

ONLY THE ESSENTIALS

**A LIFE NIGHT ON
THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS**

QUICK GLANCE

ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

In this Life Night, we explore the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience — what they are, why they exist, and how we can live them to some degree in our day-to-day lives. The counsels are an invitation to embody Christ's way of life and live as witnesses of the Gospel in all areas of our lives. The goal of this Life Night is to introduce teens to the evangelical counsels and inspire them to foster these dispositions as a means to grow in their relationship with God.

MAIN POINTS

1. The evangelical counsels are poverty, chastity, and obedience. These vows are officially professed by those who live a consecrated vocation. Jesus invites each of us to adopt these dispositions in imitation of him.
2. The evangelical counsels go above and beyond the requirements of God's commandments. They aid Christians on the journey toward perfection.
3. By practicing the evangelical counsels to the extent we are able, we can experience the freedom God desires for us and strive to live wholly for him.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:19-21 | Matthew 19:21 | 1 Corinthians 7:25-35 | Philippians 2:5-8

CATECHISM

915-916 | 1973-1974 | 2102-2103

KEY TERMS

Chastity | Obedience | Poverty

SAINTS

St. Francis of Assisi | St. Teresa of Avila

RESOURCES

Article

Daniel Campbell, “Living the Spirit of the Evangelical Counsels” (sjvlaydivision.org)

Music

Spotify: “LS - To the Heights”

Video

National Eucharistic Revival, “Evangelizing as a Body of Christ (feat. Bishop Robert Barron) | 10th NEC Keynote” ([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com))

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to introduce teens to the evangelical counsels and inspire them to foster these dispositions as a means to grow in their relationship with God.

ENVIRONMENT

This Life Night continues to build on the “To the Heights” environment. See the Getting Ready section for more details.

GATHER

Mr. Glamper and Ms. Camper Skit

This silly skit sets the stage for the Life Night by addressing the benefits of simplicity.

PROCLAIM

Talk: Only the Essentials

This shortened talk introduces teens to the evangelical counsels, including what they are, why they are important, and how they can be practically lived out in our day-to-day lives.

BREAK

Counsel Stations

Teens rotate through three stations that explore each of the evangelical counsels through real-life examples and discussion. Each station will involve a brief sharing by the facilitator, followed by time for teens to share their thoughts and ask questions.

SEND

Litany of Simplicity

The Life Night concludes with a Litany of Simplicity inspired by the spirit of the evangelical counsels.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

GETTING READY

LIFE NIGHT DATE: _____

FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- Read through the entire Life Night.
 - Pray with the Scripture and Catechism references.
 - Consult the Resources suggestions.
 - Select a presenter for the Proclaim and contact them this week.
 - Send the Proclaim Teaching Guide to the presenter.
 - Select facilitators for the Counsel Stations and send them the necessary material this week.
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TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- Assign core members to the tasks on the Core Meeting Worksheet.
 - Check in with the Proclaim presenter and ask for an outline and slides, if applicable.
 - Schedule practice time with the presenter if needed.
 - Schedule a practice time for the Gather skit.
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ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Distribute the Life Night outline to the core members.
 - Pray with the core members over the Life Night.
 - Review the highlights of the Life Night.
 - Explain the core assignments.
 - Encourage the core members to review the Break activity and pray for their small groups.
 - Confirm the facilitators for the Counsel Stations.
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THE WEEK OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Advertise the Life Night on the parish youth group's social media channels.
 - Schedule the Parent Letter email as a follow-up to the Life Night.
 - Make a plan for the Life Night Environment using the suggestions below.
 - Gather the supplies needed for the Life Night.
 - Inform core members of their roles during the session and provide them with the required materials and instructions.
 - Create slides to project each line of the Litany of Simplicity.
 - Pray for the teens who will be present and experience the Life Night.
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THE DAY OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Test all audio-video elements of the Life Night.
 - Decorate the youth room using the Environment instructions below.
 - Project an Environment image found online at lifeteen.com.
 - Play the "LS - To the Heights" Spotify playlist as teens gather.
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ENVIRONMENT

Reference the previous Life Night environments in this Life Night Planning Guide to ensure you have all the necessary pieces for the “To the Heights” campsite environment.

Create a campsite with a large tent with sleeping bags inside. Display a lantern, headlamp, hiking stick, and hiking boots. Place a small camping table near the tent and lay a topographic map, compass, and binoculars on top of the table alongside a radio and some walkie-talkies. Add one or two hiking packs and a first aid kit to the campsite area. Lay out roasting sticks and campfire supplies.

Place camping chairs around the “fire.” Hide a piece of the bear costume from Life Night 6, “Wild Life,” somewhere within the campsite. Clothespin postcards from national parks and exotic locations onto a clothesline or scatter them around the campsite. Turn on the twinkling string lights above the campsite.

Add essential camping items, such as a water bottle, some camp food (like MREs, beef jerky, or trail mix), and a prop knife.

SUPPLIES

	Skit props (see Gather for details)
	Slides with the Litany of Simplicity
	Printed copies of the Litany of Simplicity (optional)

LIFE NIGHT PLANNER

SCHEDULE

TO-DO

ROOM LAYOUT

CORE MEETING WORKSHEET

Use this outline for your core team meeting before the Youth Mass. The core meeting follows the Gather-Proclaim-Break-Send structure.

CORE MEETING START TIME: _____

GATHER

- Begin with a brief social time and rapid high/low points of the week from each core member.
- Pray with your core team and include one of the Scripture passages from the Life Night.

Scripture choice: _____

PROCLAIM

- Review the Life Night outline.
- Assign core members to the tasks for this Life Night and write their names in the Core Assignments chart on the next page.

BREAK

- Review the Break activity with a core member discussion. Spend about 15 minutes on this section.
- Take questions.

SEND

- Conclude the meeting with a Hail Mary.
- Set up final details for the Life Night.
- Arrive early to the Youth Mass to greet teens as they arrive.

CORE ASSIGNMENTS

Setup	1.	2.	3.
	4.	5.	6.
Check-In	1.	2.	3.
Audio-Video			
Opening Prayer			
Skit Characters	1.	2.	
Proclaim Presenter			
Counsel Stations	1.	2.	3.
Closing Prayer			

NOTES

[illegible]

GATHER

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER 5 min

Gather in the main meeting space and welcome the teens to the Life Night. Introduce any teens attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

MR. GLAMPER AND MS. CAMPER SKIT 5 min

The skit aims to introduce the idea of simplicity through a silly, overdramatized, on-theme interaction between a husband and wife. Choose two core members who can keep the skit engaging and bring the personalities to life.

The skit script is found at the end of the Life Night.

SUGGESTION

The skit is written with certain props. They can be swapped as needed, depending on what is readily available at the parish. The point is for Mr. Glamper to have an excess of unnecessary camping items. Integrate what you already have on hand for a more budget-friendly skit.

PROCLAIM

GETTING STARTED

This Teaching Guide is not just an outline; it's a tool to help you craft a powerful and personalized talk that will leave a lasting impact. Whether you use any suggested media or find your own, make sure it's visually engaging, attention-grabbing, and thought-provoking. Consult the Going Deeper section at the back of this resource and highlight the points that most resonate with your teens. Whenever presenting in front of a group, use a Bible or Catechism to read any passage rather than a digital copy or paper printout.

Beyond these guidelines, the most important thing is to be yourself and let the Holy Spirit guide you. Practice your talk, pour your heart into it, and trust that your authenticity and humility have the power to make a difference in the lives of these teens. If possible, record yourself giving the Proclaim and make notes on what you can improve or avoid. This guide is just the beginning — the rest is up to you!

MAIN POINTS

1. The evangelical counsels are poverty, chastity, and obedience. These vows are officially professed by those who live a consecrated vocation. Jesus invites each of us to adopt these dispositions in imitation of him.
2. The evangelical counsels go above and beyond the requirements of God's commandments. They aid Christians on the journey toward perfection.
3. By practicing the evangelical counsels to the extent we are able, we can experience the freedom God desires for us and strive to live wholly for him.

KEY TERMS

Chastity - The moral virtue that helps integrate sexuality within the person, leading to the inner unity of body and spirit. Chastity moderates sexual desire. **(CCC 2337)**

Obedience - Submission to legitimate authority, the foremost of which is God. Obedience comes from the Latin word “ob-audire,” which means to hear or listen to. **(CCC 144)**

Poverty - Having very few physical possessions. In the spiritual sense, to be “poor in spirit” or humble. **(CCC 2544-2546)**

Main Point 1:

The evangelical counsels are poverty, chastity, and obedience. These vows are officially professed by those who live a consecrated vocation. Jesus invites each of us to adopt these dispositions in imitation of him.

- In the Gospels, Jesus asked his followers to live in a particular way. From the moment they were each called, they more or less began to live life on the road, possessing very little. When Peter, Andrew, James, and John were called, they left everything behind, including their fishing business, and followed Jesus. **(Mark 1:9-13)**
- The first apostles would have lived a life very similar to Jesus. This is what the call to be a disciple entailed. A disciple followed their master, learning from them and imitating their way of life.
(Going Deeper #1: “What Is a Disciple?”)
- Today, men and women in religious life strive to do something similar by professing vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, so that their lives might more closely resemble Jesus’ life. We call these vows the evangelical counsels. **(CCC 915)**
- To make a vow in the religious sense is a particular way to give to God what is his due because he is God. In this case, what the person vows is their entire self! In vowing poverty, they give God their possessions; in vowing chastity, their body; and in vowing obedience, their power of will and plan for their own life. **(CCC 2102-2103)**
- These vows serve to simplify and purify the life of the religious brother or sister who makes them. They let go of what is non-essential to focus on and be available to what matters most: God.
- Each of these vows involves setting aside valuable aspects of life, such as possessions, marriage and sex, and self-rule and autonomy. This is done for the sake of having a greater simplicity of life in order to give God more space and more of oneself.
- When religious men and women offer God their lives through their vows, they are essentially making the decision to imitate Jesus more closely and follow the way he lived his life in the Gospels. **(CCC 916)**
- But shouldn’t we all desire to imitate Jesus’ way of life more closely? Yes! We are not all asked to do this in a vowed way like religious brothers and sisters, but Jesus invites each of us to adopt the dispositions of poverty, chastity, and obedience so that we more readily imitate him and live as his witnesses in the world. **(CCC 915)**

Main Point 2:

The evangelical counsels go above and beyond the requirements of God's commandments. They aid Christians on the journey toward perfection.

- The evangelical counsels go above and beyond the requirements of God's commandments by offering an even deeper way of expressing the life received in Baptism through the way we live.
- When we were baptized, we were consecrated, or set apart for holy things, for God. We were invited as his adopted sons and daughters to imitate him through a holy way of life. "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (**Matthew 5:48**)
- In religious life, which is also referred to as consecrated life, brothers and sisters live this baptismal identity "out loud," with more depth, more purity, and more clarity.
- The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are the way in which they, in their own lives, continue this journey to perfection.

CATECHISM

Project and read the following from **CCC 916**:

"In the consecrated life, Christ's faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come."

- In other words, the counsels exist for the sake of wholehearted devotion to God, for growing in love of God and neighbor through service, and as a sign here and now of what we were all made for in heaven — complete, undivided union with God.
- Someone who willingly gives up material possessions, sex and marriage, and even the right to make some of their own decisions, lives as a unique sign in the world. They are countercultural. They point to a higher reality. They imitate Jesus, who was himself a sign of contradiction.
- The evangelical counsels foster two essential dispositions in the heart of those who practice them: freedom and purity of heart.
- Imagine for a moment that you have little to no money and have vowed to own almost nothing in

this world. How much time would you find back in your day if you weren't concerned about getting the next cool gadget or best outfit? What else could you focus on if you weren't concerned about having more or better things than everyone else? This is part of the freedom gained through a vow of poverty. Instead of focusing on possessions, the person can focus on God, trusting that he will provide everything that is needed. Their heart is purified from a desire to own things and seeks only to possess, love, and serve God.

- The same is true for the vows of chastity and obedience. What the person “loses” from the vow is really for the sake of what they gain. They can do whatever God asks, go wherever he calls, and love whoever he puts in front of them, free from a duty towards a spouse and children. By embracing obedience and relinquishing their will, the person becomes totally available to God, able to heed his call and do whatever he asks.
- In one of his parables, Jesus talks about a sower who goes out to sow seeds. He sows the seed on different

Main Point 3:

By practicing the evangelical counsels to the extent we are able, we can experience the freedom God desires for us and strive to live wholly for him.

types of soil, and depending on the type of soil, the plant grows more or less and is fruitful. **(Mark 4:1-8)**

- Some of the seed is sown among weeds. As the seed grows, so do the weeds. They steal nourishment, light, and water from the growing seed, and choke it so that it isn't fruitful and eventually dies.
- This parable is given as an analogy for our response to God's Word. We all should strive to be the good soil that receives the seed of the Word and bears fruit.
- In this sense, we can think of the evangelical counsels as weed killer. The evangelical counsels are necessary because we tend to get distracted easily and care way too much about things that don't matter. Embracing the spirit of the evangelical counsels helps us eliminate the “weeds” in our lives and devote our time, energy, and effort to our relationship with God.
- Even though we are not all called to profess these vows and live in the particular way that consecrated religious men and women do, we are all called to practice the virtues that are expressed through these vows. **(CCC 915)**
- The heart of the evangelical counsels is love. Each vow invites us to simplify our lives so that we can love God freely and wholeheartedly.

CATECHISM

Project and read the following from **CCC 1974**:

“The evangelical counsels manifest the living fullness of charity,
which is never satisfied with not giving more.”

- When you truly love someone, you want to give yourself to them. You do not tolerate anything that keeps you apart or distracts you from the one you love.
- The evangelical counsels are a lover’s response to God. They are ways we give ourselves more fully to him.
- The world is full of temptations and distractions that try to turn us away from God. The evangelical counsels directly combat three main areas of temptation: possessions, relationships, and ego.
- Poverty frees us from a disordered attachment to material goods. We can use them as needed, but they don’t distract us from God. Chastity brings us freedom in our relationships. We are able to love others with pure hearts rather than use them for ourselves. Obedience helps keep our ego in check. Rather than always trusting ourselves and thinking we know best, we listen to the advice of others and, most importantly, the Church.
- Knowing and loving God more is the key to happiness in this life. Though it may seem contradictory, the evangelical counsels are paths to a deeper and more lasting happiness because they help us to stay focused on God and love him with all our heart.

BREAK

COUNSEL STATIONS 40 min

Divide the teens into three groups. Groups rotate through three twelve-minute stations where they explore each of the evangelical counsels. Each station includes a story of the specific counsel lived in real life and a time of discussion and reflection about how to embrace that counsel in a practical way, even as lay people. Select a core member or another volunteer to lead each station.

The story of the counsels lived in real life can either be a saint's story or a personal testimony from a core member, clergyman, or parishioner. In either case, the story or testimony should highlight how the person lived poverty, chastity, or obedience in some way in their own life, and the fruits that came from it.

The goal of each station is to address the following questions:

- What does this evangelical counsel look like?
- What effects does it have/what does it do?
- How can we embrace and practice it?

Use the information provided below as a guide.

SUGGESTION

Invite a priest to facilitate the station on obedience. Every diocesan priest promises obedience to his bishop and will be able to speak with firsthand experience about the fruits and struggles of obedience.

STEP IT UP

Bring the evangelical counsels to life by creating displays at each station that include pictures of saints that exemplify the particular counsel, information about those saints' lives, and quotes pertaining to the counsel.

Poverty

- Jesus is clear through his teachings that the love of money and undue concern with material possessions are serious dangers to the spiritual life.
(Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 19:23, Mark 4:18-19, Luke 12:15-21)
- The vow of poverty takes Jesus at his word, knowing that we cannot wholeheartedly serve God and money. It seeks to eliminate the distractions caused by the desire for physical possessions and leads us to trust more deeply in God and be fully available to him. **(Matthew 6:24)**
- In consecrated religious life, this vow typically means that the individual has little to no personal belongings and shares all things in common with the community.
- Saint Francis of Assisi illustrates the freedom that comes from embracing poverty.
- He was the son of a well-off merchant and lived in an Italian city in the 12th-13th centuries. He was materially comfortable and familiar with the luxuries life can provide.
- After hearing God's call, he lived a life of extreme poverty, wearing a simple cloak and begging for his daily needs.
- Francis embraced poverty so deeply that he referred to it as "Lady Poverty," a reference to the chivalric culture of his time, which sought to win the heart of a lady. He did not pursue poverty for its own sake, but because of the radical freedom and availability it gave him to love God and do whatever he asked.
- We probably aren't going to give up all of our possessions and spend our lives begging on the street, but we can all practice poverty in some capacity and experience the fruits that follow.
- When we are overly concerned about having all the best things or making the most money, it skews our vision. We miss out on what's really important in life. Our possessions are necessary, but they can also be a distraction from what truly matters.
- Embracing poverty helps us to be free from the tyranny of money so that it doesn't dictate our lives. We aren't constantly driven by a need for the latest gadget or the best brand. Instead, we can focus on our relationships with God and others and use our money for what really matters, such as helping those who are less fortunate and taking care of our legitimate needs.

Discussion Questions:

- How would you describe your relationship with money?
- On an average day, how many times do you think you think about God? How many times do you think about money or physical possessions (a new article of clothing, a video game, the next thing to buy on Amazon, etc.)? What does this tell you about your priorities?
- What practices can you develop that will help you keep money and possessions in their proper place in your life?
- Do you take the time to distinguish between what you need and what you want? What is one thing that you want that you can let go of in order to help someone else with what they need?

Chastity

- Chastity is intended to help us live our sexuality in a healthy way that glorifies God and respects the dignity of each person.
- For consecrated religious, this vow entails not entering into any form of romantic relationship and completely refraining from sex.
- However, chastity is not just about celibacy (not having sex). It's about being pure in mind, body, and heart. It has the power to transform the way we think and what we desire.
- The chaste person is able to love freely, without being dominated by their sexual passions or trying to use someone else to gain something for themselves.
- Chastity enables us to see people in their totality, in the fullness of their personality, body, and soul. We don't just value what they look like; we value the whole of who they are. This is the way God sees us, and he invites us to do the same.
- Chastity also helps us remember that God alone can satisfy the human heart. When consecrated religious take this vow, they exchange a particular experience of human love for a deeper encounter and openness to the divine love of God, which is ultimately more satisfying. They bear witness to the fact that the human heart thirsts for God and is fully satisfied in him alone.
- Chastity makes us free in relationships. We are open to everyone, seeing them as they are and able to love them purely.
- Not all people are called to take vows of chastity, but we all have to develop the virtue of chastity. For lay people, this takes the form of refraining from sex until marriage, abstaining from masturbation, pornography, and other illicit sexual behaviors, fighting against the temptation to lust after another, learning to see others as whole persons rather than just parts of their body, and developing self-mastery that helps us act on what we know is right rather than just what we feel.
- Throughout history, there have been numerous examples of saints who have gone to great lengths, and even sacrificed their lives, in order to defend chastity. One example is St. Agnes.
- Saint Agnes was a young woman who lived in Rome around the year 300. She was deeply devoted to Jesus and desired to give herself to him through a vow of chastity. She was also very beautiful, and many men sought to marry her.
- Because of her vow, she rejected any request to be married. This frustrated those who sought her hand, and one of them delivered her to the authorities as a Christian. She was humiliated and ultimately martyred for her faith. However, she never gave up her vow.

Discussion Questions:

- What do teens generally think about chastity? What is the culture's general view of chastity?
- What are some practical ways you can live chastely in your day-to-day life?
- What are the benefits of embracing chastity? How might it help your relationship with God?
- What sacrifices might you need to make in order to live a chaste life?

Obedience

- Although it may not seem like it, the vow of obedience can actually be the most difficult of the three evangelical counsels to live out.
- While chastity and poverty are undoubtedly challenging in their own right, the vow of obedience gets right to the heart of one of the most personal aspects of us: our own will. What's harder to give up than that?
- Consecrated religious who take a vow of obedience are subject to the commands of their superior. They essentially give up their own plan for life and willingly put their path in someone else's hands.
- Obedience directly combats our own ego. In every situation, we all make a judgment about what we think is best. We know how we would handle this incident or the choice we would make given the circumstances. Obedience makes us put our thoughts and desires in second place. Rather than following ourselves, we follow others.
- This basic dynamic is essential to learn because it addresses one of the major obstacles in following God. Whether we are trying to listen to God's commands or the commands of someone in authority over us, we have to overcome the same resistance: ourselves.
- Obedience comes from a Latin word that means to hear or listen. It teaches us how to truly hear and listen to others, even when what they say isn't exactly what we want to hear.
- Obedience frees us from the driving need to listen to and serve our own ego. It opens us up to the thoughts, wisdom, and experience of others. It reminds us that we don't always know what is best, and that our way isn't always the right way.
- We have a great example of obedience in our pastor. When every diocesan priest is ordained, they make a promise of obedience to their bishop, meaning they acknowledge his authority and are open to fulfilling any ministry to which he assigns them. For this reason, priests often move from parish to parish or ministry to ministry even when they don't want to. This obedience to the bishop helps the priest be a willing instrument in God's Church wherever he is most needed in the diocese.
- Obedience can be hard, yet it also helps keep us humble and reminds us that the world doesn't begin and end with us.

Discussion questions:

- In what situations do you have a hard time obeying legitimate authority figures? What makes it difficult to listen to them?
- What are little ways you can start giving up what you want to embrace what someone else wants?
- Have you ever been obedient even when you didn't want to be, and it turned out to be a good thing for you? Share about that experience.

SEND

LITANY OF SIMPLICITY 10 min

The Life Night concludes with a Litany of Simplicity, which invites teens to live in the spirit of the evangelical counsels.

Gather the teens in the main meeting space or chapel. Explain the call and response aspect of praying a litany. Project the words one line at a time as you pray. Pray the litany slowly, allowing a short time to reflect on each line.

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

<i>From seeking security in physical possessions,</i>	deliver me, Jesus.
<i>From bitterness when things I have are taken away,</i>	deliver me, Jesus.
<i>From the desire for things I don't need,</i>	deliver me, Jesus.
<i>From an attachment to all the perfect brands,</i>	deliver me, Jesus.
<i>From jealousy of what others have,</i>	deliver me, Jesus.

<i>When I seek my identity in what I own rather than who I am,</i>	Jesus, simplify my heart.
<i>When I fear that I won't have enough,</i>	Jesus, simplify my heart.
<i>When I think the next purchase is what I need to be happy,</i>	Jesus, simplify my heart.
<i>For the grace to find all my satisfaction in you,</i>	Jesus, simplify my heart.
<i>That I may know that you, Lord, are my portion,</i>	Jesus, simplify my heart.

<i>From seeing people as objects of use,</i>	deliver me, Jesus.
<i>From focusing only on myself in relationships,</i>	deliver me, Jesus.
<i>From using friendships as a means to an end,</i>	deliver me, Jesus.
<i>From coveting others' appearances,</i>	deliver me, Jesus.
<i>From feeling like I am the only one who cares about purity,</i>	deliver me, Jesus.

<i>When I am reckless with my emotions,</i>	Jesus, simplify my heart.
<i>When I harbor lust in my heart towards another person,</i>	Jesus, simplify my heart.

*When sexual temptation seems stronger than my faith,
When I'm chasing in others the love that is only satisfied by you,
When I define myself solely by my relationships with others,*

Jesus, simplify my heart.
Jesus, simplify my heart.
Jesus, simplify my heart.

*From a self-centered ego,
From the need to always be right,
From an attachment to my own plans and schedule,
From the desire to constantly make my opinion known,
From the urge to always be in control,*

deliver me, Jesus.
deliver me, Jesus.
deliver me, Jesus.
deliver me, Jesus.
deliver me, Jesus.

*That I would learn to love the most humble roles,
That I would be open to diverse opinions,
That I would grow in trust of those in authority over me,
That I would be prompt in responding to God's voice,
That selflessness would replace selfishness,*

Jesus, simplify my heart.
Jesus, simplify my heart.
Jesus, simplify my heart.
Jesus, simplify my heart.
Jesus, simplify my heart.

Let us pray.

*Lord Jesus,
You invite each of us to embrace a spirit of poverty, chastity, and obedience.
In living out these counsels, may our lives look more like yours.
Help us to love you always with free and undivided hearts.*

Amen.

SUGGESTION

Print out a copy of the litany to give each teen, encouraging them to place it somewhere they will see it and pray it each day this week.

ANNOUNCEMENTS 5 min

Make announcements for your program, then dismiss the teens.

AFTER THE LIFE NIGHT

Most core members are tired at the end of the session, but be sure to do two things upon the completion of a Life Night.

FIRST, CLEANUP

Try to foster a spirit of teamwork and generosity among your core team. One of the fastest ways to a divided core team is for one or two members to neglect cleanup. No one is done for the night until everyone is done cleaning up. If a core member is not helping clean up, presume goodwill on their part. If it becomes a consistent problem, address it with them rather than letting issues fester.

Be mindful of any relational ministry that may be happening or teens that need to talk. Sometimes, teens can be deeply moved by a Life Night and may need to continue to process with a trusted adult. During cleanup, your team should continue to be available and interruptible for any teens. You never want to shove teens out the door for the sake of cleaning up.

SECOND, EVALUATE

After all the teens have left, appreciate what God has accomplished through the Life Night. Share any praise reports. Identify who or what needs follow-up. Set a timer and invite the group to share in these five categories of the Life Night: Pros, Cons, Questions, Comments, and Concerns. Remind the core team that evaluations are intended to improve the teens' experiences at Life Teen and are not critical judgments of a youth minister's or core member's performance. As you discuss, encourage the core team to consider each of the Life Night movements of Gather, Proclaim, Break, and Send, or pass out/email the evaluation forms. Conclude your time together in prayer and praise to God.

LIFE NIGHT EVALUATION

On a scale of 1-10, how well did this Life Night accomplish the goal we set?

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to introduce teens to the evangelical counsels and inspire them to foster these dispositions as a means to grow in their relationship with God.

Did not accomplish

Nailed it

1

2

3

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10

What was the strongest aspect of this Life Night?

Gather

Proclaim

Break

Send

Environment

Optional: Please explain further.

What kind of follow-up do we need to do after this Life Night?

What can we improve for future Life Nights? How can we accomplish this?

Setting: Hiking trail

Supplies: Four backpacking backpacks, excessive amounts of unnecessary items, such as snorkeling gear, outfit changes, a laptop and remote charger, seltzer water, seasonings, and more

CHARACTER	CAST	PLAYED BY
Mr. Glamper	Core member or volunteer	
Ms. Camper	Core member or volunteer	

Scene: On the trail

(MS. CAMPER enters in hiking gear with a single hiking pack.

She strolls at a slow pace with ease.

MR. GLAMPER enters later, lagging behind and carrying three hiking packs.

He is bent over and gasping for air, clearly exhausted and burdened
by the magnitude of what he is carrying.)

Mr. Glamper:

Will you slow down!?!

Ms. Camper:

Dear, if I walk any slower, I won't be moving anymore.

Mr. Glamper:

I'm going to pass out! Call an ambulance! I can't take it out here!

Ms. Camper:

Honey, we've only been hiking for 20 minutes.

Mr. Glamper:

I won't go an inch farther. I can't feel my legs! My vision is getting blurry!

Ms. Camper:

Well, this is as good a place as any to rest. Just sit down for a minute and take a deep breath.

(shakes head in exasperation)

Mr. Glamper:

(sits down, deeply inhales and exhales a few times)

I can't believe I let you talk me into this. We aren't meant to be in the wilderness.
We are civilized folk. My weekends are for a comfy couch, DoorDash,
and binge-watching a good series.

Ms. Camper:

(looks away and whispers)

You asked me what I wanted to do for *my* birthday.

Mr. Glamper:

What?

Ms. Camper:

Nothing, love!

(pause for a moment)

I know you're tired, but we need to keep moving if we want to reach the campsite before dusk.

Mr. Glamper:

I need a minute. These bags are so heavy. I can't believe I have to do this.

I'm not a donkey; I'm a human. I'm not supposed to carry my own bags.

Ms. Camper:

I told you not to pack so much. We're just camping for one night.

What do you even have in there?

Mr. Glamper:

Only the essentials!

Ms. Camper:

Only the essentials?

Mr. Glamper:

Yes!

Ms. Camper:

I have the tent, food, water filter, fire starter, and sleeping bags. What are you carrying?

Mr. Glamper:

(Starts pulling out clothes)

Well, I have my daytime outfit, evening outfit, morning outfit, and a change of each.

You never know what might happen out here. I have to stay fresh.

Ms. Camper:

Right...what else do you have?

Mr. Glamper:

(Pulls out a blanket and fan)

I obviously had to bring my heated blanket and personal fan.
The weather can turn on a dime, and I don't want to be too hot or cold.

Ms. Camper:

Necessary, of course. What's in that other pack?

Mr. Glamper:

(Pulls out a seasoning rack)

I didn't know what we were eating, and I wanted to make sure we had the right seasonings.

(MS. CAMPER just stares in disbelief at MR. GLAMPER)

Mr. Glamper:

(Searches through the pack)

Oh, yeah. And I'm excited to use these!

(pulls out fins and snorkel gear)

Ms. Camper:

We're on a mountain, not at the ocean!

Mr. Glamper:

There might be a river or something.

Ms. Camper:

(slightly frustrated)

What else did you pack?

Mr. Glamper:

I figured my legs would get tired, so I brought this bad boy to fight those knots.

(pulls out a massage gun)

Ms. Camper:

(donning an agitated smile)

Wouldn't want you to cramp, would we?

Mr. Glamper:

Nope. That's why I brought this.

(pulls out a case of seltzer water)

Ms. Camper:

I have a water filter.

Mr. Glamper:

I can't just drink water straight from the outdoors like a wild beast!

Ms. Camper:

How silly of me to suggest it.

(silence as MS. CAMPER stares at MR. GLAMPER rummaging through his packs)

Mr. Glamper:

Got it!

(pulls out a laptop)

Ms. Camper:

You thought of everything.

Mr. Glamper:

Sure did! I've got my laptop, a mobile charge pack, and a signal booster.

Ms. Camper:

Honey, the point of going camping is to get away from all the noise and excess,
not bring it with you.

Mr. Glamper:

Believe me, I left a lot behind. I only brought what I needed.

We're out in the middle of the woods living like savages.

I had to maintain some semblance of civilization.

Ms. Camper:

(silently pauses for a moment and nods her head in quiet but incredulous acceptance)

Of course, love. Well, let's get moving before it gets too dark.

(MS. CAMPER throws her pack back on and easily walks out of the room. MR. GLAMPER repacks all of his bags and struggles to the exit.)

Mr. Glamper:

(talking to himself as he leaves)

Some people just don't get the point of camping.

GOING DEEPER

ONLY THE ESSENTIALS

A Life Night on the Evangelical Counsels

#1: What Is a Disciple?

The word disciple is translated from the Greek word “mathetes,” which means “learner” or “pupil.” The disciple is someone who has committed to learn from the master. This is not just in the sense of learning what he has to teach, but also learning from his whole way of life. The faithful disciple becomes progressively more and more like the master.

Jesus calls each of us to be his disciples. This means that we need to learn from his teachings and way of life and imitate his behavior, eventually leading to an identification with him. To call oneself a Christian necessarily entails this dynamic, as the name Christian denotes someone who can only be identified based on their association with Jesus Christ.

#2: A Sign of Contradiction

When Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the Temple as a baby, the righteous man Simeon proclaimed the following words about him:

“Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against.”
(Luke 2:34)

These words testify to the fact that Jesus’ life provoked contradictory responses. He was loved and hated, considered a great prophet and a devil, thought to be wise and a madman, accepted and rejected. His life presented a challenge to those around him and therefore solicited strong reactions. Something was different about him. He didn’t just act like everyone else or follow the status quo.

Like its founder, Christianity is a religion of contradiction. It poses a decision and demands a response. The one thing you can’t do is simply ignore it. If Jesus Christ is God, then our lives must be marked by conversion, repentance, and discipleship. In a world that does not accept Jesus as the Son of God and revolts against the idea of obedience to a higher power, each Christian’s life ought to present a contradiction to the culture, bearing witness to deeper truths about the human person that the world neither accepts nor understands.