

SECRET IDENTITY

Jesus, Son of God

GOAL

The goal of this session is to introduce youth to Jesus as our powerful, yet personal, God and encourage them to engage with prayer and faith as a relationship with a person rather than an intellectual endeavor.

Scripture

Matthew 8:4, Matthew 16:13-20, Mark 14:60-64, Luke 1:35, Luke 1:68-79, John 1:1-5, John 10:30, John 20:24-29

Catechism

CCC 422-451

Resources

Blog

Adam Cross, “Why Jesus Matters” (lifeteen.com)

Handout

“Secret Identity” Parent Letter

GATHER

Youth are given a superhero name or their secret identity and ask questions to discover their identity, then find their matching partner.

PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- What defines a Christian is the belief that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior.
- Catholics call Jesus “Christ” and “Lord” because these titles affirm our belief that Jesus is anointed and the powerful Son of God.
- Even though Jesus is our powerful God, he still wants to know us personally. We build a relationship with him through prayer.

BREAK

In small groups, youth research how people in Jesus’ time spoke to and about him and engage in a discussion about Jesus’ identity.

SEND

Youth learn and pray a simple formula for prayer that has a subtle superhero theme.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

This week, use the CAPE prayer as part of your daily prayer to connect with God.

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PREP

Collect all materials needed for the Edge Night.

Create two decks of cards: one stack of superhero names and another stack of the heroes' secret identities. Come up with your own or use the list provided below.

Superhero Deck	Secret Identity Deck
Superman	Clark Kent
Batman	Bruce Wayne
Spider-Man	Peter Parker or Miles Morales
Black Widow	Natasha Romanova
Scarlet Witch	Wanda Maximoff
Cyclops	Scott Summers
The Incredible Hulk	Bruce Banner
Martian Manhunter	J'onn J'onzz
The Flash	Barry Allen
Black Panther	T'Challa
Captain America	Steve Rogers
Captain Marvel	Carol Danvers
Iron Man	Tony Stark
Hawkeye	Clint Barton
Wolverine	James Howlett

SETUP

Follow the Environment suggestions for the series.

Test all audio-visual elements of the Edge Night.

Project the environment image, and play the “ES - Unsuspecting Hero” Spotify playlist as the youth enter.

SUPPLIES

Prepare the following supplies:

Gather

- ☐ Superhero and secret identity index cards, one card per youth

Break

- ☐ Bibles, one per pair of youth

COMING SOON

The upcoming Edge Night, “Saved the Day,” concludes with Eucharistic Adoration. Contact your parish priest and music minister to coordinate this time of prayer for your youth.

NOTES

CORE ASSIGNMENTS AND NOTES

This youth minister worksheet provides writing space to detail core member assignments and notes specific to running this Edge Night. Write the names of core members assigned to the roles listed.

Setup: _____

Opening Prayer: _____

Gather – Who’s That Hero?

• Leader: _____

Proclaim – Secret Identity: _____

Break – Gospel Scavenger Hunt, Small Group Discussion

Send – Pray Like a Superhero

• Leader: _____

Weekly Challenge: _____

Parking Lot: _____

NOTES

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GATHER

Introduction (5 min)

Welcome the youth and introduce those who are there for the first time. Invite the preselected core member to begin in prayer. Give a brief overview of the Edge Night topic, using the following as an example:

As all heroes know, their true identity is a valuable secret. If the villains know who they are, then their jobs, families, and everything they love is at risk. In this series, however, our hero's goal is for everyone to know his identity. Jesus deliberately reveals himself as the Son of God. Rather than put who he loves at risk of danger, this revelation saves us!

Who's That Hero? (15 min)

Give each youth an index card to hold on their forehead. They may not look at their own card. Make sure that each card's pair is also in the group. For large youth groups, duplicate pairs are allowed.

Youth must ask each other questions about their identity to decipher who they are. Once they know their identity, they must find the superhero identity or secret identity that pairs up with theirs.

Suggestion

For an added challenge, once all of the pairs are made, instruct them to make more groupings, such as heroes that can or cannot fly, Marvel and DC superheroes, heroes with or without sidekicks, etc.

Step It Up

To turn this into a fun upfront game, select 5 volunteers. Use a TV or monitor on a cart to display identifiable superhero torsos on the screen. One at a time, the volunteer stands behind the TV with their head above the screen (so it appears as if the torso on screen were connected to their head) and asks questions of the audience to try and guess which superhero they are. The volunteer who guesses the most correct wins!

PROCLAIM

“Secret Identity” Teaching (10 min)

A Secret Identity

Begin by asking the youth to share a few ideas of what they think of when they hear the words secret identity (e.g., a spy, a detective, a superhero).

- When a character has a secret identity, it is usually to cover up or hide some aspect of who they are or what they do.
- Characters who have secret identities are usually somewhat mysterious or have very complex backstories.

Share with the youth one of your favorite characters that has a secret identity and what you like about them. Take your notes here:

- Sometimes, we can view Jesus in the same way that we see these types of characters; he did some really cool things, like walking on water and raising people from the dead, and seemed to have a mysterious identity that people didn’t quite understand, being both man and God. **(CCC 464)**
- We may know some things about Jesus — a variety of facts, Bible stories, or prayers with his name — but sometimes we can leave him in a similar place in our minds that we do with fictional superheroes.
- The difference, however, is that Jesus is real. He really existed, and he is the Son of God.
- The belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he came to save us, defines what it means to be a Christian.

Going Deeper

The Catholic Church promotes ecumenism, which is the unity of all Christians. Jesus established one church, his Body, and divisions within it are cause for sadness. Even though the Catholic Church contains the fullness of truth, we are united to our Christian brothers and sisters through Baptism and our shared belief in the Trinity, eternal salvation through Jesus, and the sacredness of Scripture. As one family of God, we can pray for and support each other’s efforts in bringing more people to faith in Jesus.

Blatantly Obvious

- Jesus, at times, spoke in mysterious ways, but he was not shy about revealing his “secret identity.”
- There are instances throughout Scripture where Jesus asks the people he heals not to reveal who he is to anyone, but there are also times when Jesus blatantly tells people exactly who he is — the Son of God. **(Matthew 8:4)**

Project and read **Mark 14:61-62**.

- Jesus’ identity as the Son of God was revolutionary, and for many people in Israel was a cause for scandal.
- Jesus was not who they expected him to be — but he was exactly who God planned him to be.
- He fulfilled many promises that God made regarding how he would save his people.
- Jesus is called Christ, which comes from the Greek translation of “Messiah,” which means “anointed.” **(CCC 436)**
- Based on God’s promises from the Old Testament, the Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah, who would come and save them from oppression and restore God’s Kingdom. **(Isaiah 42:1-4)**
- Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit as priest, prophet, and king to fulfill God’s plans for His people. **(CCC 436-440)**
- Jesus is not only the Messiah, an agent of God’s will, but he is also God himself, so we can also call him “Lord.” The word “Lord” comes from the Hebrew name given to Moses, “YHWH” (pronounced Yah-weh), and by calling Jesus Lord, we affirm that from the beginning “the power, honor, and glory due to God the Father are due also to Jesus.” **(CCC 449)**
- By revealing that He is the Son of God, Jesus shows us that God “has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation — he has sent his own ‘beloved Son.’” **(CCC 422)**
- Throughout all of human history God made promises to his people, to us, that he would send us a Savior, the Anointed One, to set us free from sin, from slavery, to save us from the darkness and death and bring us peace and new life; that is what Jesus, God’s Son, came to do. **(Luke 1:68-79)**

Going Deeper

Project and read the entire Canticle of Zechariah. **(Luke 1:68-79)**

Not Just a Character

- There is an endless amount of information that we can research and find about Jesus, who he was, and what he did throughout his life. But if we just learn things about Jesus and think of him as a cool character in old stories, that keeps him in the same area of our minds and hearts as superheroes, or spies, or detectives.
- Jesus is not just a character in a story, but a real person who died 2,000 years ago and rose from the dead.
- More than that, Jesus is alive in heaven and truly present to us today through the Eucharist.
- Jesus is a person we can actually know, not just know about.
- One of the reasons that Jesus became man was so that we could identify with him. He knows what it is like to be human. He felt every emotion — joy, sorrow, comfort, and grief. He knows what it is like to follow God and be tempted.
- God wants to be a part of our life so much that he came down from heaven to walk amongst us.
- Through Scripture, the Church, and in prayer, “We find a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father... who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever.” **(CCC 426)**

Share with the youth briefly about a time in your life when you encountered Jesus as a person, not just an idea. Take your own notes here:

- Jesus is not just the hero of a story from long ago. He is the hero of our story, here and now.
- Our goal this semester is to learn more about who Jesus is. By growing in our faith and learning to pray, we will come to know him as a person, not just another hero.

BREAK

Gospel Scavenger Hunt (15 min)

Divide youth into their small groups. If this is a new small group meeting for the first time, spend about five minutes doing introductions and learning each other's names.

Pass out a Bible to each pair of youth in the small group. Direct them to turn to the Gospel of Mark. In their pairs, skim through the Gospel and identify how differently people refer to Jesus when they speak with him or about him. Ask the following questions to foster a discussion:

- Who is Jesus to this person?
- To them, is Jesus a good guy or bad guy? Why do you think that?

Theological Insight

In the Gospels, Jesus occasionally tells people not to tell others who he is. This motif is called the “Messianic Secret.” There are a few possibilities why Jesus may have done this. One possibility is that he may not have wanted to draw the attention of the political authorities too soon, thus continuing a longer public ministry. Another possibility is that the Jews would not have been ready to accept a Messiah (understood to be a strong militaristic figure who would overthrow the occupying Romans by force) who would suffer and die on a cross. Jesus needed time to teach them and reframe their understanding of suffering and death before he revealed his true identity publically.

Small Group Discussion (10 min)

Use the following questions to foster a discussion within the small group:

- Whip Around: If you were a superhero, what would be a unique element to your supersuit (e.g., a cape, a mask that looks like an animal, sparkly pink boots)?
- What do you know about Jesus?
- Who in your life has taught you about Jesus?
- How can we learn more about Jesus?

Eighth-Grade Adaptation

Use the following questions for a more challenging discussion for eighth-grade youth:

- If one of your friends asked you who Jesus is, what would you tell them?
- Why does it matter that Jesus is more than just a character in a story?

SEND

Pray Like a Superhero (10 min)

Gather the small groups back together in the main meeting space. Invite the youth to sit in a comfortable upright position as you lead and introduce the time of prayer. Use the following as an example to teach the CAPE prayer:

Jesus is a person we can know personally, just like our friends and family. Jesus does not physically live in our house, nor do we go to school with him and pass by him in the hallway. The way we converse with Jesus is through prayer. In prayer, we open our minds and hearts to God, expressing our thoughts and feelings, and allow God to respond according to his will.

To help give us a pattern to follow, we are going to learn how to “pray like a superhero” with the acronym CAPE. We will start in prayer, and I will explain each letter as we go. Let us begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The first letter, C, stands for Call. Just like we did in the Sign of the Cross, we call on the name of God. God has many titles and names – God the Father, our Creator, Jesus our Savior and Prince of Peace, the Holy Spirit our Advocate and Comforter, etc. Turn your attention to God, and call him by his name or title that is most comfortable for you.

Pause for a few moments.

The next letter, A, stands for Adore. It is important to remember who God is and thank him for the good work he has done for us. Acknowledge God is good, all-powerful, merciful, and loving. Sit in his goodness, and thank him for the good things you have experienced in the last week.

Pause for a few moments.

The next letter, P, stands for Petition. A petition is something that we ask of God. Petitions can be for ourselves, for family or friends, or even people and circumstances in the world. What is weighing on your heart and mind that you want to ask God for help with?

Pause for a few moments.

Finally, the last letter, E, stands for Expect. Rather than have a monologue with ourselves, prayer is meant to be a dialogue with God. That means we need to give him time to respond. God responds to each of us in a unique way — he may not speak in audible words, but we can trust that God hears our prayer and responds. When we entrust our prayers to him, we can expect him to respond.

Pause for a few moments. Close the prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

Suggestion

Encourage memorization of the CAPE acronym at the conclusion of the prayer activity.

Step It Up

Create a prayer card with the CAPE prayer for youth to take home.

Weekly Challenge (5 min)

Invite the preselected core members to present the Weekly Challenge.

This week, use the CAPE prayer as part of your daily prayer to connect with God.

Dismiss the core members preassigned to parking lot safety.

Make announcements related to your program.

Dismiss the youth.

NOTES