

Acceptance

Pages A-1 through A-4
Fireside Catholic Youth Bible - NEXT

Song: No Longer Strangers
Words and Music by: David Haas

CD 1, Track 1
FCYB Music CDs

Materials Needed

Fireside Catholic Youth Bible – NEXT, FCYB Music CDs, CD player, poster paper for Setting the Stage, poster board, markers, paper, pens/pencils, paper shredder for the “Dealing with Obstacles to Acceptance” Large Group Discussion.

Setting the Stage

Before the session begins, create and display a poster with the words: WE ARE ONE IN THE HOUSE OF GOD! As the teens are gathering, have the song “*No Longer Strangers*” by David Hass playing in the background. CD 1, Track 1 of the FCYB Music CDs.

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Have three teens proclaim the following Scripture verses found on page A-2 in the **Fireside Catholic Youth Bible – NEXT** out loud -- pausing briefly between each reading.

Romans 15:7

1 Samuel 16:7

James 5:9

Large Group Activity – “The Peace of Acceptance” (10 minutes)

Draw a circle divided into three sections (to make a peace sign) on a markerboard, chalkboard or poster board. As you say the words of the phrases below, write each in a different section of the divided circle.

- * Acceptance of Others
- * Acceptance of Self
- * Acceptance of God’s Will for You

Ask the teens, “What shape have we made?” (Answer: *A peace sign.*) Suggest to them that if we practice these three aspects of acceptance, we will find peace. Draw an outer ring around the peace sign and write the word PEACE in it.

Large Group Activity – “Dealing with Obstacles to Acceptance” (15 minutes)

Give each teen a pen/pencil and paper. Instruct them to write down things about other people that become obstacles to accepting them. These “things” could be purely prejudicial in nature like smoking, obesity, race, homosexuality, or more likely just little things that annoy them.

After everyone has had time to complete their list, give the teens an opportunity to share with the group one thing from their list. Have each teen come forward and “shred” their list in a paper shredder, symbolizing our destroying these prejudices and “pet peeves” and our willingness to try to accept all people as God does.

Perhaps accepting yourself is the hardest thing to do. Instruct the teens to draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper. On one side of the paper, have them write down words that describe how they see themselves, things they like about themselves and things they don't. (The good, the bad and the ugly.) On the other side of the paper, have the teens write words that describe how God sees them. You may simply want to dictate these words or phrases: "Child of God;" "Adopted Son/Daughter of The Father;" "Redeemed, Loved, Accepted Just the Way You Are;" "Created in God's Image," etc. Have the teens discuss what "accepting yourself" means to them. Ask them, "Is it hard for us to accept that God made us just the way we are?" "Can you believe in your heart that God loves you unconditionally?" Encourage them to share their thoughts.

Large Group Discussion – "Accepting God's Will" (15 minutes)

Read the first two paragraphs of the Your Decision/Your Reward article on page A-1 in the **Fireside Catholic Youth Bible – NEXT**. Then, discuss the teens' answers to these questions:

What are some things in your life that you find difficult that you cannot change?

Do you want to blame God or someone else for the "crosses" you have to bear?

What would happen if you accepted these challenges as God's will in your life?

Do you think God can make good things come out of bad things?

How could God use these challenges in your life for good - for His honor and glory?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Heavenly Father, just as Paul taught the Romans, empower us to welcome others into our lives for Your glory. Help us to see You in each other and in everyone we meet. Open our hearts and minds to accept others for who they are. Help us to keep from judging or complaining. Guide us when we are lost, comfort us when we are alone and inspire us to work each day in Your name to accept each other and become one in building the "City of God." In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Bed Thinks

When you go to bed tonight ask yourself . . .

What is one new thing I can do tomorrow to demonstrate acceptance of God's will in my life?

(Type this message on a small piece of paper and give to each teen as they leave.)

Acceptance

Pages A-5 through A-8
Fireside Catholic Youth Bible - NEXT

Song: No Longer Strangers
Words and Music by: David Haas

CD 1, Track 1
FCYB Music CDs

Materials Needed

Fireside Catholic Youth Bible – NEXT, FCYB Music CDs, CD player, two copies of the text for the What Jesus Did Large Group Activity. Give the teens that are going to perform this skit the script in advance so they can practice ahead of time. Schedule the parents and child that will be participating in the What Jesus Said Large Group Discussion well in advance of the session.

Setting the Stage

As the teens are gathering, have the song “No Longer Strangers” by David Haas playing in the background. CD1, Track 1 of the FCYB Music CDs.

Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Proclaim together Luke 4:43 at the top of page A-5 in the **Fireside Catholic Youth Bible – NEXT**. Then, ask the teens to spend a few minutes in silent prayer focusing on Jesus’ sense of “purpose” in His life. After a minute or two of silence, encourage each teen to change the focus of their prayer to what they think God’s purpose is for them. Ask the teens to share their perspectives.

What Jesus Did

Large Group Activity/Skit and Reflection – “A Conversation with Jesus” (15 minutes)

Ask two teens to dramatize this skit for the group.

Teen: But Jesus, my life is so boring, nothing exciting ever happens to me. You were always doing something awesome. Oh, how I wish you would use me in an extraordinary way.

Jesus: Wait a minute! Do you think my life on earth was always one miraculous event after another?

Teen: Well, yes. You were always performing miracles or preaching to large crowds or challenging the Jewish leaders.

Jesus: Well, not always. At least that’s not how I view my public ministry. I saw it as waking up each day with a willingness to accept whatever came my way. Some days were “action-packed” but most days were just slow and easy. But, just like in your life, each day brought an opportunity to bring people closer to my Father. That was my purpose.

Teen: And is that what being Your disciple is all about, to give honor to God by imitating You even in the routineness of my life?

After reading the What Jesus Did article on page A-5 in the **Fireside Catholic Youth Bible – NEXT**, ask the teens to share what it means to think of “doing everyday things” as a way of living the Gospel. Discuss how doing this gives us opportunities as a disciples of Christ.

What Jesus Said

Large Group Discussion - “A Visit by a Special Guest” (15 minutes)

Have teens read the What Jesus Said article on page A-6 in the **Fireside Catholic Youth Bible – NEXT**. Invite some parents to bring their infant child to your session. Introduce the baby and his/her family to the group by telling them a few details about the baby’s family and his/her birth. Then lead the group in a discussion of what the teens think Jesus meant when he said “whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.” Discuss how the acceptance and dependence a baby demonstrates to his/her parents is related to our dependence on God in discipleship. After the infant and his/her parents leave, discuss the teens’ answers to these questions:

What does “dependence” on God look like in the life of a teen? What does it look like in your life?

How does acceptance of Jesus as your savior lead to dependence on Him?

Putting My Faith Into Action

Small Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Divide the teens into groups of two or three to discuss the To Make or Break and Tips for Talking entries on page A-7 in the **Fireside Catholic Youth Bible – NEXT**.

Break – Share how you approach the small sacrifices you must make as a member of your family.

Tips for Talking – Share how you could make the people you don’t normally associate with or the people you simply encounter each day a part of your life in some small way.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Remind the teens that the first thing we must accept as disciples of Christ is the very salvation that He won for us through His death and resurrection. Then, pray together . . .

A Disciple’s Prayer for Acceptance

Dearest Jesus, the salvation You have won for us is more than we can imagine.

Help us to accept this gift. May it be reflected to others in every word

we say and every move we make. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Mindful in the Morning

When you wake up every morning, before you get out of bed . . .

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you accept whatever comes your way today.

Ask Him to open your eyes to the opportunities you are given

to bring yourself and others closer to God.

(Type this message on a small piece of paper and give to each teen as they leave.)