

HEROIC DEEDS

The Ministry of Jesus

GOAL

The goal of this session is to explore Jesus as the Son of God and delve into the effect this reality has on the beliefs and moral choices of middle school youth.

Scripture

Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 8:1-4, Matthew 9:2, Matthew 28:18, Luke 8:40-56, John 2:1-12, John 3:16, John 6:1-14, John 11:1-44, Romans 10:8-13

Catechism

CCC 461-463, 484-486, 547-549

Resources

Handout

“Heroic Deeds” Parent Letter

Media

“Way Maker” by Leeland

The Chosen, “Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead (John 11)” (youtube.com)

The Religion Teacher, “The Seven Signs in the Gospel of John” (youtube.com)

Resources

Event Bracket (eventbracket.com)

PrintYourBrackets.com (printyourbrackets.com)

GATHER

Youth debate which superpower is the best using a bracket structure.

PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- One of the purposes of Jesus' miracles and teachings was to reveal his identity as the Son of God and Christ.
- Miracles like the wedding at Cana and the raising of Lazarus were signs that showed Jesus' power and authority.
- If we believe Jesus is who he says he is, then his teachings affect our earthly and eternal lives: God is present to us, and our actions in this life can lead us to communion with him in heaven.

BREAK

Youth hear the story of Lazarus in Scripture, accompanied by a visual representation so as to immerse them in the story and reveal the reality hidden behind the text.

SEND

Youth reflect on their personal relationship with Jesus and how they see him in their lives.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

When you go to Mass, pay attention to the Gospel reading. Listen and identify who Jesus portrays himself to be to the others in the story.

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PREP

Collect all materials needed for the Edge Night.

Use one of the online tools linked in the Resources section to create a 16-seed bracket of superpowers. Choose from the list of superpowers provided below or select your own. Be sure to include a hero or villain for reference to provide context on how the superpower works. If you do not have access to a projector, draw the bracket on a large whiteboard.

- Flight (Superman)
- Invisibility (Invisible Woman)
- Super Strength (Captain America)
- Super Speed (The Flash)
- Reading Minds (Professor X)
- Telekinesis (Jean Grey)
- Regeneration (Wolverine)
- Shapeshifting (Mystique)
- Teleportation (Nightcrawler)
- Time Manipulation (Doctor Strange)
- Controlling Weather (Storm)
- High-tech Gadgets (Batman)
- Control Electricity (Black Lightning)
- Heat Vision (Captain Marvel)
- Super Intelligence (Tony Stark)
- Size-shifting (Ant-Man)

The Immersive *Lectio Divina* activity involves back-and-forth readings from Scripture and watching video clips. Mark a Bible with sticky notes to indicate where each passage starts and ends. Consider making a slideshow with the video clips divided. Provide the outline of the activity to the assigned core members in advance so they can review it.

At the top of a large poster, write “Jesus” in bold writing.

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

Superpower bracket

Break

Bible

Send

- Large poster, prepared with the title “Jesus”
- Sticky notes, three to five per youth
- Pens, one per 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.

Highlights:

- Participate in the Send activity along with the youth as an example for them of prayerful meditation and reflection.

Setup: _____

Opening Prayer: _____

Gather – Powerful or Powerless

- Leader: _____

Proclaim – Heroic Deeds: _____

Break – Immersive Lectio Divina

- Leader 1: _____

- Leader 2: _____

Send – Jesus, My _____

- 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:

Heroes are known for all kinds of rescues: saving people from burning buildings, stopping runaway trains, and even collecting cats stuck in trees. Through these actions, the hero shows their character and what they believe in — saving the innocent. Jesus also performed some heroic deeds through his teaching and healing miracles. His actions point to the purpose of his mission and prove that he is just as powerful as everyone says he is.

Powerful or Powerless (15 min)

Display the superpowers bracket you created. The youth vote on each matchup to decide which superpower is the best. Present each matchup, assigning one power to the left side of the room and the other to the right side.

Youth move to the side of the room that they think is the better superpower and determine the winning power. As the rounds advance and time allows, ask volunteers from each side to explain why they think that superpower is better than the other. Then, allow any youth who change their mind after the explanations to change sides before declaring the winning power.

Continue voting on matchups until there is one superpower remaining!

Suggestion

For added engagement, prompt the youth to pose on their side as if they are using the superpower, such as pretending to fly or focusing hard to read minds.

Step It Up

Consider adding a “perfect bracket” challenge to the game. Provide each youth with a printed copy of the bracket to fill in with their predictions for the winners. As the group votes, the youth keep track of how many winners they guess correctly. At the end of the game, the person with the most correct bracket wins a prize.

PROCLAIM

“Heroic Deeds” Teaching (10 min)

Prove It

Begin by asking the youth, “If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?” and share what superpower you would choose and why. Write your thoughts here:

- Imagine for a minute that you met someone who claimed to be a superhero. They told you all about how they could fly, walk through walls, or even shoot lasers from their eyes. That sounds pretty ridiculous. After all, we do not live in a comic book! So we would ask them to prove it. As they say, seeing is believing. Of course, the likelihood of someone on the street suddenly jumping up to fly around the sky is basically zero. But what if they could back up what they said?
- Think of Jesus. He made some really radical claims, saying that he was the Son of God, that all authority had been given to him, and that he could forgive sins. **(Matthew 9:2, Matthew 28:18)**
- These were powers that no person could possibly have, especially not someone who appeared to be human just like everyone else. Jesus did not walk around on Earth with a halo over his head or glow with supernatural light.
- What Jesus claimed to do was seemingly impossible and often invisible. How can you see someone’s sins were forgiven? How can you see his authority?
- Jesus backs up all of his claims with actual visible works that prove he is telling the truth in all things.
- The miracles Jesus performed point to a power over the natural and spiritual realms, powers that only God could have, thus confirming his identity as the Son of God.

The Pudding

- Jesus demonstrated that he is God by showing he had power over the physical world. For example, Jesus’ first miracle transformed hundreds of gallons of water into wine.

Ask the youth to summarize the story of the wedding at Cana. Allow multiple youth to answer, filling in all of the details of the story. Project and read **John 2:11**.

- The Gospel author highlights that this sign, or miracle, manifested Jesus’ glory and caused his disciples to believe in him. **(CCC 547)**

- When they believe in Jesus, it is not like when we tell our friends or teammates, “I believe in you!” as encouragement. The belief the disciples held about Jesus was that he was the Son of God!

Going Deeper

The wedding at Cana is included in the Gospel of John's seven “signs” that prove Jesus' divine identity. The Gospel itself indicates that not all of Jesus' deeds were recorded, but these were so that “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.” (**John 20:30-31**)

- After that miracle, Jesus continued to perform others that showed his control over nature, further manifesting his glory and causing others to believe in him.
- He calmed raging storms, he multiplied food for thousands, and he healed the injured, sick, and dying. (**Matthew 8:1-4, Matthew 9:2, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:40-56**)
- Jesus understood our human nature, that we believe what we experience through our senses. That is why he did so many miracles and heroic deeds, because “the signs worked attest that the Father has sent him.” (**CCC 548**)
- For us, the eyewitness testimony of the Gospels shares the evidence with us, so that we might also come to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Game Changer

- Jesus worked these miracles thousands of years ago, so how do they make a difference to us? We do not have the benefit of seeing these miracles for ourselves; we only have what was handed on to us through Scripture.
- Jesus answers this for us with one of his own disciples, Thomas.

Project and read **John 20:24-29**.

- Thomas, a faithful follower of Jesus, had, of course, seen many miracles that Jesus performed. He truly believed that Jesus was the Son of God. And still, he doubted the testimony of his friends when they said they had seen the risen Jesus after his death.
- Jesus' response to Thomas is also a word to us: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” (**John 20:29**)
- The accounts of Scripture are trustworthy. The teachings of the Catholic Church passed down through time proclaim the truth. They present overwhelming evidence of who Jesus is. Our question is whether we believe it or not.

Going Deeper

C.S. Lewis, a Christian apologist and author of the Chronicles of Narnia, presented the answers to this question in his famous “Trilemma.” Essentially, there are three options for what we can believe about Jesus of Nazareth. One is that he was a lunatic who falsely believed himself to be God and convinced hundreds of others to believe it too. Another is that he knew he was not God but was a liar who conned his way into history. Or, finally, the third option is that Jesus is God and that all he said and did was true.

- Believing in Jesus’ identity as the Son of God has a profound impact on how we live.
- If Jesus did not have the authority of God, we have no reason to follow what he says any more than any other “good” person.
- If Jesus did not have the power to forgive sins, then there is nothing waiting for us after this life. (**1 Corinthians 15:14-17**)
- However, if Jesus is who he says he is, then all of the promises he made are true. And we need to respond.

Project and read **John 3:16**.

- Through Jesus, we have eternal life. Through Jesus, we have God’s presence with us in the Eucharist. Through Jesus, we are adopted as God’s sons and daughters.
- These miracles actually happened, and they reveal Jesus’ power and authority, his love for his people, and his love for you.
- These signs “invite belief in him,” and they show us that “to those who turn to him in faith he grants what they ask.” (**CCC 548**)

Project and read **Matthew 7:7-8**.

- Jesus will never force us to believe in him, but he will give us the grace we need to do so.
- Jesus is who he says he is. His love for you is real. He doesn’t want to be any savior, he wants to be your Savior.

BREAK

Immersive *Lectio Divina* (25 min)

Invite the youth to spread out and find their own space. Prepare the video “Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead (John 11)” referenced in the Resources section. Invite the preselected core members to come forward with their Bibles to lead this section using the example text that follows.

Leader 1

Art and media are amazing tools to help us visualize stories from Scripture. They help bring the words to life and show us things that we cannot see beyond the page. We are going to hear and see the miracle of Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead. Pay attention to what you see in the video and how it illuminates the words of Scripture.

Close your eyes and imagine yourself with the disciples. Jesus and his disciples arrive in Bethany, arriving four days after Lazarus had died. This is a sad day – you have lost a good friend. Lazarus’ sisters, Martha and Mary, are in mourning. They meet Jesus in their sorrow, telling him that if he had only arrived sooner, Lazarus would not have died. You find comfort in being together, but only a little. Jesus asks to be taken to the tomb where his friend is laid.

Leader 2

Instruct the youth to open their eyes and then read **John 11:38-40**.

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”

Play the video clip from 0:18 to 1:34. This clip ends with Simon putting down his bag to follow Jesus’ command.

Leader 1

The crowd is shocked by what Jesus is asking them to do. Even his followers are shocked. Jesus has worked many great miracles in their presence, controlling the natural world and healing many illnesses. But death is permanent. What could Jesus possibly do?

Leader 2

Pause for a moment of reflection. Then, read **John 11:41-42**.

So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that thou didst send me.”

Play the video clip from 1:34 to 3:14. This clip ends with Jesus raising his hand in the air.

Leader 1

This miracle is Jesus' last public work. After this, Jesus soon enters Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover with his disciples, is arrested by the authorities, tried, and executed on a cross. Jesus proclaims this last great work is so that the witnesses of it would come to believe in him.

Leader 2

Pause for a moment of reflection. Then, read **John 11:43-44**.

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Play the video clip from 3:14 until the end.

Leader 1

Through Scripture, we are now “witnesses” to the raising of Lazarus. A house filled with mourning now rejoices. A tomb filled with death now lies vacant. Death is defeated by the power of God.

Pause for a moment of reflection. Conclude with the Sign of the Cross, and gather the youth in their small groups.

Suggestion

Ask for three youth volunteers to read the passages from Scripture.

Small Group Discussion (10 min)

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

- Whip Around: Who do you think is the most powerful superhero?
- What stood out to you from the reflection on the raising of Lazarus?
- What do you think the crowd expected Jesus to do?
- If Jesus is who he says he is, what other teachings do we have to accept from him?
- Who do you trust to tell you the truth? How have they shown that they are trustworthy?
- Is the evidence for Jesus as the Son of God convincing? Why or why not?

SEND

Jesus, My _____ (10 min)

Gather the youth back in the main meeting space. At the front of the room, display the poster with “Jesus” written on the top. Pass out several sticky notes and a pen to each youth. Use the following as an example to lead them in prayer:

We have reflected a lot about who Jesus says he is and who he proves himself to be. We have the evidence, but who Jesus is for us may be vastly different. Jesus is a person we can know; how much do we know him?

Take a moment, and think about who Jesus is to you. Is he like a friend that you talk to often? Is he like a distant relative that you love but do not see often? Is Jesus a stranger? Be honest with God and with yourself.

On a sticky note, write down who Jesus is to you, then come up and place it on the poster. You can write more than one note.

Take a few minutes for the youth to write down notes and place them on the poster. When most people appear to be done, continue.

Wherever you are in your relationship with Jesus — whether he feels like an enemy, a stranger, or your best friend — he wants to grow closer to you. A relationship with Jesus is not an event, like the miracles; it is an experience lived daily. If we invite Jesus to reveal himself to us, through prayer and daily acts of faith in him, we will grow deeper in relationship with him.

Whether we feel close to or far from Jesus, he still loves us. Let us pray to stay in his love.

Conclude the time of prayer with a Glory Be.

Weekly Challenge

Invite the preselected core members to present the Weekly Challenge.

When you go to Mass, pay attention to the Gospel reading. Listen and identify who Jesus portrays himself to be to the others in the story.

Dismiss the core members preassigned to parking lot safety.
Make announcements related to your program.

Dismiss the youth.

Step It Up

Create five posters with outlined letters spelling JESUS. Tell the youth to place the sticky notes inside the outlined letters. Keep the posters hung in the main meeting space for the rest of the semester. Place sticky notes and pens nearby for the youth to add to it throughout the remaining weeks. Consider displaying the posters in the narthex for a weekend and inviting parishioners to add to it.

NOTES