



Making it

REAL

AND

RELEVANT

A

Multi-Media Enhanced,

Topic-Based

Bible Study for Youth

Topic 15: [Christ Revealed & What it
Means to be a Christian: Epiphany Yr. A]

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Before Classes Start...

An Overview of *Making it Real and Relevant*

Making it Real and Relevant is a youth Bible study curriculum for use in a 45-55 minute class period. The course is available in two formats, a lectionary-based format and a topic-based format. The **lectionary-based format** follows the 3-year lectionary cycle as found in your choice of the Revised Common Lectionary, Roman Catholic or Book of Common Prayer. Therefore, one or more of the readings that will be heard in church during the Sunday morning service will be the focus of the class that Sunday. Readings are usually based on the New Testament readings, although Old Testament readings and occasionally the Psalm assigned for that Sunday become the focus reading for a lesson as well. The **topic-based format** examines a topic in some detail over a 3 to 4-week period of time. The topics are based on the characteristics of spiritual development, which are to learn that one has a life-purpose and that it is possible to discern what that purpose is; to seek connection with the inner self (the spirit, as opposed to the outer self, the ego); to seek connection with God and with the world around one, both natural and human; and to experience transcendence (meaning seeing how one fits into the bigger picture). The year will progress from inward to outward, focusing on “me” issues first, then progressing to “God” issues, and then examining “community and world” issues.

Regardless of the format (lectionary-based or topic-based) you have chosen, the weekly lessons in *Making it Real and Relevant* follow the same structure. The curriculum is designed to address multiple learning styles by incorporating small group and general group discussion, movie clips, music, current events and a variety of interactive activities to bring Bible readings to life. Through this varied style of presentation, youth can explore God, Jesus, the Bible, their faith and values in ways that show them how real and relevant these topics are in their lives. The curriculum is sectioned into four parts: an “Opener,” “The Heart of the Lesson,” “Wrapping it Up,” and a “Closing.” The “Opener” is primarily used to bring everyone’s attention to the class and the topic being studied. “The Heart of the Lesson” and “Wrapping it Up” offer the substance of the class, and the “Closing” allows youth the opportunity to reflect on the discussion and readings for the class. The lessons are designed to be usable for small (2-6 students) or large (7 or more students) classes, and directions are included in each lesson plan for leaders of groups of both sizes.

There will be two opportunities for outreach during the year. The lessons during the seasons of Advent and Lent suggest projects and build in time to work on those projects, since they are perfect times to be thinking about how we can be more Christ-like as we remember why Christ was born into this world and why he died and rose again.

Some Words About Time and Discussion

Timing

Making it Real and Relevant lesson plans include suggested times for each section of a lesson. Times are located in parentheses in the line below each of the lesson section headings. For example, for the first section of the lesson you will see,

Opener
(10 minutes)

These times are only suggestions, based on pilot study results. Every class is different, however. You may have a class that really enjoys discussion but is not musically inclined. In this case, you may decide to not use the music clips and to extend the discussion time. Or, you may have a group that prefers to do the opening activities or spend more time in prayer at closing than in discussion following a Bible passage or movie clip. Again, you may choose to extend the time given for the activities the students like and seem to be getting the most out of.

Consequently, you will need to decide whether or not you will follow the suggested times for each section. If you choose to follow the suggested times, plan on cutting activities and discussions off at the end of the allotted time in order to move through the whole lesson in one class. If you choose to extend the time on a section that is holding your class's attention, think about what other section of the lesson you are willing to skip or condense. You may also decide to extend a lesson over two Sundays because the class is finding a lot to talk about or is taking time to absorb concepts being presented.

Discussion Questions

Making it Real and Relevant makes use of discussion questions following movie clips, Bible passage readings, music clips, and some activities. The questions are designed to get conversation rolling. There are often more discussion questions than you will have time to cover, so think about the questions that will be most meaningful for your group, and start with those questions first. You may also find there are questions not listed in the curriculum that would be appropriate for your unique group. You are encouraged to add questions as you would like. Remember that when asking questions, frame your questions so that students are required to give more than a "yes" or "no" answer. One way to do this is to ask students, "Why?" or, "Explain your reasoning."

Sometimes the conversation that develops from a discussion question will lead away from the original topic. As long as it is a topic of relevance to the spiritual growth and moral and faith development of your youth, allow the conversation to have a life of its own. It is amazing what can be learned and discovered when you get "off track." If you wish to cover a certain number of the discussion questions, you can place a time limit on "off track" conversations that develop out of a discussion and move the class back on topic by introducing the next question.

Some Words About Multimedia

This curriculum makes use of popular movie and music clips and information from recent world events. Therefore, it is very important that you, the instructor, take the time before class to familiarize yourself with what will be seen or heard in class. To save yourself from unpleasant or uncomfortable surprises, always have your movie clip cued up before you start class and watch it before you show it to your students. G, PG and PG-13 rated movies are the primary resources for video clips, but occasionally an R-rated movie (such as *The Matrix*) will have a scene that is too good not to use. The clips shown in class will be acceptable for any audience; however, unacceptable content may be in the preceding or following scenes, which is why it benefits you to know what is happening around your clip before you show it and why you should have the scene cued up ahead of time.

When you receive the curriculum for each quarter, a separate page listing all the movie and music clips will be included so that you can plan ahead. Most classes will make use of either a video clip or a music clip. Sometimes lessons will have both music and video and occasionally there will be neither. You can rent videos or music DVDs, borrow from church members who are movie fans, or purchase used videos inexpensively through sites such as amazon.com or a local video store. It is not legal to burn a DVD with the movie clips; you *must* use the original (as per the July 2010 ruling) and queue it up to the starting point ahead of time. You need to obtain a license to play movies from an organization such as www.cvli.com. Some argue that short movie clips used in an educational context are exempt but I encourage you to get a license to be safe – and it allows your church to show a movie whenever you choose! While printed lyrics used in an educational context may be covered under “fair use,” it is best to get a license from an organization such as www.ccli.com or a comparable group.

When you are preparing for classes that include music clips please consider making copies of the lyrics available for youth. Sites such as www.christianlyricsonline.com or www.lyricsondemand.com offer lyrics – all you have to do is cut and paste the lyrics into a separate document and then photocopy the lyrics for the youth to follow along when you play music clips. I highly recommend doing this because this music is chosen for the lyrics—no matter how good the music is, there is always a point where words get lost because of the drums, guitars, or poor annunciation on the singer’s part. When the youth don’t hear the lyrics, they lose part of the meaning of the lesson. It is also helpful to have lyrics to refer back to when discussing the song after playing it. Again, getting a license before copying lyrics ensures that you are legal. And in any case, make sure you destroy the copies when you are finished so no one inadvertently uses them illegally.

Finally, current events do not stay current for long. If you find something that fits with the lesson plan that is more current than the plan suggests, use it! For example, at the time of this writing, Hurricane Katrina had just devastated the Gulf States. Lessons that may have used 9/11 or the tsunami as examples or discussion starters will have much more impact if they refer to Hurricane Katrina or whatever may have happened recently.

Some Words About Group Discussion

Some portion of each class will be devoted to group discussion. Therefore, facilitators should go into the first class with some goals regarding group discussion rules and building trust and a sense of community in a group. Here are some things to think about:

Respect is the key to making a discussion format work.

Respect silence. Let silence happen after a question. Respect the students' need to ponder a question, to have the time to think about how they want to put words together, to let the Holy Spirit go to work in that space of silence. The first ten seconds after a question has been asked can be the most anxious ten seconds a group leader will endure. Please endure! Curb the inclination to fill the silent space with your thoughts and reflections. This class is about their thoughts and reflections—let them own the silence.

Respect for each other is also important. There will be talkative youth and silent youth. You'll know pretty quickly who is not going to talk in your class, but there will inevitably be a class that strikes a spark for the silent one; make sure that the ones who like to talk respect the right of all other group members to speak.

Along that line, remember to *temper your enthusiasm*. It's good to have examples from your life experiences to share that encourage discussion, but try to keep your input to a minimum.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, respect each other by making it clear to the group before you start the lesson that personal reflections offered during class stay within the group and are not to be shared with people outside of class. Nothing kills trust in a group more quickly than having something personal and private shared with the world. *Show respect for each other by fostering trust.*

If you find typos, errors, activities that went “splat,” or if you or your youth have suggestions for music clips or opener activities and games, please email me so that I may continue to improve upon this work in progress. If you find things that go exceptionally well, I'd love to know that too! My email address is included below. Please put “real and relevant suggestions” in the subject line so I don't mistake it for junk or infected mail.

Thank you!

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Making it Real and Relevant

Topic 15: Christ Revealed and What it Means to be a Christian

Movie and Music Clips

Topic 15—Week 1

The Nativity Story. The clip starts at 1:13:30 (the beginning of chapter 17 on DVD) with the three wise men entering Jerusalem and being invited to dine with Herod. The clip ends at 1:33:50 when Joseph and Mary walk across the desert toward Egypt with the infant Jesus.

Topic 15—Week 2

Wall-e: The clip starts at 27:23 (midway through chapter 9 on DVD) when Eva picks up a lighter and is fascinated by the flame, and ends at 34:11 when Wall-e sees Eva inside the ship.

Topic 15—Week 3

Oh Brother, Where Art Thou? The scene starts at 17:05 (chapter 4 on DVD), when Everett says, “It’s a fool that looks for logic in the chambers of the human heart,” and ends at 21:07, when Everett, Pete and Delmar are in the car and Delmar says, “Pull over Everett” (you will want to stop the clip immediately after Delmar says “Everett.”). This clip does have some swearing in it; you should watch the clip ahead of class to determine if it is swearing that your class can handle hearing. If you are concerned about the language, you can start the clip immediately following the swearing, which is where Delmar comes out of the river after being baptized (19:30 when Pete says, “Delmar’s been saved”); however, you will miss some of the key features of the scene by doing so. (If you don’t mind hearing the same swear words, you can continue the clip to 22:23 where Tommy says “Well, I wasn’t using it” for some additional discussion questions).

Topic 15—Week 4

The Mask of Zorro The clip starts at 33:32 where Alejandro is sitting at a table in a market area, drinking, and ends at 40:55 when Zorro finishes the first sword training lesson, saying, “Time for a drink.”

Topic 15—Week 5

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers: The clip starts at 57:15 when Gandalf and company (Gimli the dwarf, Legolas the elf and Aragorn the future king) are blocked at the entrance to the throne room and asked to hand over their weapons and ends at 1:04:00, when Aragorn says “Hail, Theoden, King and kneels. Theoden turns away from the crowd. (Please preview this scene; Gandalf’s friends do a very efficient job of clearing a path for Gandalf to approach Theoden unhindered. If you think the fight scene is too much, cue the clip up to just after the majority of the fighting is over and Gandalf has made it to stand in front of Theoden and begins talking to him/Saruman).

Topic 15—Week 6

The American President The clip begins at 1:37:47, where President Sheppard is pacing the halls of the White House 48 hours before the State of the Union speech, trying to decide what he should do. The clip ends at 1:44:00, when the president walks out of a press meeting, having given a speech about character and what he will do as president.

Topic 15—Week 7

Men In Black: The clip starts at 1:19:09 (about halfway through Chapter 25 on DVD) with Agent K handing Agent J a large gun out of the trunk of the car, and ends at 1:21:30, when the alien starts to appear through the fog in the doorway of the crashed ship. You'll want to stop before the alien says anything more than "You idiots" because the alien is not handsome and becomes even less so when he steps out of his human disguise, and the language gets a little blue. Caution— the word "damn" is used in the portion of the clip you will show.

"New Day" by Avalon, found on such albums as *The Very Best of Avalon: Testify to Love*.

Topic 15—Week 8

Hook The first clip starts at 56:15 (midway through Chapter 10 on DVD), when Peter Banning says "Oh my, a wall" as he tries to ride a skate board to escape the horde of boys chasing him who are sure he is an intruder—an adult and therefore a pirate. The scene ends at 1:00:45 when Tinker Bell (Julia Roberts) shouts, "Yeah! Come on, give him a chance!" and smiles.

The second clip starts at 1:41:08 (Chapter 21 on DVD) when one of the boys yells, "Pan's back!" and rings the alarm bell and ends at 1:43:28 when the Lost Boys dance.

Week 1: The Birth of Christianity--Christ

Focus Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

Opener

(10 minutes)

Over the next five weeks, we will cover several key elements of the topic, what does it mean to be a Christian? The season of Epiphany is a perfect time to explore this topic because this season is all about revealing who Jesus Christ really was. This week we will review how Christianity came into being, with the birth of Jesus Christ, recognized by many even as an infant as a savior, a king, and messiah. We will then examine baptism, one of the foundations of the Christian faith, before we discuss what people understood Jesus to be and why they chose (and still choose today) to follow him. We will then talk about the final act of revelation by God, the transfiguration of Jesus, and how witnessing this act affected the followers of Christ.

Today, we are going to spend much of our time watching part of a movie, *The Nativity Story*, when retells the story of the visitation of the three wise men to Jesus.

As youth arrive, give them a few minutes to get settled if they have had a break from school and Sunday school due to Christmas. Steer the conversation toward today's lesson as youth talk about their break by asking the following questions:

- What is your best memory of the Christmas season? Why?
- What was the favorite gift you received over the Christmas holidays? Why?
- What was the favorite gift that you gave? Why?
- Will you use the gifts you were given? Why or why not?

The Heart of the Lesson

(5-7 minutes)

Today we are going to about who Jesus was, but we are going to do so in a roundabout way—by talking about gifts. Gifts can be physical objects or they can be actions that help someone else. Today's Bible passage has examples of both type of gift. However, before we start talking about gifts, let's talk first about Epiphany and what Epiphany means for the church. Epiphany comes from a Greek word that means "to reveal" or "to shine on." Many Christian denominations recognize that January 6th, the 12th day of Christmas, was the day the three wise men found the infant Jesus and came with gifts to give to

Movie clip from
*The Nativity
Story*

the one that had been revealed to them by God. God told these Gentiles (non-Jews) that this was God and King, and they believed and acknowledged the infant as such. Epiphany, therefore, is about the revelation that Jesus is the son of God.

The season of Epiphany is the season where we remember all the ways God revealed this information to the world. These revelations are through the things that Jesus did and the things that happened to him. These events served as clues to all those who witnessed them, revealing that this was the Son of God who had come to set the world right.

In celebration of Epiphany, many churches will offer special services or plays and pageants, called the “Feast of Lights.” The idea of light also comes from the translation of the word “epiphany” as “shining on.” “Shining light on a subject” is a popular phrase we use today that simply means to reveal something. The Feast of Lights is traditionally based on passages from the Gospels, such as the passage we read today, Matthew 2:1-12. Take a moment to read Matthew 2:1-12 out loud to the class. After you have read, ask the group,

- What are the gifts the three wise men bring?
- Why do the three wise men not return to Herod?
- What would have happened to Jesus if the three wise men had returned to Herod after visiting the infant?

Wrapping It Up (22 minutes)

Wrap up today’s session with a special movie clip, from the movie *The Nativity Story*. This is a great retelling of the story of Mary and Joseph and the birth of Jesus. Today we will watch the last part of the movie, where Joseph finds a place for Mary to have their baby, the wise men visit Herod and then follow the star to give their gifts and pay homage to the new born king. The clip starts at 1:13:30 (the beginning of chapter 17 on DVD) with the three wise men entering Jerusalem and being invited to dine with Herod. The clip ends at 1:33:50 when Joseph and Mary walk across the desert toward Egypt with the infant Jesus.

Closing (5 minutes)

After the clip has played, ask:

- What is the importance and meaning of the three gifts the wise men bring? What is the emotion the third wise man

is experiencing when he offers the gift of myrrh? Why do you think he is feeling this emotion?

The three wise men explain their gifts as they give them. Obviously, gold is a gift that symbolizes the recognition of a king, of royalty. Frankincense and myrrh are not as easily understood however, because we live in a different world today than that of the three wise men and Mary and Joseph. Frankincense is a very fragrant (and expensive) incense that was used by the Temple priests in Jerusalem to burn for God. Myrrh had two functions; it was used medicinally in wine as a kind of numbing agent (in some accounts of Jesus' crucifixion, he was given some wine mixed with myrrh). It was also commonly used when embalming a dead body to keep the body from rotting. In essence, the three wise men, with their gifts, were acknowledging all that Jesus was and what he would do for humanity. He was a king; he was God; and he would give his life for the sake of humankind.

Take a few minutes to close the class in silent reflection of the gifts that Jesus has given us and how we will use those gifts.

Week 2: The boy Jesus and his family

Focus Reading

Luke 2: 41-52

Opener

(10-15 minutes)

Truth or fiction

After youth arrive and get settled, start the class with a story telling time. Each student will tell a story about a time he or she got separated (for example, getting lost in a huge department store, or separated from one's family in a huge crowd at the mall or an airport) from his or her family. They can either tell a true story or make up a story. After each story is told, the other students have to guess whether the story was truth or fiction.

Heart of the Lesson

(15 minutes)

Introduce the idea that being separated from the people you love or with whom you feel safe and secure is an experience that usually produces feelings of fear or anxiety.

Today's video clip is from the movie, *Wall-e*, a story about a robot who is left alone on earth to clean up the garbage after humans leave the planet. Wall-e has a cockroach as a friend and old movies and interactive games to keep him occupied, but no contact with beings like himself. Then, a ship arrives and drops off a scout robot named Eva. Wall-e falls in love with Eva, but she shuts down not long after she realizes she likes Wall-e. When Eva's ship returns to pick her up, Wall-e refuses to be separated from her and he hitches a ride on the outside of the ship so that he can stay with her. In this video clip, Wall-e is giving Eva gifts of things he's collected over the centuries. One of the gifts he gives her is a seedling he recently found, which is what Eva had been sent to scout out. She automatically goes into hibernation, since her objective has been accomplished, and Wall-e is left alone.

The clip starts at 27:23 (midway through chapter 9 on DVD) when Eva picks up a lighter and is fascinated by the flame, and ends at 34:11 when Wall-e sees Eva inside the ship.

After the clip has played, ask:

- Wall-e has been content to exist alone on the planet for a few hundred years, apart from his cockroach friend. Since he is used

Supplies

Video clip from
Wall-e

Space for Notes

- to being alone, why does he get so upset when the ship comes to retrieve Eva, a robot he has only known for a couple days?
- Wall-e faced being separated from Eva two times: first when she shuts down and second when the ship comes to take her away. Which of the separations do you think hurts Wall-e more? Why?
 - (A note to the teacher: this question and the next can raise some deep discussions; depression is a common ailment in teens, and in parents as well. Be prepared to be sympathetic, but remember that you are not a therapist-unless you happen to be one in your daily life☺! If you should hear something that concerns you, talk to your clergy. You can also mention to the class that they are always welcome to talk to their clergy. If the subject of depression seems to be something that most of the class is concerned about, you can also ask students if they would like you to invite either your clergy or a psychologist in to the class to talk about depression and how to deal with it.) When Eva shuts down, Wall-e tries to take comfort in the fact that at least part of her is still with him. Compare Eva's shut down to being with someone who is sad or depressed. How are the two similar? Are the things Wall-e does for Eva after she shuts down of any benefit, and if they are, who do they benefit? Are the things Wall-e does examples of what we can do when friends or family members are sad or depressed?
 - Have you ever experienced someone shutting down on you, whether they were angry, depressed or sad? How did you handle the situation? What things did you do to encourage that person to open up to you again?
 - We've talked about Wall-e being separated from Eva. What about Wall-e's pet cockroach? Do you think the cockroach experienced any feelings of separation? Have you ever known a pet to be anxious when its owners go away? What did the pet do that indicated it was anxious or worried?
 - At the beginning of class, we talked about experiences we have had where we were separated from our families. What feelings did you experience when you realized you

- couldn't find the person you were with? Why do you think you felt fear or anxiety? Did you fear that the person you were with would not try to find you or that they would give up looking for you?
- Why do we trust that the people we love will try to take care of us, no matter what? Or do we trust this?

Wrapping It Up (15 minutes)

Just about every family has a story about being separated from the ones they love, whether someone got lost, was taken away, or left. Even the Bible tells stories of families who are separated. In the Old Testament, Joseph was separated from his father by his jealous brothers; Jacob fled from his brother Esau because he feared Esau's anger. In the New Testament, Jesus tells parables about the prodigal son who left his father and the sheep who are separated from their master. There are also several stories of family members turning to Jesus for miracle healings because loved ones were going to be separated from them by death.

Perhaps the greatest story to be told about a parent and child being separated would be the story of Jesus getting "lost" in Jerusalem, a story Jesus' family probably told around the dinner table as he was growing up.

Have the youth work as a team to re-enact today's gospel lesson, Luke 2:41-52, in mime. Youth can act out the story in total silence or have narrators retell the story while others act it out silently. The purpose here is to highlight the emotions that Mary, Joseph and Jesus were feeling when this incident occurred. Give youth 5 to 7 minutes to get their act together 😊 and then call them together to present their story. After they have acted the story out, ask:

- What are Mary and Joseph's feelings when they realize their child is missing?
- What are Jesus' feelings about being separated from his parents? Why isn't Jesus afraid?
- Are there any places where you would feel safe even if no one else was around?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you felt afraid, alone or separated from someone and prayed to God? How did you feel after you prayed to God?

Space For Notes

- Why did you pray? Were your prayers answered? Did you notice afterwards that your prayers were answered?
- Has your faith in God increased or stayed the same since that event?
- Based on your experience of prayer when you were afraid and the story of Jesus' lack of fear after being separated from his earthly mother and father, would you consider God to be someone you can trust?
- Just as we trust our parents to be there for us to the best of their ability, do you trust God to be there for you as well? Why or why not? Does knowing God can be trusted to be there for you make a difference in how you approach living your life? How?
- One of the things we do as humans is rely on ourselves too much and set God aside to use only in emergencies. We could describe this as "using" God, and yet God, like any good parent, still answers our prayers and comes to our aid in our times of trouble. How do we move from using God to creating a more meaningful, balanced relationship with God? In other words, how can we give back to God when God gives to us?

Closing

(2 – 3 minutes)

Close with prayer.

Week 3: Baptism

Focus Reading

Acts 10:34-43
Matthew 3:13-17

Opener

(7-10 minutes)

After youth have arrived and gotten settled, start today's lesson off by handing out copies of the baptismal vows as found in the baptismal service in your prayer book. Have the class take turns reading the different promises that the person being baptized makes (or the adults make on behalf of an infant) and what the congregation promises before moving into today's lesson.

The Heart of the Lesson

(15 minutes)

One of the basic tenets of the Christian faith regardless of the denomination is a belief in baptism. We read today about Jesus' baptism, which marks the beginning of his adult ministry. While we have brief accounts of Jesus as a child through the stories of Simeon and Anna and the story of his parents' trip to Jerusalem when Jesus was "lost" in the temple, the first stories that we have of Jesus as an adult start with his baptism by John. Have volunteers read Matt 3: 13-17, then read Acts 10:34-43 aloud. After the two passages have been read, ask:

- What happens when John baptized Jesus?
- In Acts, Peter says that Jesus is anointed by God with the Holy Spirit as he comes out of the water. Does our tradition use anything to anoint a person being baptized?
- Does our church have a special service for baptism? If so, who takes part in that service? (You will find that everyone takes part in a baptism. There are places for the person being baptized—or those speaking for the person being baptized—to speak, and there are places for the congregation to speak.)
- What does the person being baptized promise (or what is promised by the parents and God parents on the baptized person's behalf)?
- What does the congregation promise?
- Are these promises important? Why or why not?

Supplies

Copies of
baptismal service
as found in Prayer
Book.

Movie clip from
*O Brother, Where
Art Thou?*

Wrapping It Up (15-20 minutes)

As mentioned above, there are very few beliefs that all Christians hold: one of these beliefs is a belief in baptism. Let's look at a clip from the movie, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* that has a good representation of what a baptism might look like. *O Brother, Where Art Thou* is a movie about three prisoners who escape a chain gang to travel across the southern part of the country to dig up a fortune buried in an area about to be flooded by a government dam building project. The leader, Everett (George Clooney), seeks ways to pay for their expenses as they travel, which leads the group to a radio station where they record a song that rapidly becomes famous. The scene we will watch today is the scene that leads to the launching of their singing fame. The group is hiding out in the woods, eating wild gopher over a fire when a congregation appears at the edge of a river and a preacher starts baptizing the people who are lined up at the shore.

The scene starts at 17:05 (chapter 4 on DVD), when Everett says, "It's a fool that looks for logic in the chambers of the human heart," and ends at 21:07, when Everett, Pete and Delmar are in the car and Delmar says, "Pull over, Everett" (you will want to stop the clip immediately after Delmar says, "Everett."). This clip does have some swearing in it; you should watch the clip ahead of class to determine if it is swearing that your class can handle hearing. If you are concerned about the language, you can start the clip immediately following the swearing, which is where Delmar comes out of the river after being baptized (19:30 when Pete says, "Delmar's been saved"). If you skip the swearing and start the clip later, be prepared to describe the part of the clip they will not see. After you have played the clip, ask:

- What happens to Everett, Delmar and Pete when the congregation appears in the forest, singing? Describe what you think they are feeling as the congregation passes them and they are swept with the group to the riverside?
- Why does Delmar decide to be baptized? Why does Pete get baptized after Delmar decides to? Are these good/appropriate reasons to be baptized? Why or why not?
- Are Pete and Delmar's reasons for being baptized alike or different from a parent's decision to have a baby baptized,

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or a youth or adult's decision to be baptized in our church?
How are they alike or different?

- Epiphany is a time of revelation. God revealed the infant Jesus to the wise men as the son of God and the Messiah. When John baptized Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended upon him and revealed to all who witnessed the baptism that God considered Jesus to be his Beloved Son. When Jesus was transfigured, the true meaning of his message was revealed to his disciples. These are all Epiphany stories. When Delmar was baptized, did he have any revelations? Did baptism appear to change his life? What about Pete?
- What is Everett's overall attitude toward baptism? Have you ever met anyone that had this attitude toward Christianity, religion or baptism in particular? Why do you think they feel this way?
- Do you think the depiction of baptism in this scene could actually be representative of how a church might perform baptisms? What elements were realistic? Why do you think so? What elements were not? Why do you think so?
- Everett starts the scene out by explaining to his friend that "It's a fool that looks for logic in the chambers of the heart." What does this statement mean? Based on this statement, is Everett a fool or smart when it comes to baptism? Why? (this can be argued either way- however, Everett could be considered a fool because he tries to convince his newly baptized friends in a logical fashion why baptism is pointless).
- Immediately following this clip (If you don't mind hearing the same swear words, you can continue the clip to 22:23 where Tommy says "Well, I wasn't using it"), Everett stops to pick up a hitch hiker, Tommy Johnson. Everett explains that his two friends just got saved, and then the hitch hiker says that he just sold his soul to the devil. Everett laughs and jokingly replies, "It appears that I'm the only one here who remains unaffiliated!" What does it mean to be unaffiliated? (he does not worship God or Satan)
- If Everett was a real person and you knew him, what would you say to him about his lack of affiliation with God? Is it something that should concern you when you meet people who don't know or believe in God?
- When Tommy explains he has sold his soul to the devil in order to gain the skill of guitar playing so that he can make money, Delmar and Pete are very concerned about

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Tommy's soul. Tommy replies that he is not concerned, for he says, "I'm not using it." Do you think this is a true statement? Do we use our souls while we live on Earth? What do our souls do for us? Are they valuable? Why?

- What are ways that we could be convinced that our souls are not worth much?
- What is the importance of baptism in your life?

Closing

(7-10 minutes)

Close with prayer.

Week 4: Christ the Teacher and Leader

Focus Reading

John 1:29-42

Opener

(15-20 minutes)

A Game of Choices

During the week before class, gather inexpensive items that students would like to receive. You need as many items as there are youth. Items could be things like an extra large candy bar, a fancy matchbox car, an individual size bottle of Mountain Dew (or the favored soft drink of your group of youth) or \$1 or \$2 gift certificates from a fast food restaurant. Gift wrap each of the items then place them in the center of the classroom for youth to see when they arrive.

On a piece of paper, write down numbers equivalent to the number of youth you have or the number of teams you will have. For example, if you have 5 youth in class, write the numbers 1 through 5 on individual slips of paper.

For large classes:

If you have a large class find small items that come in sets, so that you can split the class into teams and each team will receive one of the sets of items- for instance, a 4-pack of gum can be an item that a team of 4 could receive as a gift. Make sure you buy sets that have at least the number of items in them as there will be students in a team. In other words, don't buy a 3-pack of socks and set up teams of 4 members. Gift wrap the sets of items (for example, the 4-pack of gum would be wrapped as one gift, not four gifts) then place them in the center of the classroom for youth to see when they arrive.

When youth arrive and have gotten settled, have them count off into the number of teams you want to use. So if you have 15 youth and want to create 5 teams of three, have youth go around the room counting off, one, two, three, one, two, three, until everyone has counted themselves. Have the class reseal themselves so that they are sitting with their teams.

On separate slips of paper, write down numbers equivalent to the number of youth you have or the number of teams you have. For example, if you have 5 youth or 5 teams in class, write the numbers 1

Supplies

Small, inexpensive items or sets of items (see directions for opener game) that have been gift wrapped.

Slips of paper to write numbers on for a drawing.

Movie clip from
The Mask of Zorro

through 5 on individual slips of paper. Put the slips in a cup and have each youth (or if you are using teams, one person from each team) draw a number.

The person or team that draws the number 1 gets to be the first to choose a gift from the gift pile. When they choose their gift, they get to open it (tell them not to eat it if it is food, because the game isn't over until everyone has chosen). Then, the person/team who has the number 2 gets to choose; however, they get to choose either one of the presents that has not been opened or else they can choose the gift that person/team number 1 has opened.

If they choose a gift from the pile, once they have opened it, the person/team who drew the number 3 gets to choose a gift. If they choose to take the gift person/team number 1 has already opened, then number 1 gets to choose a gift from the gift pile and opens a new gift. After number 1 has opened his or her gift, the person or team who drew the number 3 gets to choose between the gifts that 1 and 2 have opened or else number 3 can choose a new gift from the pile and open it. If they choose a new gift, when it has been opened, play goes to person/team number 4. If 3 chooses the gifts that either 1 or 2 have already opened, then the person/team that loses their gift to person/team 3 gets to either choose from the other opened gifts or they can open a new gift from the pile, and then play goes to number 4.

Continue until every number has made a choice of a new gift or an opened gift. The only rule in this gift exchange is that you cannot choose a gift that got taken from you in the same round. So if number 3 chooses number 1's gift, number 1 cannot take back the gift number 3 chose; they must choose either number 2's gift or else a new gift from the pile. If you have having a lot of gift trading going on, you can limit the choosing by only allowing a gift to be taken from someone else twice in the game. After it has moved to a third set of hands, it stays with that individual/team.

Another way to play this game for a small group is to have each youth bring in a small, generic gift that is gift wrapped and have them place their gifts in the center of the class (this saves you from having to do the buying and the wrapping).

The Heart of the Lesson**(10 minutes)**

In today's Bible reading, John tells his followers who Jesus is. When they see Jesus, they follow him. Jesus asks them why they are following and they call him "teacher." In other words, they want to become his students; to learn from him. They also call him the Anointed.

Read the passage, John 1:29-42 out loud, then ask:

- What are people choosing to do in this passage? (they choose to follow Jesus) Why do they choose to do this?
- What do people call Jesus? (The Anointed, Rabbi)

The people call Jesus by terms we might translate today as Professor and King/President. People *choose* to follow Jesus. They come to him of their own free will. Think about all the stories you remember—Jesus doesn't have to bribe or persuade. He tells things as they are and leaves it up to the people listening to choose whether or not they will believe. He can do this because he is considered an authority (a rabbi/teacher or the Anointed One/King) Do we do things like this today? Do we give up everything in order to follow someone we believe has all the answers we might be seeking?

- What is something at which you want to excel? What do you do in order to become the best at this thing? (you practice, you find someone or a place to teach you)
- Have you or has anyone you have known, excelled at something and because they had a special talent or ability, they chose to go to train with a particular person or at a particular school? Describe the situation.
- Does it matter who the someone or the place is? (Yes! You wouldn't go to Martha Stewart to learn about computer technology, you would go to Bill Gates or one of Bill Gates' protégés.)
-

If you wanted to excel at something, you'd find someone who could teach you all there was to know. You'd also look for someone who was successful at what he or she did, because success is an indication of knowledge and experience.

Wrapping It Up**(15 minutes)**

In the movie, *The Mask of Zorro*, a young man (Antonio Banderas)

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has witnessed the assassination of his brother by an army captain, Captain Love. When he is not getting drunk, Alejandro yearns for revenge. He crosses paths with an older man, who it turns out was once the legendary Zorro. Zorro, also seeking revenge, takes Alejandro on and trains him to become the next Zorro. In the clip we see today, Zorro meets Alejandro and takes him to Zorro's old training grounds. The clip starts at 33:32 where Alejandro is sitting at a table in a market area, drinking, and ends at 40:55 when Zorro finishes the first sword training lesson, saying, "Time for a drink." After the clip has played, ask:

- What is it that Alejandro wants more than anything? What is he willing to do to achieve his goal?
- Why does Alejandro choose to follow an obviously crippled old man?
- What are some things Zorro does that prove to Alejandro that Zorro is a great teacher to learn from?
- Zorro invites Alejandro to learn from him, saying, "When the people is ready, the master will appear." Do you think this saying could also be applied to those who follow(ed) Christ? Explain your answer.
- While Zorro's and Jesus' purposes are quite different, they both are master teachers; not only do they have mastery in a subject, but they also have certain personality characteristics that draw people to want to learn from them. What are some of those characteristics?
- Zorro has special knowledge that Alejandro wants. What is the special knowledge that Jesus was willing to teach that people considered important and wanted to learn?
- Do you think that we today would consider this to be essential knowledge? Why or why not?
- Do you know of anyone who would consider what Jesus was teaching to be so important that they would give up their jobs or careers to follow him and learn? Do you think the kind of person who would do this would have a particular talent or ability? If you said yes, what would that unique characteristic be?

Closing

(2-3 minutes)

We started class today with a game about choices. Discuss the following before closing with a prayer that asks for guidance in making good choices in our lives:

- When you were choosing your gift at the beginning of class

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- today, which choice did you find easier to make; choosing the gift-wrapped item or the item you could already see?
- How is this process of choosing similar to the choices we must make in our daily lives?
 - Why is choosing the unknown so much harder than choosing what we know?
 - When the disciples chose to follow Jesus, were they making an easy or difficult choice? Why?

Week 5: Christ and Our Demons

Focus Reading

Mark 1:21-28

The Heart of the Lesson (25 minutes)

Today we're going to open right up with the heart of the lesson. Begin the class by reading today's focus reading, Mark 1:21-28.

After reading, begin a discussion with:

- This story talks about Jesus casting out demons who were possessing a man. Whether or not we believe demonic spirits exist and actually possess people today, we can all talk about the figurative demons that possess us. What are some things in your life that possess you? (some examples: the TV, the computer, video games, drugs, smoking, drinking, family members who are emotionally needy)
- What does it mean to be possessed by something or someone? (The thing or person doing the possessing exerts control over you, to the extent that it changes how you would normally behave or think)

So let's look at what a demon possession and casting out might look like...

Today's clip is from the second movie in The Lord of the Ring series, *The Two Towers*. In this clip, Gandalf finds Theoden, King of Rohan, being possessed by Saruman, an evil wizard. Gandalf casts Saruman out and returns Theoden to his true state of being before the possession.

The clip starts at 57:15 when Gandalf and company (Gimli the dwarf, Legolas the elf and Aragorn the future king) are blocked at the entrance to the throne room and asked to hand over their weapons and ends at 1:04:00, when Aragorn says "Hail, Theoden, King and kneels. Theoden turns away from the crowd. (Please preview this scene; Gandalf's friends do a very efficient, if somewhat brutal, job of clearing a path for Gandalf to approach Theoden unhindered. If you think the fight scene is too much, cue the clip up to just after the majority of the fighting is over and Gandalf has made it to stand in front of Theoden and begins talking to him/Saruman).

Supplies

Video clip from
*The Lord of the
Rings: The Two
Towers*

Space for Notes

After the clip, ask:

- How is this clip like Jesus casting out the demon in today's story?
- How did Theoden, who appears to be a very strong man under normal circumstances, allow himself to be possessed? (encourage them to comment on the fact that Wormtongue was there to keep poisoning Theoden's mind)
- How is Theoden's possession similar to people today who are possessed by their own forms of demons? (for instance, people who are possessed by a drug habit change the group of people they hang out with; they start hanging out with other users)
- What are the physical signs of Theoden's possession? How are those signs similar to signs of people today who are possessed by their own forms of demons? (Body changes- weight loss, lack of care of hair, appearance, changes in attitude, in how one thinks about oneself; aging)
- How hard is it to return to who you once were once you have been possessed or become addicted to something?
- Jesus and Gandalf both made it clear that in order to free oneself from being possessed, a person needs help from someone who has strength to resist the demon. Do you think this is true for all instances where people are trying to fight their personal demons? Why or why not?
- What do you think makes it possible for Theoden to resist being possessed by his demons again? (he is surrounded by family, people who love him, and Gandalf, who will help him to remain true to himself). When you have given something up that was bad for you, or witnessed someone else giving up an addiction, what did you or that person do in order to stay free of the possession?

Wrapping It Up (10 minutes)

We all face demons of some sort or another, although in our culture these are not usually labeled "demons." Instead we call them obsessions, addictions or other words that describe something that controls our lives. Take a few minutes to let youth think about how their lives are affected by "demons." Hand out paper and pencils or pens to each student, then take them through the following writing exercise:

- On a piece of paper, write down one demon that you are

Space For Notes

- wrestling with. If you can't think of one, think of a demon someone you love or care for is wrestling with.
- Then, write down what changes this possession have made in your life or in that person's life.
 - Finally, write down what you can do to free yourself or help that person free him-herself and stay free of the demon. Remember, it takes a person of authority to free someone from possession– you should not expect to be able to handle it by yourself. It is a community effort to free a person from a possession and to help that person remain free, so do not feel solely responsible or expect that you can handle something on your own. Only Jesus (or in the fictional world, an all powerful wizard like Gandalf) can cast out demons with such authority that they never come back. Until Jesus reappears, we have to help each other overcome our demons.

Closing (2-3 minutes)

Close with prayer.

Week 6: Choosing Christ

Focus Reading

Matthew 4:12-23

Opener

(3-5 minutes)

Before class, make copies of the paragraph found at the end of the lesson. Cut the page in half so that one copy of the paragraph is on each half sheet. As youth arrive, hand out copies of the non-punctuated paragraph found at the end of this lesson and have youth fill in the punctuation. Tell them that there are no wrong ways to punctuate the passage. After youth have added punctuation, have a volunteer read their punctuated paragraph aloud. When that person is done, ask if anyone had the passage punctuated differently, and then have them read their version. The youth will find that depending upon where the periods are placed, the paragraph either talks about Jesus or Satan. As we begin a new year, it is good to think about how easy it is to go in one direction or the other, if we aren't paying attention to what we do and how we act and whether we live out our beliefs.

Take a few moments to review what we have discussed over the last three weeks. We started the season of Epiphany by talking about the wise men and how Jesus was revealed to them as the son of God. Then we looked at baptism, which is how individuals respond to the revelation that God exists and that Jesus Christ is the way to God. Last week we talked about how Jesus was revealed to be a master teacher and people chose to follow him. Today, we're going to talk about why people follow Jesus. Ask the class,

- Why would people choose to follow Jesus?

The Heart of the Lesson

(10 minutes)

Begin the lesson by reading the Bible passage for today, Matthew 4:12-23. There are two important topics to discuss today; what it means to repent, and why people choose to follow Christ. In this passage, we read that Jesus began appearing throughout the Galilee, sharing the good news that the kingdom of God is near, and that people still have time to repent and believe in God. When translating this word from the Greek, a better way to translate "repent" is to say "change one's mind." Repentance calls for more than just an "I'm sorry." It calls for a change in the way the person repenting thinks about and does things. It requires a change in behavior, in thought, in attitude. For that change, God will forgive us our sins.

Supplies

Movie clip from
*The American
President*

Copies of Who Is It? unpunctuated paragraph found at end of the lesson (there are two copies of the paragraph on a page). Please note that this paragraph is not my creation, but was first introduced to me in the 1980's. Despite much research, the author of this piece remains unknown.

Have youth discuss Jesus' command to repent. Ask them:

- Can you think of any times in your lives when you've said "I'm sorry," but didn't really mean it?
- Have there been times when you were genuinely sorry for something you did and you have never done it again?
- When Jesus tells us to "repent," what exactly are we supposed to be repenting?

Wrapping It Up (20 minutes)

One of the most important pieces of today's passage is that people chose to follow Jesus. They left their jobs and their families, their way of life, to follow him. What does this say about the character and personality of Jesus, that people would give up all that they know in order to follow someone into the unknown? What does it take to be that kind of a person?

Let's look at a movie clip this morning that will help us to consider the qualities such a leader might need to have. In the movie, *The American President*, President Andrew Sheppard (Michael Douglas) falls in love with a lobbyist, Sydney Ellen Wade, while preparing to run for a second term in office. In trying to keep the relationship developing between himself and Sydney separate from his job as president, he leaves himself open for attack from opposing politician, Bob Rumsfeld (Richard Dreyfus). Rumsfeld accuses Andy Sheppard of moral and ethical character flaws, which Andy refuses to respond to. As a result, Sheppard begins to lose the confidence of the American people, as indicated by drastic drops in polls regarding confidence in the president. In this scene, the president goes before the press corps and gives a speech about the character a president must have. Just before this clip, Sheppard and his best friend (Martin Sheen), who also happens to be the White House Chief of Staff, have an argument about whether Sheppard should continue to try to ignore Rumsfeld or engage in a character debate, which Sheppard believed was only stooping to Rumsfeld's level.

The clip begins at 1:37:47, where President Sheppard is pacing the halls of the White House 48 hours before the State of the Union speech, trying to decide what he should do. The clip ends at 1:44:00, when the president walks out of a press meeting, having given a speech about character and what he will do as president. After you have played the clip, ask:

- After watching this clip, do you think people would want Andrew Sheppard to serve another term as president? Why or why not?
- What are some of the qualities that Andrew Sheppard shows that make him a strong leader people will want to follow?
- Do you agree or disagree with the statement Sheppard makes about leaders when he says “Being president is entirely about character”? Explain your answer.
- What are some characteristics that both Sheppard and Jesus Christ share?
- What characteristics would you look for in a good leader?
- Why do people follow Jesus? Is your answer any different than the answer you gave at the beginning of class? If so, why?

Closing

(3-5 minutes)

Close with prayer.

Space For Notes

Who Is It?

He is a young man yet experienced in vice and wickedness he is never found in opposing the works of iniquity he takes delight in the downfall of his neighbors he never rejoices in the prosperity of his fellow-creatures he is always ready to assist in destroying the peace of society he takes no pleasure in serving the Lord he is uncommonly diligent in sowing discord among his friends and acquaintances he takes no pride in laboring to promote the cause of Christianity he has not been negligent in endeavoring to tear down the church he makes no effort to subdue his evil passions he strives hard to build up Satan's kingdom he lends no aid to the support of the gospel among the heathen he contributes largely to the devil he will never go to heaven he must go where he will receive his just reward.

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Week 7: Standing Firm—Jesus faces Temptation

Focus Reading

Psalm 27
Mark 9:2-9
Matthew 4:1-11

Opener (10 minutes)

Open by having youth play a few rounds of the card game, “21.” If you have a large group, split the class into groups of 4 or 5. One person will be the dealer in each group. The dealer deals out one card, face down, to each player, and then another card, face up, on top of the face down cards. The players look at their cards, add up the totals of their cards and decide whether to stand firm or have the dealer give them another card. If they want another card, they tell the dealer, “Hit me.” The dealer will deal the card face up. The players can ask to be hit with a card as many times as they want until they go over 21 points, and then they are out. The goal is to reach 21 points without going over.

Face cards (Jack, Queen, King) are worth 11 points. Aces are equal either 1 or 10 points. All other cards are equal to the value of the number on the card. No Jokers in the deck, please!

After playing a few rounds, ask youth:

- Was it difficult to stand firm when they you under 21 points but did not ask for any more cards?
- Why is it so hard to stand firm when the future is unknown to you?

The Heart of the Lesson (15 minutes)

Today we’re going to talk about standing firm. This theme appears twice in Psalm 27. The first example of standing firm is in relation to standing firm in the face of the enemy. The second theme is standing firm in face of rejection. We will first focus on standing firm in the face of the enemy, and because we are nearing the end of the season of Epiphany, we will also glimpse ahead into Lent, and look at how Jesus stood firm.

Read aloud Psalm 27, and ask youth:

- What main ideas jumped out at you when you heard this Psalm?
(If you have a writing surface, such as a chalk board, dry erase

Supplies

Enough decks of cards for 1 deck per 4 youth.

Movie clip from the movie *Men in Black*

Music clip “New Day” by Avalon, found on such albums as *The Very Best of Avalon: Testify to Love*

Space for Notes

board or flip chart, write the themes down. You should have answers like, standing firm, standing up to enemies, to being rejected, having hope and faith in God, relying on God for strength to face the bad stuff.)

- How hard is it to stand firm in your convictions and beliefs when you feel like you are alone?

Today's clip is from the movie, *Men In Black*. In this short clip, Special agents K (Tommy Lee Jones) and J (Will Smith) are trying to save the world. They are waiting for an alien space craft to crash land after they shot at it, trying to bring it down before it left the planet. K, the older, more experienced agent, stands resolutely waiting for the ship to land, while J tries to stand firm beside him, but has to keep looking to K for reassurance that standing is better than running.

The clip starts at 1:19:09 (about halfway through Chapter 25 on DVD) with Agent K handing Agent J a large gun out of the trunk of the car, and ends at 1:21:30, when the alien starts to appear through the fog in the doorway of the crashed ship. You'll want to stop before the alien says anything more than "You idiots" because the alien is not handsome and becomes even less so when he steps out of his human disguise, and the language gets a little blue. Caution– the word "damn" is used in the portion of the clip you will show.

After the clip, ask the youth:

- How hard is it to stand firm when things are really not looking good?
- What are the convictions that keep K and J standing, waiting for the ship to land, instead of running for cover when it looks like the ship is going to land on them? (they have a job to do that can save the world-if they run, the enemy will win and the world is lost). How is their conviction like Jesus' conviction?
- How does this clip demonstrate the truths found in Psalm 27?
- Have you ever been in a position when you would have much preferred to let someone else deal with a situation, but you stood up and dealt with the problem instead? How did you feel afterwards? Did you feel alone, or did you feel supported by friends, family, God?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you were afraid,

but you moved through your fear and dealt with the situation? How did you feel afterwards? Did you feel alone, or did you feel God's presence in the midst of your fear?

Wrapping It Up (10 minutes)

Let's take a look at how Jesus dealt with standing firm in the face of the enemy. Read aloud the story of Jesus' temptation while in the desert for 40 days, found in Matthew 4:1-11. Before reading, ask the youth to listen for what the three temptations were that Jesus had to stand firm against as you read.

After you have read the story, ask

- What are the three temptations and why they might be temptations to Jesus? How did he withstand the temptations? (the three temptations can be translated as: the power to make food— to take care of those in need. The power or immortality—to never be hurt, to never die. The power of rule—to rule the world, which could mean that Jesus could save the world by being the ruler of the world.)
- How hard do you think it was for Jesus to stand firm against what Satan was offering him?

Closing (10-15 minutes)

We don't want to end Epiphany without recognizing the closing act of the season. Today's gospel is about the transfiguration, when Jesus goes up the mountain and is transfigured before his apostles' eyes. Moses and Elijah are standing with him, representing the law and the prophets of the old order, and then they disappear, leaving Jesus standing by himself, representing to his witnesses that he is the culmination of the old ways and beliefs. Jesus' way not only covers what the law and the prophets dictated; Jesus represents a new way, a new day.

Read today's gospel story, Mark 9:2-9, and then explain to the youth that with the end of Epiphany, we move into the beginning of Jesus' journey to death, resurrection and salvation of the world. With the transfiguration, a new world started. If you have time, close the lesson plying Avalon's song, "New Day." As always, it's good to have the lyrics available for the

youth, and they can be found at any lyric website on the internet, such as
<http://server1.lyricsondemand.com/a/avalonlyrics/newdaylyrics.html>

Week 8: The Transfiguration

Focus Reading

Matthew 17:1-9

2 Peter 1:16-21

Opener

(10-12 minutes)

Over the past month, we have talked about what it means to be a Christian by exploring stories that reveal to witnesses that Jesus is God's son. When the youth have arrived and gotten settled, ask them to share about a time when they were told something or realized something that was so profound it felt like it changed how they lived or thought about important things in life.

For example, when I was very young, I used to love tapioca pudding (it is a pudding that has lumps in it). One day, my brother (5 years older than me) told me that he couldn't believe I was actually eating tapioca pudding, because the lumps were actually fish eyes. My father and brother had gone fishing the day before and we had eaten the fish they caught for dinner that evening. It made sense to me that my mother had put the fish eyes in the pudding, since I saw the fish come out of the lake with eyes, but they appeared at the table without their heads, scales or tails. Ever since that day, I have not been able to stand even the sight of tapioca.

On the other end of the profound scale, I can remember the incredible sense of God's presence I felt when I witnessed a dear friend of mine holding her newborn baby for the first time, after she had undergone an emergency open heart surgery within hours of delivering her baby. Witnessing how precious life is heightened my awareness of my responsibility as a parent and how valuable life is.

Give youth time to share their own experiences of revelation that they have witnessed in their lives.

The Heart of the Lesson

(15 minutes)

Today's lesson is about the last revelation that God made to show people who Jesus really was. Invite one of the youth to read today's Bible passage, Matthew 17:1-9. When you have finished reading the passage, ask:

Supplies

Movie clip from
Hook

- This passage is referred to as the Transfiguration of Jesus. What does it mean to be transfigured, or to undergo a metamorphosis? What is the transfiguration that Jesus experiences?
- What did the disciples hear and see? Why are Moses and Elijah seen with Jesus? (Jesus was meant to fulfill the law and the prophets. Moses represents the law, since he brought the 10 Commandments to Israel, and Elijah represents the prophets, since he is also the prophet who ascended to heaven rather than died, because he was believed to be the prophet who would return before the Messiah to prepare the way.)
- Did the disciples' attitudes or understandings of who Jesus was change or stay the same after the experience they witnessed? Explain your conclusion.
- Does it make a difference in how you believe something when you see something firsthand, as opposed to hearing about it from someone else?

The transfiguration of Jesus is one of those moments that permanently change the lives of the people who witnessed it. Before the transfiguration, the disciples had an understanding of who Jesus was, but it was based on what they had seen him do, what they had heard him preach, and what they had heard through others, such as John the Baptist, who had witnessed the touch of God at Jesus' baptism. The transfiguration changed the disciples. It gave them irrefutable evidence that this person they had chosen to follow was much greater than just a political king who would change their immediate lives on earth.

While there can not be a more powerful experience than witnessing proof of the truth of Jesus Christ and his message, we all experience moments of transfiguration or metamorphosis in our lives. When we do experience these moments, they not only change us, but they have an impact on the people around us as well.

Today's movie clip, from the movie, *Hook*, shows a before and after shot of a man who experiences a transfiguring moment in his life. Peter Banning (Robin Williams), a lawyer, a pirate in the business world, goes to England with his wife and children, only to have his two children kidnapped in the night. He must rescue his children, but in order to do so, he has to remember his life before he was Peter Banning—his life as a child, as the leader of a group

of orphaned boys in a land called Never Never Land. The movie is about the transfiguration Peter Banning undergoes as he remembers his life as Peter Pan.

The clip we will watch is actually two scenes. The first scene is Peter upon his arrival in Never Never Land; the second scene is when Peter finds his happy thought, which transforms him into Peter Pan.

The first clip starts at 56:15 (midway through Chapter 10 on DVD), when Peter Banning says “Oh my, a wall” as he tries to ride a skate board to escape the horde of boys chasing him who are sure he is an intruder—an adult and therefore a pirate. The scene ends at 1:00:45 when Tinker Bell (Julia Roberts) shouts, “Yeah! Come on, give him a chance!” and smiles.

After the first scene plays, ask:

- If you had met Peter Banning in this scene, would you think that he could inspire people to follow him? Why or why not?
- Why does Peter step over the line that Rufio draws?
- Why are the Lost Boys so indecisive as to whether to follow Peter?
- When the youngest Lost Boy looks into Peter’s face and sees beneath the surface appearance, he recognizes something in Peter that is proof enough for him that Peter Banning is indeed Peter Pan. Have you ever recognized something within yourself that just isn’t visible on the surface? Is there a part of you that is hidden beneath the mask you wear for the world? Do you see special traits in others that they are hiding from the rest of the world?
- Do we hide parts of ourselves from the world, or does the world just pretend not to see? Why do you think this is so?
- Had Jesus hidden part of himself from the world, or did the world choose not to see him for who he really was? What do you think was the purpose of Jesus’ transfiguration scene?

Wrapping It Up (15 minutes)

We’ve seen a before picture of Peter Banning, lawyer; now lets see the after shot of Peter Banning, Peter Pan. Just before this scene, Peter realizes that in order to save his children, he has to

become Peter Pan, with all the fantastical powers that Peter Pan had. However, in order to remember how to be Peter Pan, he has to find the happy thought that would unlock to memories of all that he could be and do. He eventually finds his happy thought; the birth of his son, and in the process, he transforms from the angry, stressed, staid lawyer into the happy, playful, imaginative Peter Pan. He returns to the lost boys, who, unlike the last time he appeared before them, recognize him immediately.

The scene starts at 1:41:08 (Chapter 21 on DVD) when one of the boys yells, "Pan's back!" and rings the alarm bell and ends at 1:43:28 when the Lost Boys dance. After the clip plays, ask:

- If you had met Peter Banning in this scene, would you think that he could inspire people to follow him? Why or why not?
- When Peter draws the line in the sand, the reaction of the boys is much different than in the previous clip we watched. What is the difference? Why is there a difference?
- How has Peter changed, now that the part of him he has been hiding from the world is allowed to be a visible, active part of his life?
- How does this change in Peter affect the Lost Boys?
- In this scene Rufio gives Peter his sword back. Rufio had been given the sword before Peter had left as a boy to go live with Wendy and grow up to marry Moira, Wendy's granddaughter. The sword was a symbol that Rufio would lead the Lost Boys and protect them from harm. What happens in this scene that causes Rufio to give up his sword? (This is the power of witnessing a transfiguration!)
- Read 2 Peter 1:16-21 out loud. How has Peter's witnessing of Jesus' transfiguration changed him? How have his beliefs and actions changed since seeing Jesus transfigured?
- Do you think witnessing Jesus' transfiguration changed the growth and development of Christianity? Do you think, if the disciples had not seen Jesus transfigured, that Christianity would have grown and spread as it did after Christ's death, resurrection and ascension to heaven? Explain your answer.
- Can you recall a time where you witnessed something profound that happened to change someone's life? How did it affect you? Or did it affect you?

- Can reading and hearing the stories of Jesus' life and the things that have happened in people's lives as a result of their faith cause a change in you and me? Why and How?

Closing

(5 minutes)

Close with prayer.

Space For Notes

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