

Notes:

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TEACHING GUIDE

GETTING STARTED

To cover the basic information follow along and craft the talk based off of the bullet points. If your youth are ready to take it deeper, start incorporating a few of the Going Deeper call out boxes (like the one below) by picking the ones your youth would relate to the most.



GOING DEEPER

Check inside these boxes for tips and ideas on how to take your youth a little deeper with the Proclaim.

VIRTUES

- *Begin by projecting an image of a saint your youth would be familiar with and read Philippians 4:8.*
- All of us are called to live lives of virtue. “A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good.” Someone who lives a virtuous life performs good acts and gives the best of him or herself. A virtuous person tends towards what is good, chooses what is good, and does good things through concrete actions. (CCC 1803)
- *Give an example of someone in your life who you would consider to be virtuous and give concrete reasons why this person reveals true virtue based on the criteria above.*
- Most people are not born perfectly virtuous; it is something we all have to work at. One type of virtue is human virtue which helps us to govern our actions and emotions and guides us toward living Christian lives.
- There are four human virtues that play a pivotal role in the Christian life and they are called the cardinal virtues. All other human virtues are grouped around them and praised in various names throughout the Scriptures. I would now like to introduce to you my cardinal virtue friends. (CCC 1805)
- *At this time have four Core Members ready to be called up and introduced as the four cardinal virtues. Each Core Member should have an outfit to fit their “personality” and act the part. Have Prudence dressed as a studious person, Justice dressed as a judge, Fortitude dressed as an athlete, and Temperance dressed in very simple modest clothing and clean cut.*
- This is my friend Prudence (*call up a female Core Member*). Prudence is a thinker. She always makes sure that she is doing the right thing before she acts! (CCC 1806)
- This is my next friend, Justice (*call up a male Core Member*). Justice is a righteous dude. He is always fighting for what is right, and it is kind of annoying because he is always right too! (CCC 1807)
- Now to introduce Fortitude (*call up a female Core Member*). Fortitude is the toughest of the bunch. She is so strong and does the right thing even in the most intense situations. She overcomes every obstacle in the moral life. (CCC 1808)

- Finally we have Temperance (*call up a male Core Member*). If you want someone to just chill with, Temperance is your guy. He always keeps things in check and makes sure no one goes overboard. He is all about moderation. (CCC 1809)
- When all of these virtues are practiced together, we find the perfection of the Christian life. We obtain these virtues in our lives by putting them into practice and using them to form good habits. (CCC 1810)
- *Give the youth a few practical examples of living out these virtues that would apply to their daily lives.*
- But there is even more at our disposal to help us live virtuous lives and to choose to do the good. There are even higher virtues given to us directly from God and infused by God into our souls.
- To create a visual for the youth of what this looks like, bring up a glass of milk that represents our soul and chocolate sauce that represents virtue. Squeeze chocolate sauce into the milk and stir it to represent the virtues being infused in our souls.
- These virtues help us to live our lives like children of God and to live lives worthy of eternal life. These are called the theological virtues. They are not something we obtain by our own effort, but they are given to us directly as gifts from God. (CCC 1812-813)
- At this time have three presents wrapped and on the stage for the speaker to unwrap as he or she talks about each theological virtue. In each box have one of the words — faith, hope, charity — written on large sheets of paper.
- The first theological virtue is faith (*unwrap the present with the word “faith” in it and have a Core Member tape it to the wall*). Faith helps us to believe in God and all that he has said and revealed to us. It helps us also to share our faith with others. (CCC 1814-1816)
- Next, we have hope (*unwrap the present with the word “hope” in it and have a Core Member tape it to the wall*). Hope is the virtue by which we desire heaven and see it as the greatest good and the fulfillment of all our desires. It sustains us during difficult times and helps us to purify our lives so that we can make it to heaven. (CCC 1817 - 1821)
- Finally, there is charity (*unwrap the present with the word “charity” in it and have a Core Member tape it to the wall*). This is also known as love. It is the greatest virtue which allows us to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves out of that love for God. Love binds together all the other virtues. (CCC 1822-1829)



GOING DEEPER

And if all these virtues were not enough, there is still more that vGod has given to us to help us live holy lives — the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Discuss with the youth the different gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit and what they do to aid us in living lives of virtue. (CCC 1830-1832)

- *Ask the youth to respond: Why do you think that God gives us so much help when it comes to living virtuous and holy lives?*
- Remember in the beginning of the night when we found that it was so much easier to destroy things than it was to build them up? God gives us so many tools to help us live holy lives because we are constantly combating a very real struggle with sin.

- *Read John 10:10 out loud while projecting an image of the Good Shepherd.*
- There is a constant and very real battle in our lives between following the way of the thief who kills and destroys and following the Good Shepherd to abundant life. It is the difference between choosing sin or virtue.



GOING DEEPER

If you also subscribe to Life Support, play the video Armor of God from the Media Suggestions.

- But sin can be confusing, it can be alluring, and it is often times filled with a lot of false promises.
- *Give the youth a few examples of sins that may be alluring in their lives. For example: cheating on tests, too much physical affection with a boyfriend or girlfriend, gossip, etc.*
- Sin is an offense against reason and truth. It goes against our very creation and is a failure to love God and our neighbors. It stems from unhealthy attachment to certain goods, and it wounds the nature of man and the community he lives in. (CCC 1849)
- Not all sin is the same in severity; there are two categories of sin. Mortal sin is the worst sin and is comparable to turning our backs, completely, on God. It results in a loss of charity and a rejection of sanctifying grace which puts us outside of a state of grace. If someone dies not in a state of grace - because he has severed his relationship with God — he is likely to go to hell. (CCC 1854 - 1860, CCC 1999-2002)
- In order for a sin to be mortal sin it must be of grave matter. Grave matter is something that goes directly against the commandments of God such as murder, abortion, cheating on your spouse, stealing, or pre-marital sex.
- Also for it to be a mortal sin the person must be fully aware that what he or she is doing is wrong. That means that in the midst of doing something or making a choice you know completely and totally that it is wrong.
- Finally a mortal sin must be done with free consent. Free consent means a person is freely choosing to commit that sin. For example you absolutely know that something is bad but you choose to do it anyway, no one is forcing you to do it. (CCC 1856-1861)
- Venial sin is the second type of sin and it is less severe. It weakens charity within us and weakens our relationship with God but it does not cut it off completely. We should still confess these sins and seek to overcome them because “deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin.” (CCC 1862-1864)
- *Give the youth some examples of venial sins such as gossip, small lies, small disobedience to parents, using bad language, etc.*
- Sin clouds our judgment and makes it hard for us to make the right decisions. It tends to build up on itself and grow stronger the longer we let it run our lives. But at the end of the day it cannot destroy our innate sense of right and wrong. (CCC 1865)
- Sin affects everyone, not just us. And we can be responsible for the sins of others if we participate in their sin by encouraging them or not discouraging them when we know that they are doing something wrong, or if we protect evildoers. (CCC 1865-1869)

MERCY

- There are a lot of things constantly at play in our lives either encouraging us to build up or to destroy different things in our lives.
- The good news is that we have the choice. We have complete control over what kind of lives we live and which way we decide to go — the way of destroyers or builders.
- As we learn more and more about how to make the right decisions in our lives, it is not just something that stays here. It is not some school lesson to remember for a test and then forget. This is about our life; this is about our eternal salvation.
- It is up to us to choose whether to live a virtuous life or a sinful life. It is up to us, with the help of the Church, to form our conscience and begin to learn what is right and wrong in the moral life.
- God gives us so much to help fight the war with evil, to live good lives, and to have abundance and joy. And He even gives us His great mercy, love, and forgiveness when we do fall into sin.
- Sin is tricky, and our choices can be clouded. We are all sinners and we all fall short of the glory of God. But even in this midst of this reality God gives us the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (Romans 3:23)
- Through this sacrament God forgives us of all our sins and gives us the strength to carry on and to overcome particular sin in our lives!
- God's mercy is never ending. He will always forgive our sin if we come to Him sorrowful and seeking repentance. God wants to give us freedom, but again it is our choice; it is up to us to come to Him and admit that what we did was wrong. (CCC 1846-1848)
- *Challenge the youth to commit some of the virtues to memory and to pray for an increase in the virtue they need the most in their life to help them overcome sin.*

WHICH VIRTUE?

The following is a leader guide to facilitate a discussion in small groups. Use the following scenarios and ask the youth to decide which virtue said person is practicing as they are trying to make a decision. Then ask them why they chose that virtue and what is the right decision.

- Rachel is trying to figure out the right thing to do. She is trying to decide if she could somehow manipulate her parents to change her curfew or if she should just respect their wishes. Which cardinal virtue does Rachel need? (Prudence) Why? What is the most virtuous decision in this case?
- Ryan is walking out of the store and realized that he accidentally walked out without paying for one of his items. Should he count himself lucky or go back in and pay for it? Which cardinal virtue does Ryan need? (Justice) Why? What is the most virtuous decision?
- Joe is being made fun of for his faith. His friends keep trying to make him say that believing in Jesus is dumb. Joe knows that he should stand up for his faith but he is afraid. Which cardinal virtue does Joe need? (Fortitude) Why? What is the most virtuous decision?
- Leah's favorite TV show just came out and she really wants to just blow off all her homework and watch the entire season in one sitting. She knows that it is not the best use of her time, but she really wants to. What cardinal virtue does Leah need to put into practice? (Temperance) Why? What is the most virtuous decision?
- Lily is really starting to doubt that God is even real and wonders if any of this "church stuff" really matters. She is really struggling. What theological virtue should she be praying for? (Faith) Why? How would faith improve her situation?
- Joel has fallen into a lot of sin lately and he is really struggling with seeing heaven as a possibility in his life. He knows that God has forgiven him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but he is still unsure if he will even make it to heaven. What theological virtue should he be praying for? (Hope) How will hope improve his situation?
- Mark loves God and understands the love of God, but he gets really, really annoyed at his younger siblings and finds himself being really impatient and mean to them. What theological virtue does he need? (Charity) How will charity help him in this situation?

EDGE

WHICH VIRTUE? HANDOUT

Use this handout to lead the "Which Virtue?" activity during the Break. The printable version can be found on the *March 2017 Edge USB* or online at lifeteen.com under Edge Support: *March 2017*.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Sixth Grade

LOVE GOD

"Jesus said to them, 'You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" - Matthew 22:37

Examination Questions:

- Have I been to Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation?
- Did I pay attention at Mass?
- Do I put God after friends, video games, sports, or other activities?
- Do I pray every day?

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

"Jesus said to them, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" - Matthew 22:39

Examination Questions:

- Do I love my family as best I can? (Using kind words, and thoughts)
- Do I respect my parents and teachers and others that lead me? (Babysitters, relatives, youth ministers, Core Members)
- Do I talk badly about other people behind their back?
- Do I apologize when I make a mistake, or do I blame others?
- Do I try to get along with and love my brothers and sisters? How do they frustrate and annoy me?

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EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Seventh Grade

LOVE GOD

"Jesus said to them, 'You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" - Matthew 22:37

Examination Questions:

- Have I been to Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation?
- Did I pay attention at Mass?
- Do I put God after friends, video games, sports, or other activities?
- Do I pray every day?

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

"Jesus said to them, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" - Matthew 22:39

Examination Questions:

- Do I love my family as best I can? (Using kind words, and thoughts)
- Do I respect my parents and teachers and others that lead me? (Babysitters, relatives, youth ministers, Core Members)
- Do I talk badly about other people behind their back?
- Do I apologize when I make a mistake, or do I blame others?
- Do I try to get along with and love my brothers and sisters? How do they frustrate and annoy me?

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EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Eighth Grade

LOVE GOD

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today." - Deuteronomy 6:4-6

Examination Questions:

- Do I make God a priority in my life? Have I put other people, events, or activities in front of God?
- Have I made an idol out of my schoolwork, sports, activities, or relationships? Do I trust those things to "save" me, rather than God?
- Have I used Sunday as a day to rest and thank God for blessings in my life, or have I filled it up with other activities?
- Did I miss Mass on a Sunday or another Holy Day of Obligation?
- Have I remembered to pray every day? Do I spend meaningful time in prayer, or do I give it less effort than I should?

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

"The scholar of the law said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, 'A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went on leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise, a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?' He answered, 'The one who treated him with mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" - Luke 10:29-37

Examination Questions:

- Have I been kind and respectful to other students at school? Do I stand up for people who are being bullied or made fun of, or have I joined in or ignored it?
- Do I love and honor my parents, or do I blame them for my own shortcomings or hold their failures against them?
- Have I been sexually pure? Have I looked at pornography, engaged in masturbation or sexual behaviors with another person?
- Have I shared my possessions and time with those who are in need? Do I make an attitude of service a way of life?
- Do I gossip about other people in person or on social media? Have I engaged in "cyber-bullying"?

EDGE

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (BY GRADE) HANDOUT

Use these Examination of Conscience handouts for the appropriate grade levels. The printable version can be found on the *March 2017 Edge USB* or online at lifeteen.com under Edge Support: *March 2017*.