

4 IN 1

A LIFE NIGHT ON THE GOSPELS

QUICK GLANCE

ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

Jesus Christ is God Incarnate who came to save us from our sins and give us new life. This is the heart of the Gospel message, and it's recorded for us in the four Gospels. Each Gospel unpacks the mystery of Jesus in a unique way, and together, they give us a magnificent portrait of his identity and mission. Through the Gospels, we are ushered into an encounter with Jesus that leads to faith and discipleship. This Life Night aims to convey that essential Gospel message and introduce teens to basic details about each individual Gospel, all designed to inspire them to read and pray with the Gospels so they can more deeply encounter the one to whom they all bear witness.

MAIN POINTS

1. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ came to save us and give us new life. The Gospels proclaim this good news by relating and interpreting Jesus' life on Earth.
2. Each Gospel was written by a different person under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They emphasize certain aspects of Jesus' teaching and identity and together form a cohesive picture of Jesus.
3. If we desire to know Jesus, we have to know the Gospels. Reading and praying with the Gospels helps us experience the reality of the good news, fosters a deeper relationship with Jesus, and enables us to perceive his presence in our lives today.

SCRIPTURE

Mark 1:14-15 | Luke 1:1-4 | John 3:16 | John 20:30-31 | Romans 1:16 | 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

CATECHISM

74-79 | 124-127 | 422 | 514-515 | 2705

KEY TERMS

Evangelists | Gospel | Inspiration

SAINTS

St. Luke | St. Mark | St. Matthew | St. John

RESOURCES

Church Documents

Dei Verbum 17-20

Image

“The Good Samaritan” by Jacopo Bassano

Life Night Series

“Breakfast Club” (lifeteen.com)

Music

Spotify: “LS - Number One”

Video

BibleProject, “The Gospel” (youtube.com)

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to convey the essential Gospel message, introduce teens to basic details about each individual Gospel, and inspire them to read and pray with the Gospels.

ENVIRONMENT

This environment focuses on the four evangelists and popular sayings and scenes from the Gospels.

GATHER

Gospel or Not?

Small groups compete to correctly identify whether a quote is from one of the Gospels or another source. This activity gets teens thinking about the kind of content they expect to find in the Gospel and provides the sole small group interaction in the Life Night.

PROCLAIM

Talk: 4 in 1

This shortened Proclaim provides an introduction to the Gospels. It helps teens realize that through the Gospels we encounter the good news of Jesus' life, Death, and Resurrection. Teens are encouraged to read, reflect on, and pray with the Gospels as a means to know and encounter Jesus Christ and experience the power of the Gospel.

BREAK + SEND

Gospel Stations

In this combined Break and Send, teens visit different stations that explore a particular Gospel. Each station includes an overview of the themes and key elements of that Gospel, a few discussion prompts, and a short prayer experience.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across its entire width, providing a guide for handwriting or typing. The paper itself is a clean, off-white color.

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 core members to lead the Gospel Stations. Send the relevant content to each station leader.
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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.
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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 discussion questions and pray for their small groups.
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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.
 - Ensure that each Gospel Station has the proper materials prepared.
 - 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 - Number One" Spotify playlist as teens gather.
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ENVIRONMENT

If possible, acquire a statue of each evangelist. Otherwise, print images of each, or an icon of all four together, to display on a main wall in the room.

Write out some of your core team’s favorite sayings from the Gospels on craft paper and display them on the walls. Alternatively, source images of favorite Gospel scenes to print out and hang.

On a small stand at the front of the room, leave a Bible open to the first page of one of the Gospels.

SUPPLIES

	Red and green construction paper, one piece each per small group
	Bibles
	An image of the Parable of the Good Samaritan

LIFE NIGHT PLANNER

SCHEDULE

[illegible]

TO-DO

[illegible]

ROOM LAYOUT

[illegible]

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.
- Invite each core member to share the Gospel Scripture passage they submitted for the environment, or, if this Environment suggestion was not used, to share their favorite evangelist.
- 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 Life Night Break and Send activities 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			
Proclaim Presenter			
Gospel Stations	1.	2.	
	3.	4.	
Closing Prayer			

NOTES

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GATHER

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER 5 min

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

GOSPEL OR NOT? 10 min

Divide the teens into their small groups. Give each group a piece of green construction paper and a piece of red construction paper.

One at a time, read each of the quotes on the following page aloud, projecting it on screen if possible. Each small group must decide whether the quote is from one of the Gospels.

Allow a few moments for group members to deliberate, then count down from three. At the end of the countdown, one designated group member must hold up either the green or red piece of construction paper. Green indicates that the quote is from the Gospel; red indicates that it is not. Groups must raise their paper as soon as the countdown ends. They may not wait for other groups or change their answer based on what they see.

Designate a core member or two to keep a tally of the correct answers for each round.

Share the correct answer, as well as where the quote is from, and then proceed to the next quote.

The group with the most correct answers after all the quotes have been read wins. Consider having a small prize prepared for the winning team, such as candy.

SUGGESTION

Give teams a bonus point any time they can correctly identify the source of any of the quotes that are not from the Gospel.

“You miss 100 percent of the shots you never take.”

Answer: Not Gospel (Wayne Gretzky)

“Come and have breakfast.”

Answer: Gospel (John 21:12)

“Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

Answer: Gospel (Matthew 6:25)

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

Answer: Not Gospel (Franklin D. Roosevelt)

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

Answer: Not Gospel (Socrates)

“You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Answer: Gospel (John 8:32)

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”

Answer: Not Gospel (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Answer: Not Gospel (Lao Tzu)

“With God all things are possible.”

Answer: Gospel (Matthew 19:26)

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Answer: Gospel (Mark 12:17)

“To thine own self be true.”

Answer: Not Gospel (Shakespeare)

“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

Answer: Gospel (Luke 6:37)

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. Don't just prepare the main points — unleash your creativity and incorporate media and Going Deeper content to captivate your audience and inspire the teens. 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.

This shortened Proclaim is intended to cover the basics of the Gospel message and the four Gospels before teens dive into the specifics of each Gospel during the Break and Send.

MAIN POINTS

1. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ came to save us and give us new life. The Gospels proclaim this good news by relating and interpreting Jesus' life on Earth.
2. Each Gospel was written by a different person under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They emphasize certain aspects of Jesus' teaching and identity and together form a cohesive picture of Jesus.
3. If we desire to know Jesus, we have to know the Gospels. Reading and praying with the Gospels helps us experience the reality of the good news, fosters a deeper relationship with Jesus, and enables us to perceive his presence in our lives today.

KEY TERMS

Evangelists - One of the four writers of the Gospels. **(CCC 126)**

Gospel - The “good news” of God’s mercy and love revealed in the life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. The four books composed by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that have for their central subject Jesus Christ, God’s Incarnate Son. **(CCC 124, 514, 571)**

Inspiration - The gift of the Holy Spirit, which assisted a human author to write a Biblical book so that it has God as its author and teaches faithfully, without error, the saving truth. **(CCC 105)**

Main Point 1:

The Gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ came to save us and give us new life. The Gospels proclaim this good news by relating and interpreting Jesus' life on Earth.

Begin by asking the following question: “What is the best news you have ever heard?” Allow a few teens to answer. Consider sharing about a time when you received really great news, such as the announcement of a pregnancy, a wedding, or a promotion.

- When we hear really good news, we want to share it. Whether it’s an announcement of something that has been desired or the end of a bad thing like war, the key component of good news is that it’s worth sharing because it means something profound to those who hear it.
- This same concept is at the heart of the Gospel, but in a unique way. The word Gospel means “good news.” It’s the ultimate good news.
- The Gospel refers to the amazing story of the life of Jesus, who came to save us and give us new life. The basic Gospel message is summed up in one of the most famous lines from the Gospel. **(CCC 125, 422) (Going Deeper #1: “The Kerygma”)**

SCRIPTURE

Project and read **John 3:16**, or invite a leadership teen to read it.

- While “the Gospel” refers to that message of the saving work of Jesus and his promise of salvation from sin and new life in him, “the Gospels” refer to the four books in the New Testament that tell us the story of Jesus. They are known by the names of their writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
- Together, these books recount the story of Jesus’ life. We hear about the events of his birth. They share about his public ministry, which included teaching, healing, exorcisms, and other mighty deeds. We read about his Passion, Death, Resurrection, and final commands to his disciples. In these books, we come to know who Jesus is and what that means for us.
- Each of the Gospels is different. None of them records the same stories in exactly the same way. They each highlight unique aspects of Jesus’ identity. Through them, we get a holistic picture of Jesus.

- The Gospel writers aren't interested in strictly recording the events of Jesus' life. They also interpret what they mean for their audience. They see Jesus as the fulfillment of something that has been unfolding since the fall in the Garden of Eden. They recognize him as the Messiah foretold by the prophets and for whom Israel has been waiting. They help us see who Jesus is through their eyes, and each account is necessary for getting a whole picture of Jesus. **(CCC 514-515)**

Main Point 2:

Each Gospel was written by a different person under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They emphasize certain aspects of Jesus' teaching and identity and together form a cohesive picture of Jesus.

- The Church teaches that God inspired human authors to write the Bible. This means that, through God's inspiration and guidance, the biblical writers conveyed everything that God desired to communicate in the Bible. However, since they are true authors, they also wrote in a particular style, to a particular audience, and within a particular context. **(CCC 109, *Dei Verbum* 11-12)**
- The same is true for the Gospels. Each Gospel is attributed to a different person, and the events are arranged and articulated from a certain perspective and for a particular purpose. While they all speak about the same Jesus, each tells his story in a unique way, offering different shades of meaning that help us get the fullest picture of Jesus.
- As one quick example, in Luke we get stories such as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Cleansing of the Ten Lepers. These stories are unique to Luke and are not found in the other Gospels. This doesn't mean that Luke is making these stories up. Rather, it means that these have a place in the story Luke is telling about Jesus. Luke is concerned about highlighting Jesus' compassion and mercy. These events from Jesus' life help him do that.
- Matthew, Mark, and Luke form what we call the Synoptic Gospels. These Gospels are largely similar in many respects. They tend to share many of the same stories, even if they are told from a unique perspective.
- John is a little different. There is a lot of content in the Gospel of John that isn't found in the other Gospels. While John's witness to Jesus is unique, it is not contrary to the Synoptic Gospels.

Main Point 3:

If we desire to know Jesus, we have to know the Gospels. Reading and praying with the Gospels helps us experience the reality of the good news, fosters a deeper relationship with Jesus, and enables us to perceive his presence in our lives today.

- The Catechism is filled with powerful statements about the importance of the Gospels. Here is one of them.

Read paragraph 127 from the Catechism: CCC 127.

CATECHISM

“The fourfold Gospel holds a unique place in the Church, as is evident both in the veneration which the liturgy accords it and in the surpassing attraction it has exercised on the saints at all times.”

- Why do we include the Gospels in every Mass and stand as it is read? Why are the saints so attracted to these books? Because in the Gospel we meet Jesus and learn to live like him.
- In the Gospels, we learn about who Jesus is. They are filled with stories and details that help us understand his character. We learn what made him rejoice and what angered him. We see the care he has for the poor and hurting. We hear the teachings he gave us so we can know God and live a full life. We see his love for the human race on full display in his Passion and Death. We experience his power and authority through his miracles and exorcisms. We come to recognize his glory and our destiny in his Resurrection and Ascension. **(CCC 125, 515)**
- By reading, reflecting, and praying with the Gospels, we learn more about who Jesus is and who we are called to be.
- But if we don't know the Gospels, we don't know Jesus. And if we don't know Jesus, we won't have a full life here on Earth or eternal life in the world to come. He makes that clear to us. **(John 10:10)**

SCRIPTURE

Project and read **John 17:3** or invite a leadership teen to read it.

- In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul says that he is not ashamed of the Gospel because it is “the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith.” (**Romans 1:16**)
- However, to know and experience the *Gospel*, we have to meet Jesus in the *Gospels*.
- The Gospels are not just historical documents. They facilitate an encounter with Jesus here and now. They are not like the biographies we read in history class that tell us all about someone from the past. This Person is still living, and we meet him through what we read about him.
- Jesus is the Gospel. He is the good news that God has come to us, saved us from our sins, and invited us to life with him. Nothing could ever compare with what he has done for us and what he offers us.
- The early Church knew this, and that’s why they passed on his story. It was so important that they had to ensure others were able to hear about it. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they put together the life of Jesus so that future generations would be able to know him and encounter him through this Word. (**CCC 126, 515**)
- We are blessed as Catholics that we get to hear the Gospels proclaimed every time we go to Mass. But we are also blessed to live in a time when they are so easily accessible.
- The Gospels are more than just another book. They are the Church’s witness to the best news humanity could ever and will ever receive. In these words, we meet the Word. In these Gospels, we experience the Gospel. (**CCC 104, 127, 133, 2705**)
- Starting today, make an effort to read just a short portion of the Gospel every day. Read the Gospel for each day, or start with Matthew and work your way through each of them. You’ll come to know so much about who Jesus is by seeing how the Gospel writers portray him and really learning the story of his life.
- As the beginning of St. John’s Gospel tells us, “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.” He dwells among us still in the sacraments and in the Scriptures. Read the Gospels, that in reading them you might encounter the Word, and in encountering him you might have life. (**John 1:14**)

BREAK + SEND

GOSPEL STATIONS 45 min

In this Break and Send, teens visit different stations that explore a particular Gospel. Each station includes an overview of the themes and key elements of that Gospel, a few discussion prompts, and a short prayer experience based on that Gospel.

Set up these stations in four different rooms or in four distinct areas of one large room. Assign a core member to lead each station. There are four stations in total. Teens select and visit two stations over the course of the Break, spending 20 minutes at each station.

These introductions are not intended to be exhaustive explanations of each Gospel. There is far too much content in each Gospel to be expounded in a short talk. They focus on a selection of key characteristics of that Gospel, giving teens a basic understanding and inspiring them to dive in on their own.

Details for each station are found below.

SUGGESTION

If time permits, divide the teens into their small groups after this activity, and have them share something that stood out to them from their stations. This allows teens to learn from others' experiences. If there isn't time for small groups, invite teens to pair up with someone who attended at least one different station and share something they learned.

The Gospel of Matthew

Teaching 5 min

- Matthew (Levi) was a tax collector whom Jesus called to be his disciple. The Gospel of Matthew is attributed to this disciple and his eyewitness experience of Jesus. **(Matthew 9:9)**
- Many scholars believe that Matthew's intended audience was Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Matthew presents Jesus as the continuation and fulfillment of the story of Israel.
- For this reason, Matthew often makes **explicit references to the Old Testament**, showing how it foretold the coming of Jesus and helps us understand who he is.
- Matthew presents Jesus as a great prophet and teacher. He structures Jesus' teachings into five discourses, the most famous of which is the Sermon on the Mount. The first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah, were attributed to Moses. These contained the foundational stories and laws for God's people. In his Gospel, Matthew presents Jesus as a new Moses, delivering the fulfillment of the message of God to his people — not only by what he said but by who he was.
- This collection of **Jesus' teaching shows that he is a new lawgiver**, similar but superior to Moses. He fulfills and surpasses the old law. Just as Moses had received the law from God on Mount Sinai, so Jesus preaches this new law in the Sermon on the Mount. However, Moses was like a spokesperson, mediating the law from God to the people. Jesus, on the other hand, gives the law on his own authority, as seen from the repetition of the phrase, "You have heard that it was said [...] but I say to you." **(Matthew 5:21-22, Matthew 5:27-28, etc.)**
- These laws teach the disciples how to follow Jesus and redefine their relationship with God. They are characteristics of those who belong to God's Kingdom, as summed up in the Beatitudes. They go above and beyond the demands of the Mosaic law, exhorting the disciples to "be perfect, as [their] heavenly Father is perfect." **(Matthew 5:48)**
- Matthew also highlights **Jesus' identity as the Son of David, the promised Messiah** foretold by the prophets, who would usher in God's Kingdom. He mentions the Kingdom of God more than any other Gospel. Jesus tells parables of what the kingdom is like and gives instructions to his disciples about how to live in God's kingdom.
- Through his Gospel, Matthew shows that Jesus is the Messiah that the Israelites — and the whole world, without knowing it — had been waiting for. He is the fulfillment of every prophecy and promise God made in the Old Testament. When this King came, the Kingdom came with him.
- For Matthew, **Jesus is the Messiah from the line of David. He is the new lawgiver and teacher. He is Emmanuel** — "God with us." **(Matthew 1:23)**

Discussion 5 min

Have teens get into groups of three or four and share about the following questions:

1. What does it mean to you that each Gospel writer has a particular audience and message?
2. What does this communicate about God's desire for a personal relationship with you?
3. How does Matthew's portrayal of Jesus affect your perception of Jesus?
4. What does this mean for you?

Prayer: Lectio Divina 10 min

Pass out Bibles, and open to **Matthew 5:1-12**. Begin Lectio Divina with the Sign of the Cross.

Lectio

- Explain that this passage is known as the Beatitudes, which are characteristics of those who belong to God's Kingdom.
- Invite them to keep their Bibles open but to close their eyes for now. Then lead a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit into this time of reading Scripture.
- Read the passage aloud for the first time, encouraging the teens to take in the words and try to grasp the general message of the passage. Then pause for reflection.

Meditatio

- Read the passage again with the invitation to listen for a word or phrase that stands out.
- Spend a minute in silence, encouraging each person to ponder their word or phrase. Offer the following reflection questions: Why did it strike you? What does this word or phrase evoke in you? What does it make you think of?

Oratio

- Read the passage a third time. Provide the option to follow along. This step is about fostering a conversation with God regarding the selected passage.
- Ask the following questions, pausing between each so the teens can silently reflect: What might God be trying to tell me through this word or phrase? How is this word or phrase relevant in my life right now?

Contemplatio

- Encourage the teens to engage in a deeper conversation with Jesus in silence. In this step, they remain quiet and try to listen for God's voice in their hearts.
- Provide a few moments of silence. Teens can read the passage on their own or quietly pray.
- Conclude this station with a closing prayer and Sign of the Cross.

If time permits, provide an opportunity for a few of the teens to share their experience of *Lectio Divina*.

The Gospel of Mark

Teaching 5 min

- Mark is thought to have been authored by John Mark, a disciple of St. Peter. Thus, Mark is giving testimony to Peter's firsthand witness of Jesus.
- Mark's Gospel is centered on the cross. Many scholars believe he was writing to persecuted Christians in the time of Emperor Nero. Part of the intent of the Gospel is to encourage these Christians to remain faithful in the midst of persecution and to steadfastly follow Jesus on the way, even if it means following him to the cross.
- **A recurring theme in the Gospel of Mark is "the way."** Jesus' disciples are encouraged to follow him as he makes his way to Jerusalem. **(Mark 8:34, Mark 10:52)**
- "The Way" was a term early Christians used to identify themselves. It differentiated them from the other Jews who did not follow Jesus. Thus, Mark's emphasis on the way is a blueprint for discipleship — how to actually follow Jesus. The teachings and encounters the disciples experience along the way show them how they are to follow Jesus faithfully.
- Another characteristic of Mark's Gospel is its sense of urgency. In fact, the word "immediately" is used about 40 times. Jesus is presented as moving quickly from one thing to the next.
- **Mark's Gospel also contains key details** that give it the character of an eyewitness account. For example, Mark does not say, "they sat on the grass," but rather, "they sat down in groups of fifty on the green grass." Jesus does not just fall asleep upon the boat but is "asleep, in the stern, on a cushion." Mark also maintains some of Jesus' words in the original Aramaic, such as *talitha kum* ("little girl, I say to you, arise") and *ephphatha* ("be opened"). **(Mark 5:41, Mark 7:34)**
- Mark's Gospel does not include many long conversations or speeches. It is filled with shorter stories that are action-packed and easy to understand.
- **Mark presents Jesus as a powerful miracle worker.** He is a man of action and fulfilled promises, not just a preacher of theological ideas and premises.
- Although Jesus is the all-powerful God, he modeled humility, compassion, and service, giving us an example of how to live our lives. He came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." **(Mark 10:45)**
- For Mark, **Jesus is the powerful Son of God who willingly underwent persecution as God's Suffering Servant.** His Gospel offers encouragement to those experiencing persecution.
- Fast-paced, highly detailed, short, and to the point, this Gospel is the perfect place to start if we are new to reading the Bible and want a jumping-off point.

Discussion 5 min

Have teens get into groups of three or four and share about the following questions:

1. "The Way," distinguished Jews who believed in Jesus. How do teens today identify themselves as followers of Christ? And, specifically, how do you demonstrate your faith?
2. How does Mark's portrayal of Jesus affect your perception of Jesus?
3. What does this mean for you?

Prayer: Ignatian Contemplation 10 min

Explain that teens will have a chance to pray using Ignatian contemplation, a form of prayer in which they use their imagination to enter into a Gospel story, experiencing it as if they were there. Use the following script to teach the teens about this form of prayer:

Ignatian contemplation is a unique way of praying, using your imagination to immerse yourself in a Gospel story. We'll start by reading a story from the Gospel of Mark to get the context and details. Then, you can envision the scene vividly with all your senses engaged.

Ignatian contemplation is not just about using your imagination, but about truly encountering Jesus and having a conversation with him. Silence is a big part of this prayer, and it's not intended to empty your mind but to focus it entirely on God. In the silence, you listen for his voice and feel his presence. This quiet time enables you to reflect on what Jesus might be telling you through the Gospel story and how it applies to your life.

Read **Mark 4:35-41**. Encourage the teens to listen attentively to the story as you do so.

Close your eyes and envision the scene. Imagine you are on the Sea of Galilee in a storm-tossed boat. What does it look like? Who is there? What are they wearing? What sounds do you hear? Take a moment to immerse yourself in the scene.

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Feel the sense of desperation rise. Maybe people are frantically trying to toss water out of the boat. The rain and wind are strong, and it's hard to see. Water spills over the side of the boat as massive waves toss you to and fro. Hope of making it through the storm is slowly fading. How are the people on the boat reacting to the storm? What are people feeling? What do you feel?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Now, imagine Jesus calmly emerging from the stern. What is his presence like? How does he act? How does seeing him make you feel?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Imagine Jesus rebuking the wind and commanding the sea to be still. How does he speak these words? What does he look like? What happens to the storm and the sea after he speaks? What happens to you after he speaks?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Picture Jesus turning toward you and the rest of the disciples after the storm has died down. He simply says, “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” How does he deliver these lines? How do you and the rest of the disciples feel?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

In the silence after these events, you are left questioning who this man is. One minute, he was asleep on a cushion in the boat, just like any other human; the next, he is commanding the sea and wind, and they listened to him.

Pause for a moment of reflection.

The Gospel of Mark reminds us that Jesus is Lord. We see his power manifest in the story of the calming of the sea. As ruler over all, he commands the winds and the waves, and they obey him. As we conclude this prayer, ask Jesus for the grace to let him be the Lord of your life. Call to mind those places you try to maintain control and offer them to him.

The Gospel of Luke

Teaching 5 min

- The Gospel of Luke is associated with St. Luke, a companion of St. Paul. The beginning of the Gospel tells us that he gathered information from eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus and recorded them in this Gospel.
- His Gospel is his best effort to write “an orderly account” of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ that he can pass on. Beginning with the events leading up to the Birth of Jesus and short episodes of his young life, St. Luke gives us an incredible and inspiring glimpse into Jesus’ earthly ministry and most compassionate heart. **(Luke 1:3)**
- Most scholars think Luke was writing to a Gentile (non-Jewish) audience. He translated Hebrew or Aramaic (languages not as familiar to Gentiles) into Greek. While making Christ’s words and deeds accessible to this unique Gentile cross-section of readers and hearers, Luke also made a point to champion the rights and dignity of the lowly and oppressed.
- Thus, one of the key characteristics of St. Luke’s Gospel is his emphasis that **Jesus came to bring salvation for all people**, not just the Jews. For example, when he heals 10 Lepers, including one Samaritan, it is only the Samaritan who comes back to give him thanks. Prior to beginning his public ministry, Jesus also references two stories from the Old Testament in which God worked miracles for Gentiles as opposed to the Jewish people. **(Luke 4:25-27, Luke 17:11-19)**
- **Luke also emphasizes the power and presence of the Holy Spirit**, who overshadows Mary at the Annunciation, moves Elizabeth and John the Baptist at the Visitation, enables Zechariah to speak, is present in Simeon at the Temple, empowers Jesus’ mission, and appears elsewhere in the Gospel. **(Luke 1:35, 41, and 67, Luke 2:25-27, Luke 4:14-21)**
- The Gospel of Luke is the first installment of a **two-part series with Acts**, which St. Luke also wrote. Thus, this focus on the Holy Spirit is fitting and prepares us to read the account of the Spirit’s work in the Church in Acts.
- Another main feature of the Gospel of Luke is **Jesus’ compassion for the outcast**, whether that be widows, the poor, the marginalized, sinners, or anyone else.
- Much of the unique content in the Gospel of Luke centers around this theme. We see it in the parables of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, the Prodigal Son, and the Good Samaritan. It is also manifest in stories such as Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus, the widow of Nain, and the thief on the Cross. **(Luke 7:11-17, Luke 10:29-37, Luke 15:11-32, Luke 18:9-14, Luke 19:1-10. Luke 23:39-43)**
- **Luke shows us that Jesus is a God of compassion who wants to enter into our suffering. He is a God who proclaims his love and mercy for us**, even if no one else does, and even when we may not deserve it.

Discussion 5 min

Have teens get into groups of three or four and share about the following questions:

1. How can teens follow Jesus' example and show compassion to others in the everyday?
2. How does Luke's portrayal of Jesus affect your perception of Jesus?
3. What does this mean for you?

Prayer: Visio Divina 10 min

Explain that teens will have a chance to pray using Visio Divina, a form of prayer in which they allow God to speak through a sacred image. Use the following script to teach the teens about this form of prayer:

We're going to have an opportunity to participate in a form of prayer known as Visio Divina, in which we look at an image, reflect upon it, and allow God to speak to us through what we encounter. First, we'll listen to the story of the Good Samaritan.

Read **Luke 10:30-37**.

Project an image of the Good Samaritan, such as "The Good Samaritan" by Jacopo Bassano.

Reflect on this image. Let your eyes move freely across it. Note the colors, textures, people, places, objects, movements, lighting, and any other aspect of the painting.

Pause for a moment as the teens gaze at the image. Then, pose the following questions:

What details of the image do you notice? What grabs your attention?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Now, I invite you to look more closely at the image and contemplate the parable, reflecting specifically on the parts that stood out to you. Ask yourself why this particular part of the image or story struck you. Does it remind you of something? What does this detail bring to your mind? Does it evoke a certain emotion?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

As you continue reflecting, take the time to respond to what you feel. What is God saying through this image and story? In what ways does it relate to your life? What might God be asking of you? Whatever has come to your mind, spend some time speaking to God in your heart about these things.

Pause for a moment of reflection.

In St. Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate how we are to love our neighbors. However, while maintaining the inherent call to love others as the Good Samaritan does, the Church has long interpreted this parable in light of Jesus' relationship to us. We are the man lying on the side of the road, wounded by sin and in desperate need of healing. Jesus, in his goodness and mercy, tenderly takes care of us even though we don't deserve it.

As you look at this image one last time, I want you to imagine that you are the wounded man and Jesus is the Good Samaritan. He stops and binds your wounds. He comforts, protects, and consoles you when you are beaten or feeling down. He offers you a helping hand when no one else will. He restores you to life.

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Jesus, you love us with a love that is self-sacrificing and unconditional. Help us experience the depths of your compassion and love. Through your grace and in imitation of you, may we always be a neighbor to those who need us most. Amen.

The Gospel of John

Teaching 5 min

- This Gospel is attributed to the Apostle John, one of Jesus' closest companions and first disciples.
- John is the most unique of the four Gospels. Whereas we refer to Matthew, Mark, and Luke as the Synoptic Gospels because they are largely similar and tell the same basic story, John is very different.
- John likely wrote his Gospel several years after Matthew's, Mark's, and Luke's were already being read and circulated. John fills in some of the "gaps" of the other Gospels by sharing unique stories and moments not previously recorded.
- John was not setting out to write another Gospel that would share the same stories. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit with a different goal. His Gospel, more than others, looks **beyond the events of Jesus' life actions into the deeper truth about his identity and mission**. He encourages the reader to "lean in" and take a closer look, to peer beneath the surface and take in the majesty of who Jesus is and what that means for us. When we do so, we gain special insight into the meaning of Jesus' ministry and the Paschal mystery.
- John's Gospel is highly symbolic. It is rooted in the Old Covenant and points to the New. John highlights Jesus' divinity, and only when we comprehend the dual nature of Christ (human and divine) can we understand the purpose of his mission and the life he invites us to.
- **John refers to Jesus' miracles as "signs." These signs paint a picture of Jesus' identity as the Son of God.** These seven major miracles, including the miracle at the Wedding at Cana and the raising of Lazarus, point to **Jesus' divine identity and reveal his glory.**
(John 2:1-11, John 11:1-44)
- John also records seven self-declarations made by Jesus, known as **the "I am" statements**, such as "I am the light of the world" and "I am the bread of life." (John 8:12, John 6:35)
- These sayings give insight into his divine nature and role in salvation. They echo God's self-proclamation in the Old Testament (the divine name "I Am" revealed to Moses), further solidifying Jesus' divinity. They also teach us about who he is.
- John's Gospel is also **highly sacramental**. The feeding of the 5000 becomes the occasion for the Bread of Life discourse, in which **Jesus teaches about the Eucharist**. He speaks to Nicodemus of being born of water and spirit, symbolizing Baptism. He breathes on the disciples, giving them the power to forgive sins in his name. John shows us that Jesus' divine life is available to us in the sacraments. (John 3:5, John 6, John 20:22-23)
- John's Gospel is intended to **help us have faith in Jesus Christ**, believing that he is the divine Son of God, entrusting ourselves to him, and receiving new life in him.
(John 10:10, John 17:3, John 20:30-31)

Discussion 5 min

Have teens get into groups of three or four and share about the following questions:

1. What unique aspect of John's Gospel stands out to you most?

2. How does John's portrayal of Jesus affect your perception of Jesus?
3. What does this mean for you?

Prayer: Scriptural Reflection 10 min

Explain that you will be leading a short reflection and prayer based on the seven "I am" statements Jesus makes in the Gospel of John. Use the prompts below to guide the reflection. Read each "I am" statement and the accompanying reflection, pausing for a moment between each statement to allow teens to ponder what they heard.

As we previously mentioned, Jesus makes seven "I am" statements in John's Gospel. These statements give us insight into Jesus' identity, which in turn helps us understand who he wants to be for us. We're going to take some time to pray with and reflect on these statements. As we read, pay attention to what stands out to you and reflect on what God might be trying to say to you through it.

"I am the bread of life."

Read **John 6:35**.

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."

Jesus, you are the bread of life. You long to nourish us with your Body and Blood. You satisfy the hunger in our souls that nothing else can. You give us yourself as food in the Eucharist. Help us know that we will never be satisfied except in you.

"I am the light of the world."

Read **John 8:12**.

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jesus, you are the light of the world. You banish the darkness of our hearts and minds. You help us see clearly and guide our steps. You transform our lives with your light and warmth. May your light shine in our lives forever.

"I am the door."

Read **John 10:7, 9**

So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep...if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

Jesus, you are the door for your sheep. You are the way that leads home to good and safe pasture. You protect us, keeping us in your presence and keeping out what is harmful. Lead us through the door that leads to eternal life.

“I am the good shepherd.”

Read **John 10:11-14**

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me.”

Jesus, you are the good shepherd. You guide, protect, and care for your sheep. You lay down your life for your flock. You call each of us by name and lead us to green pastures and flowing streams. Be our shepherd now and always.

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

Read **John 11:25-26**

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”

Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life. You call out to what is dead, and it is restored to new life. You share with us the gift of eternal life. You conquered death by your own resurrection and promise us the fullness of life in you. May we live with and in you now and forever.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

Read **John 14:6**

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.”

Jesus, you are the way, the truth, and the life. Your life opens the path to eternal life. You share the truth of who you are and who we are. You are not just a way, but the way. Keep us from straying away from you. Help us to trust you more. Give us life.

“I am the true vine.”

Read **John 15:1, 4-5**

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser...Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Jesus, you are the true vine. Your life-giving power enlivens each branch. Apart from you, we will wither and die. United with you, we thrive. Help us abide with you in every moment and grow strong in your love.

Close with the following prayer.

*Jesus,
You are the bread of life.
You are the light of the world.
You are the door to salvation.
You are the good shepherd.
You are the resurrection and the life.
You are the way, the truth, and the life.
You are the true vine.
We believe you are who you say you are.
Help us cling to you in faith, and experience the life you long to give us now and in eternity.
Amen.*

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 convey the essential Gospel message, introduce teens to basic details about each individual Gospel, and inspire them to read and pray with the Gospels.

Did not accomplish

Nailed it

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 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?
