

UNMASKED

An Edge Issue Night on Identity

GOAL

The goal of this session is for middle school youth to recognize that their identity is centered in God and his promises. This realization leads them toward peace and a sense of purpose.

Scripture

Genesis 1:26-27, Isaiah 43:4, 1 John 3:2

Catechism

CCC 1, 355-368, 425-426

Resources

Article

“Catholic Answers Focus: Christ Tells You Who You Are” (catholic.com)

Book

Joe Heschmeyer, “Who Am I, Lord?: Finding Your Identity in Christ”

Handouts

“Love Letter from God”

“Unmasked” Parent Letter

Media

Actually Fun Youth Games, “Paranoia | Actually Fun Youth Games” (youtube.com)

“Harmony” (lifeteen.com)

GATHER

Youth compete as “heroes” or “villains” in a head-to-head battle to steal bandanas from the opposing team, introducing the superhero theme and the concept of giving to others.

PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- God created us. We are created in his image, adopted as his children, and destined for heaven.
- Jesus shows us how to live a holy, peaceful life that we can imitate.
- God loves us as we are, so we do not have to pretend to be someone we are not. God wants us to grow closer to him through an honest relationship.

BREAK

In small groups, youth discuss labels, identity, and the ways they desire to imitate Jesus.

SEND

Youth receive a “Love Letter from God” to pray with and receive encouragement as God’s beloved children.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Choose one Scripture passage from the “Love Letter from God” to memorize.

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PREP

Contact your parish priest and music minister to coordinate Eucharistic Adoration during this session for your youth.

Collect all materials needed for the Edge Night.

Download, print, and copy the “Love Letter from God” handout found online at lifeteen.com.

SETUP

Decorate the room as if it were a superhero’s closet. Hang hero costumes and capes on hat racks, clotheslines, or in laundry baskets around the room.

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

Bandanas, two per person

Send

“Love Letter from God” handout, one per person

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 - Heroes vs. Villains

• Leader: _____

Proclaim - Unmasked: _____

Break - Small Group Discussion

Send - Peace in the Presence

• 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:

In many superhero movies, we see the hero receive their powers and the struggle that follows as they assume a more profound responsibility to protect the innocent. They must rediscover themselves and understand their new purpose. We may not grow up to have super strength or the ability to fly, but we also struggle to answer the not-so-simple question of “Who am I?” By reaching out to our Creator, we discover who he created us to be and the purpose for our lives.

Heroes vs. Villains (20 min)

Divide the group into two teams. One team is the “Heroes,” and the other is the “Villains.” Give each player two bandanas. Tuck the bandanas into a pocket or waistband. At least half of the bandana must be hanging out. The object of the game is for each team to collect as many flags as possible in the 5-minute time limit.

When a player steals another player’s bandana, they must tuck it into their pocket or waistband before attempting to steal another. A player is out of the game and must sit down where they are when they lose all their bandanas. Another player from their team can give them an extra bandana to get them back in the game.

Start a 5-minute game timer and upbeat music. The team with the most flags at the end of the round wins! Play as many rounds as time allows.

Suggestion

Consider adding consequences depending on which team wins the round. For example, if the Villains win, they get to select extra core members from the Heroes to join their team for the next round. If the Heroes win, they get to choose a “punishment” for the Villains for the next round (e.g., five of them have to hop on one foot, they must laugh maniacally every time they grab a flag, etc.).

PROCLAIM

“Unmasked” Teaching (10 min)

The Main Character

- Part of the appeal of superhero stories is that we desire to live heroic lives. Superheroes are examples of strength, virtue, and justice.
- We want to see ourselves as the heroes of our own stories. We feel the call to succeed in a great mission — a story written, but we do not yet know the ending.
- The superheroes we know were all, at one point, ideas in the minds of writers. Their authors crafted their stories and “brought them to life” in order to fulfill a purpose.
- To discover the purpose of our story, we need to go back to our story’s writer — its Creator.
- The Creator of all our stories is God. From the way that plants receive nourishment from the sun to the cycle of seasons, God set up an intricate plan for the world to follow.
- Part of that plan includes us! God intimately knows us, having knit us together in our mothers’ wombs and continually holding us in existence. (**Psalm 139:13, CCC 27**)
- We play a particular role in the fascinating world God created.

Ask the youth to name something they find remarkable about the world or how the universe works.

- God is the origin of all life and all things in existence. He is our Creator, and his breath gives us life. (**CCC 301**)
- Human beings are both a special part of God’s creation and the highest point of it. Humanity is the most complex of God’s creatures because of our capacity to reason.
- Humans hold a special dignity because we are created in God’s image and likeness.

Project and read **Genesis 1:26-27**:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- We can know and seek our Creator, which sets us apart from the rest of creation. God instilled this power in us. (**CCC 351**)
- Our “power” reveals our purpose: what we have been created to do is what we should do. Every human being’s purpose is to know, love, and serve God. (**CCC 1, 1721**)

- Knowing our purpose is a great start for us to find fulfillment and happiness. But rather than leave us alone to figure out how to get there ourselves, God gave us an example to follow in his Son, Jesus.

The Way

- Jesus is the Son of God who became man and lived a full human life. (**CCC 464**)
- He knows what it is like to grow up in a family with parents. He knows both joy and heartache. He even knows what it is like to feel tempted.
- Jesus wanted to follow God's plan for his life. He spent time in prayer to help him accept God's will.
- Jesus often stepped away to pray by himself. (**Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, Luke 9:18**)
- When he encountered difficult situations, even his own death, Jesus did not hesitate to bring his concerns and prayers to the Father.

Project and read **Mark 14:35-36**:

And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.”

- Here in the garden, Jesus trusted in God's plan to fulfill his purpose.
- Another way Jesus demonstrated that he accepted God's will for his life was through his treatment of others.
- Jesus taught the right way to treat others, with a respect and dignity that matches their God-given dignity. (**Matthew 7:12**)
- He taught his followers to love their enemies, be merciful instead of vengeful, and to take special care of the poor. (**Matthew 5:44, Matthew 18:21-22**)

Project and read **Luke 14:12-14**:

He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

- These actions remind us of each person's dignity — no matter how someone acts or what circumstances they find themselves in, they are still beloved children of God.

- By respecting the humanity of others, we come to a deeper understanding of God's love for us. If we are quick to forgive others, we trust how quickly God forgives us. If we show love to those who are poor, lost, or broken, we can know that we are loved, too.
- Jesus, through his words and actions, showed us a life we can imitate, guiding us toward our ultimate purpose. (**John 14:6**)

He Already Knows You

- Jesus is our perfect example, yet our tendency may be to imitate the successful and popular people around us. Following their examples may make us less of who God uniquely created us to be.
- St. Carlo Acutis once said, "All are born as originals, but many die as photocopies." God created us individuals to fulfill a particular purpose that no other person could. Why should we compete to be a photocopy of someone else instead of being ourselves?
- God loves us as we are, not because of what we have done, but because we are his children. (**1 John 3:2**)
- God created you uniquely as you. He is not surprised by who you are. There has never been and never will be someone else quite like you. You must be who God created you to be in order to fulfill the mission that is uniquely yours.
- This means that wherever we are, even if we feel restless or uncomfortable with who we are now, we can be honest and bring that to God.
- God wants us to flourish, grow, and receive his divine life. He will give us everything we need to fulfill our purpose and become who he made us to be.
- The work of becoming ourselves is a lifelong journey. By uniting our will with God's will for our life, we can trust that we are on the path to get there. (**1 John 3:2**)
- We can trust that God has good things in store for our lives, and by trusting him, we will become who he made us to be.

BREAK

Small Group Discussion (20 min)

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

- Whip Around: If you had to describe yourself as a type of shoe, what would it be?
- What types of people are found in a typical middle school or high school? How well do these labels categorize people?
- What things are universal for all people?

Sample answers: We are all human beings, created in God's image and likeness. God has a purpose and plan for every person. All people have dignity and the right to be treated justly.

- What do you think Jesus was like when he was your age?
- What specific examples from Jesus' life do you want to imitate?
- How do we know what God thinks about us? How can we learn more about it?

Sample answers: We know through Scripture how God relates to humanity. By reading Scripture, we encounter God's words to the people of the past and can find comfort in the same words of love today.

Eighth-Grade Adaptation

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

- What effect does pop culture and social media have on how people view themselves?
- When have you felt most like you were fulfilling your purpose?

Step It Up

For youth ready to go deeper, consider including the following mirror reflection. Give each youth a small handheld mirror. Challenge them to look at their reflection for one minute without looking away. At the end of the one minute, ask the following questions to prompt discussion:

- What did you notice in your reflection? Positive things or negative things?
- How did that experience make you feel?
- Did your feelings change as the minute went on? How?
- Knowing God loves you infinitely, does he notice the same things about you that you see in yourself?

SEND

Peace in the Presence (15 min)

Gather the youth in the church or chapel. Pass out a copy of the “Love Letter from God” handout to each youth. Introduce the time of prayer using the following as an example:

As we sit in the presence of Jesus, we ask him to reveal the truth about who we are and who we are created to be. You will find that this letter from God, compiled from Scripture, is a love letter to us from God. These collected Scripture verses reveal to us who we are, as created by the one who made us. Listen to these words of your Father and Creator.

Read the letter aloud slowly.

Take a moment to read through this letter yourself. If one line stands out to you, reread it quietly, asking the Holy Spirit why it sticks out to you. Often, the Holy Spirit brings these up to combat a lie we believe about ourselves. What is it you are believing about your identity that Jesus wants to tell you some other truth?

After some time of silence, close with a Glory Be.

Suggestion

Ask your parish priest or deacon to expose the Eucharist for a time of Adoration. Consider having him read the “Love Letter from God” aloud to the youth as they follow along.

Weekly Challenge (5 min)

Invite the preselected core members to present the Weekly Challenge.

Choose one Scripture passage from the “Love Letter from God” to memorize.

Dismiss the core members preassigned to parking lot safety.

Make announcements related to your program.

Dismiss the youth.

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