

I AM

The Gospel of John, our identity in Christ

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

This night will provide a basic background and overview of the Gospel of John. More specifically, this night will help teens encounter the person of Christ as he describes himself and how those descriptions call us to change how we think of ourselves and how we reflect the Gospel to those around us.

Life Night at a Glance

This night has a different feel than the rest of the nights in this semester. Contrasting the lies of the world with the Truth of God, this night will give teens a glimpse into how God sees them. The first half of the night will deal with the labels, achievements and lies on which teens often base their identities. The second half of the night will use the Gospel of John (specifically the “I AM” statements) to help the teens understand that their real identity is based in God.

In order to make this night have an impact, the teens will need to be challenged to be real and honest. The Core team must set a tone of honesty and prayer throughout the night. Take this outline as a starting point in your planning and adapt it to meet the needs of your teens.

Environment

The environment for the evening is not complex, but will be set up in a way that will be functional. In the front of the room you will need a screen and projector set up for the video. Around the perimeter of the room, you will need seven enormously oversized name tag labels. These can be created with poster or butcher paper. Try to round the corners, create a border for each, write “Hello...” on the top left corner of each, maybe even write “Avery” or some other brand name just outside the label boundary. In each of the huge name tags, write the seven “I AM” statements of Jesus that are found in the Gospel of John (see below). In addition to the huge name tags for Jesus, have smaller (8 ½ x 11) name tag labels in different colors hung around the room. These should have the common labels or titles that teens give to themselves (i.e. I am an athlete, I am a nerd, I am popular, I am a musician, etc.). The room should be literally covered with tons of these name tags.

I Am statements for the 7 large name tags:

- I am the bread of life (Jn.6:35)
- I am the light of the world (Jn.8:12)
- I am the gate (Jn.10:9)
- I am the good shepherd (Jn.10:11)
- I am the resurrection (Jn.11:25)
- I am the way and the truth and the life (Jn.14:6)
- I am the true vine (Jn.15:1)

GATHER *25 Minutes*

Welcome and Introductions (3 min)

Start the night by welcoming all the teens and introducing all the teens who are at Life Night for the first time.

Small Group Division Game (2 min)

In order for the small groups to work, it is important for the teens to be in groups with random teens rather than their closest friends. Groups can be divided in a number of ways, but here is one suggestion to divide up small groups:

The youth minister will have all the teens stand and then calls out several descriptive statements. If that statement applies to a teen they will have to move a certain amount of steps in a certain direction. For example the youth minister will say, “if you are wearing sandals move three steps to your right” and then “if you have been on a date in the last month, move four steps forward.” Make the descriptive statements funny in order to engage the teens. Say at least eight statements to ensure the all the teens are mixed up. At that point, have the teens get into small groups with the people who they are standing next to. Have a Core member join each group.

Small Group Discussion (20 min)

Once the teens are in small groups, the Core member will have the teens introduce themselves and play a short game of “Two Truths and a Lie.” In this game each person will say three statements about themselves - two of them are true and one is false. It is the job of the rest of the group to guess which one is the lie. This game will help the teens feel more comfortable and ready to share

CATECHISM REFERENCES:

#205-211
 #355-361
 #459
 #590
 #2466

SCRIPTURES:

Gospel of John
 Exodus 3:13-15

honestly. After the game, the Core member will lead a discussion based on the following questions:

1. What words would your friends use to describe you? What about your family?
2. Finish this statement: I am... (have each teen finish that statement in a couple different ways and explain why they said what they said).

PROCLAIM *22 minutes*

Bring the teens back together and thank them for their honesty. The Proclaim of this night is broken into two parts with a video in the middle. The two talks do not have to be done by the same person. The first talk should be more of a testimony, while the second is more of a teaching. But the goal of both is for the teens to understand that our true identity can only be found in Christ.

Identity Talk - Part 1 (10 min)

- Ask a couple of the teens to share how they finished the statement, "I am..."
- The reality is we use all kinds of words to describe ourselves. Many times we build our identity around what we do or the people we hang around. These things aren't bad or wrong - but are they truly who we are? When we place all our identity in these things, what happens when those abilities or people go away?
- Let's look a little closer, what do you see when you look in the mirror. How do you describe yourself when no one is around? Many times we build our identities around lies that we believe about ourselves such as "I am alone, I am ugly, I am a failure..."
- (Share a personal story about how misplaced identity affects has affected your life)
- What if I told you there is a bigger Truth behind who you are? (Use this question to transition into the video and to leave the teens wanting to hear the good news)

I AM video (2 min)

This video can be found on Video Support #1

Identity Talk - Part 2 (10 min)

(See teaching on page 55.)

BREAK *20 minutes***I AM groups** (20 min)

After the teaching, read the full text of each of the seven "I AM" statements of Christ. (Jn.6:35, Jn. 8:12, Jn.10:9, Jn.10:11, Jn.11:25, Jn.14:6, Jn.15:1). Have the teens choose the one that stands out to them the most (for whatever reason) and then go and stand by that "name tag" hanging on the wall.

Assign at least one of the Core members to each of the seven groups (the rest of the Core team should divide themselves among the groups). Once the teens have made their selection the groups will need to spread out and find their own space. The groups will be different sizes, but here is the basic flow for each of the groups:

- Begin with prayer and encourage the teens to be real and honest.
- Ask a couple of teens to share why they choose this statement.
- Ask a couple of different teens to share what they think this statement reveals about God and our relationship with Him.
- After the teens have shared, lead the teens in a time of prayer. Remind them that knowing Christ will help us know who we truly are. This prayer will be a time for the teens to let God finish the "I AM" statement for them. Ask the teens to take a few moments in silence and simply ask God how He would describe them. There is no right or wrong answer - simply be quiet and let God tell you what He sees when He looks at you.

I AM

The Gospel of John, our identity in Christ

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

- After the time of silent prayer, ask if any teens would like to share what they heard from God in prayer. Encourage the teens to keep asking this question in prayer even if they didn't get an "answer" this time.

SEND *8 Minutes*

Closing Prayer (8 min)

As the teens come back together from their groups, play the song "Who Am I?" by Casting Crowns. Keep a prayerful mood in the room. The youth minister will wrap up the night by calling on the intercession of Mary who called herself, "the handmaid of the Lord." Pray that she would help us know who we are in her Son. Close with the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

Community Connection:

- Have one of the older teens give the first part of the Proclaim.
- Invite a group of parents to intercede for the teens during the Life Night

Making it Work:

- Instead of breaking into groups for the Break portion of the night, you can keep the group together for a large group discussion and then allow the teens a time of silent prayer.
- Create a prayer card with the seven "I AM" statements that the teens can take with them at the end of the night.

I AM

The Gospel of John, our identity in Christ

TEACHING

The question of tonight is “who are you?” But here’s the reality, just as you can’t really know about a painting or sculpture without knowing about the artist, we cannot know who we are without knowing the God that created us.

This semester we are looking at Scripture in order to know God and, in turn, know ourselves better. Tonight we are going to focus in on the Gospel of John.

John presents a different point of view from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). His seems to go into detail that the others left out, and talks about things from a more abstract point of view, concentrating more on the symbols, sacraments and theology of the words and actions of Christ.

John was written around 90 A.D. by the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” It is interesting that John never mentions himself in the Gospel. This self-omission is usually seen as an act of humility and an intention to keep the focus on Christ. John is usually held to be a young man when he followed Christ as a disciple and apostle. If he was twenty years old when the events in the life of Christ happened, then he would be eighty years old when he wrote his own Gospel. Able to look at the other three Gospels, John wrote with a clear intent on what he needed to say and why.

There are some disagreements among scholars who study ancient texts as to if John actually wrote the Gospel. John 19:35 states in a pretty straightforward manner that John wrote the Gospel, and this tradition has been held by the Church for 2000 years.

John starts the Gospel with a beautiful opening that reminds us of the language of the beginning of Genesis, referring to Christ as the Word of God. In Exodus, God speaks to Moses and reveals his name as “I AM.” This name could never be spoken by a Jewish person; to say the name would be to claim that you were God. The first letters of the name, “I AM WHO AM” in Hebrew were made into the name “Yahweh.”

Transition from video into teaching on the Gospel of John

For more information on the Gospel of John, please see the note for the night on the Synoptic Gospels.

“He who saw it has borne witness - his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth - that you also may believe.” - **John 19:35**

CCC #203-205, 230-231

I AM

The Gospel of John, our identity in Christ

TEACHING

Why is all of this important? Well, John was a devout Jew and he writes that seven times during the course of his ministry, Jesus made a statement in Hebrew that included the name of God, "I AM." This was punishable by death among the Jewish people under the law of Moses.

Essentially, John is writing to the Jewish Christians, reinforcing the Messianic claims Christ made. While John was writing, Jerusalem had been completely destroyed by the Romans 20 years before and the persecution of Christians made it difficult to celebrate the faith publicly. Even the Mass became a criminal act!

The Roman misunderstood the Mass and assumed that the Christians were cannibals since they spoke of eating the "Body of Christ," and this made the persecution worse. At this time, it would be easy for Christians to read into the Gospels and start to cut corners in order to make their faith less controversial.

John's Gospel makes it clear that this is not what Christ wanted. John's Gospel is clearly sacramental. Christ outlines each of the sacraments, and gives a particular emphasis to the Eucharist. John also makes it clear that John the Baptist was not the Messiah.

John becomes specific about the time in Jesus' ministry when certain things happen, using phrases such as "the next day" and speaking about Jewish feasts during certain times of the year.

John's Gospel is often seen as mystical, as if there is more to understand than what is written on the surface. While this is true of all the Gospels, simply reading the first chapter will reveal to the reader that with John it is even more so. If we wanted, we could probably spend an entire semester just on this Gospel!

John's use of the miracles in the life of Christ is deliberate. He places the miracle of the loaves and fishes before the miracle of the walking on water, and situates both of those before the teaching of Christ that he is the Bread of Life

CCC #212-213

"So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me." - **John 8:28**

CCC #1114-1116

CCC #547-553, 567

"Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out" - **John 12:31**

I AM

The Gospel of John, our identity in Christ

TEACHING

and we need to consume him in order to reach Heaven. This deliberate order shows the power of Christ over bread, nature and his own body. The climax that is the teaching referred to as the “Bread of Life Discourse” brings all of that together for the Jewish Christian. Of course Christ is present in the bread! He could control both!

John’s witness regarding the Last Supper, the Passion and the Resurrection is vital to the early Christians. Here is the beloved eyewitness sharing his recollections. Concentrating on John 17, one can’t help but notice the priestly language of Christ as he prays to the Father regarding the Apostles.

The Passion, Death and Resurrection that follows is short, almost a summary with highlights that can be filled in by the details found in the other Gospels. John’s emphasis seems to be on the primacy of Peter, the Kingship of Christ in Heaven and the fulfillment of the Jewish promise of a Messiah. The Resurrection is presented as the final evidence so that we may “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing we might have life in His name.”

Let’s go back to the name God gives himself in Exodus - “I AM.” Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus uses that phrase to describe himself a lot. Each time we read “I am” we need to remember that Jesus is telling us that he is God. There are seven specific “I AM” statements that we are going to look at tonight to see what they are say about God and about us.

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.”

- John 17:16-19

John 20:31

I AM

The Gospel of John, our identity in Christ

CHECKLIST

Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

Give copies of the Life Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture and Catechism references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.

Get the planning team together for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the teens are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Then using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Life Night to meet the needs of the teens and the parish. Create a detailed outline with any changes and/or adjustments.

Assign the person responsible for each part of the Life Night:

Environment _____

Introductions / Small Group _____

Talk (Part 1 & 2) _____

I AM video _____

I AM group discussion & prayer _____

Closing Prayer _____

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

Turn in a detailed outline of the Life Night to the youth minister. Allow youth minister to give feedback and make any necessary changes.

Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to be responsible for collecting and/or purchasing the materials needed.

Decide the people that will be doing the following things. Make sure they have a copy of the script and/or teaching outline. Inform them of any practices and/or deadlines.

Talk Part 1 _____

Talk Part 2 _____

Core to lead each I AM group (7) _____

Week of the Life Night:

Written outline of the teaching is given to the youth minister and practiced.

Run a dress rehearsal of the Life Night.

Create environment and collect needed supplies

E-mail entire Core team an overview of the night and small group questions.

Day of the Life Night:

Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.

Set up audio and video. Test the video to make sure both picture and sound work.

Walk the entire Core team through the Life Night. Make sure all transitions are ready and everyone knows their roles.

Pray! Pray for the teens attending the Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.