

# **Youth Strike 2010**

## **Junior High Small Group Sessions**

### **Portable Faith**

Focus Statement: Wherever we are in Life and Faith, Jesus invites us to follow.

#### **Overview of Material for Small Group Sessions**

Each session is divided into three sections:

**Plug In** – During this section, the kids will play a game designed to help them get to know each other better and to help them feel comfortable in the group.

**Recharge** – Every portable device needs occasional charging to maintain effectiveness. One way that we recharge our faith is by connecting to God through the Bible. During this section, a scripture passage will be read, explored and discussed. Discussion questions are listed, but these should be used as a guide. Encourage youth to ask questions also.

**Take It With You** – The activities in this section are designed to help youth think about how they can take this information and apply it to their lives.

#### **A Few Notes for Leaders:**

*Keep track of time.* The Plug In activities are fun and important, but you need to make sure that you leave enough time for the Bible Study and life application activities, too.

*Remember the purpose of the questions.* Many of the questions are asked, not for the purpose of eliciting right or wrong answers, but rather to facilitate discussion. Be open to further exploring ideas that may be brought up.

*Do not be afraid of silence!* Sometimes when you ask a question, it is tempting to answer it yourself or rush on to the next question if no one answers right away. If you do so, you might miss out on giving someone else the opportunity to answer. Youth need time to think before they answer.

*Respect everyone's answers.* As leaders it is important that you model respectful listening and encourage youth to respect one another.

## Session 1

### Portable Faith – Following the Rules

Supplies needed for this session: Bibles, a piece of paper (scrap paper is fine)
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#### Plug In

Activity: Sort it out

Have the youth stand up. Tell them that you are going to give them a classification (for example, shortest to tallest), and they are to put themselves in the correct order without speaking. Once everyone is in order, check to see how they did. Then have each youth introduce himself or herself to the person in front of them and behind them.

*Notes: The first person in line and the last person in line should introduce themselves to each other. If more than one youth has the same answer, youth with that answer may line up in any order in the appropriate place in line.*

Use the following classifications for this activity:

- shortest to tallest
- number of people in your family (from smallest number to largest number)
- number of people from your church that came to youth strike (from smallest to largest number)
- birthday (from January to December)
- number of portable electronic devices that your family owns (e.g. cell phones, iPods, portable DVD players, laptop computers, etc.)

Have the youth look around and introduce themselves to anyone that they did not meet during this activity.

#### Recharge

Activity: Exploring Scripture – Psalm 1

Say: Life has a lot of rules. It seems that wherever you are, there are rules to be followed.

As a group, have the youth think of rules that are to be followed:

- at home
- at school
- in their community (laws)
- at Youth Strike

Ask: What is the purpose of these rules? Do the rules make it easier or harder to know how to behave? How and Why? Is it always easy to follow all of the rules? Why or why not?

Say: Our scripture passage for this session concerns following God's rules or laws.

Have the youth find Psalm 1 in their Bibles. Have one or more volunteers read the psalm out loud.

Ask: What does this psalm say about God's laws? According to this psalm, who follows God's rules? Who does not follow God's law? What are God's laws or rules? *Note: If the youth have difficulty thinking of God's rules, refer them to the following scriptures: Exodus 20:1-17, Matthew 22:34-40, Matthew 28:19-20.* Which of God's rules are sometimes challenging for you to obey? What makes it difficult to follow these rules?

Say: Fortunately, God loves us even when we have difficulty following God's law. However, as we live as Christians, we continue trying to get it right. God's law helps us know how we are to live as we take our faith into the world.

### **Take It With You**

#### Activity: Sentence Stories

Have the youth sit in a circle. Wad up one piece of paper into a ball.

Say: Keeping God's laws or rules in mind, think for a moment what life would be like if nobody followed God's law. We are going to tell a story titled "Life without God's Law". I will throw this paper wad to someone and that person will begin our story with one sentence. He or she will then throw the paper wad to someone else, who will add one more sentence. After everyone has added to our story at least once, we will finish our story.

Throw the paper wad to one of the youth and begin creating a story.

Ask: How many of you would like to live in the world we just described? Why or why not?

Say: Now think for a moment what life would be like if everyone followed God's law. We are now going to use the same method to create a story titled "The World According to God's Law". Throw the paper wad to one of the youth and begin creating a story.

Have the youth stand up. Teach the youth the following rhythm: four knee pats, four claps, five snaps, four stomps. Add the Youth Strike 2010 Focus Statement, allowing one syllable per pat, clap, snap or stomp. (Rhythm changes are indicated by a /.) Wherever we / are in Life and / Faith, Jesus invites / us to follow.

Ask for a youth volunteer to close the session with a prayer.

*or*

Close the session with the following prayer: Loving God, thank you for the gift of your laws that help us know how we are to live. Be with us in our attempt to follow your law. Amen.

## Session 2

### Portable Faith –

Supplies needed for this session: Bibles, paper, pencils
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#### Plug In

##### Activity: Boom Chica Boom

Have the youth sit in a circle.

Teach the group the call and response below by asking them to repeat after you. Say it through two to three times for practice, using your name for the last line.

*Note to leader: There is no melody, just say it in rhythm. Use your own name in the last line for the practices.*

After a few times through, stop and explain that this time you will say someone else's name.

That person will then become the leader, and name another person at the end who will become the leader, and so forth.

Play the game until everyone has had an opportunity to be leader and/or the group tires of it.

Optional: If your group is up to it, choose one (or a combination) of the following variations!

- Add actions: boom = pat knees; chica = two snaps; rocka = two claps.
- Silly Voices: Allow the leader to lead in a silly voice of their choice (e.g. baby voice, squeaky voice, British accent, etc.) and have the players repeat in kind.
- Speedy Chica Boom: Challenge the youth to get faster on each subsequent round.

Leader: Boom chica boom

Players: Boom chica boom

Leader: I said-a boom chica boom

Players: I said-a boom chica boom

Leader: Boom chica rocka chica rocka chicka boom

Players: Boom chica rocka chica rocka chicka boom

Leader: Uh huh

Players: Uh huh

Leader: Alright

Players: Alright

Leader: One more time

Players: One more time

Leader: [Name]

Players: [Name]

#### Recharge

##### Activity: Exploring Scripture – Jeremiah 31:31-34

Say: You'll remember that during the last session we talked about rules and laws.

Ask: Why do you follow the rules? Are there different reasons for why you follow different rules, such as the rules at school and the rules at home?

Say: Our scripture for this session talks about why we follow God's laws.

Have the youth find Jeremiah 31:31-34 in their Bibles. Have a volunteer read the verses out loud.

Say: Let's take a look at this passage one verse at a time.

Have a volunteer read Jeremiah 31:31.

Ask: What is a covenant? (a promise) Who is God making this covenant with? (God's people)

Why is it a new covenant? Can you think of a covenant God made with Noah? (never to destroy

the earth by flood again) Can you think of a covenant God made with Abraham? (that he would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky)

Have a volunteer read Jeremiah 31:32.

Ask: What was the covenant God made with Moses and the people of Israel? (to be their God and they would be God's people) How did Israel break the covenant? (they broke God's Laws many times) What do you think God means by saying, "though I was their husband"? (This question applies if you are using the NRSV translation. God is using a metaphor to talk about being in relationship. In those days, society was patriarchal and the husband was the master of the family.)

Have a volunteer read Jeremiah 31:33.

Say: Christians believe that Jesus is the fulfillment of the new covenant discussed here.

Ask: What does it mean to have the law within us and written on our hearts? (God knows us intimately. We follow God's Laws because God loves us and we love God.)

Have a volunteer read Jeremiah 31:34.

Ask: Under the new covenant, what happens when we break God's law? (God forgives us, always loves us and gives us another chance.) Remembering God's laws that we discussed last session, why do you follow God's law? How does it make you feel to know that when you do something wrong, God has forgiven you even before you ask for forgiveness?

Say: We have the reassurance that God loves us always no matter what. Because we know of God's amazing love for us, and because we love God, we try to live as God wants us to.

### **Take It With You**

#### Activity: Flying Promises

Give each youth a piece of paper.

Say: God has promised to always love us and to forgive us when we do something wrong. A covenant is an agreement between two parties, in this case God and God's people. (That would be us.)

Invite each youth to think about what he or she promises God and to write it on the piece of paper. (They do not need to write their name on the paper.)

Have each youth fold his or her paper into a paper airplane.

When all of the planes have been made, have the youth throw their paper airplanes and then retrieve one that is not their own.

*Note to leader: You might need to set some parameters on where the planes may be thrown, depending on your location.*

When all the planes have been retrieved, have each youth unfold the plane she or he retrieved and share the promise with the group.

Have the youth stand up. Remind the youth of the rhythm learned last session (see session 1) and say the Youth Strike 2010 Focus Statement together: Wherever we / are in Life and / Faith, Jesus invites / us to follow.

Ask for a youth volunteer to close the session with a prayer.

*or*

Close the session with the following prayer: God, thank you for loving us always. And thank you for the gift of your son Jesus who showed us a better way to live. Amen.

## Session 3

### Portable Faith – Remember the Source

Supplies needed for this session: Bibles
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#### Plug In

##### Activity: Two Truths and a Wish

Instruct each youth to think of three statements about himself or herself. Two statements should be true. The third statement should be something that the youth wishes to be true but is not (yet). For example if I wished that I could travel to the Grand Canyon, I might say, “I went to the Grand Canyon last year on vacation.”

Let each youth share her or his three statements with the group, presenting the statements in any order.

Have the group vote on which statement is the wish.

After the vote is in, have the youth who shared reveal the right answer.

Give each person an opportunity to share.

#### Recharge

##### Activity: Exploring Scripture – Matthew 4:1-11

Ask: What do you think of when you hear the name Jesus? What do you think of when you hear the words devil or Satan?

Say: Satan, the devil or the tempter are names used to describe the presence of evil in the world. Our scripture for this session tells of an interaction between Jesus and the devil (or Satan depending on the Biblical translation used). In Matthew, this story follows the story of Jesus’ baptism. After Jesus was baptized, he went into the wilderness to spend some time alone with God. During this time, he fasted or went without food. Jews fasted as a way to show that they were sorry for their sins. Jesus probably fasted to show his dedication to God.

Have a volunteer read Matthew 4:1-11.

Ask: What was the devil trying to get Jesus to do? How did Jesus respond? When Jesus says, “it is written”, where are these words written? (in the Torah, the scriptures)

Say: No matter what the devil said to tempt him, Jesus remembered God’s power and love and was able to resist temptation.

Ask: What is temptation?

Say: Think of a time when you have been tempted to do something you knew you were not supposed to do, but ended up doing the right thing.

Ask: What kept you from giving in to temptation?

Say: Remember that no matter where you go, God is with you. There is nowhere that we can go where God is not already there. Just as God helped Jesus resist temptation, God can help you, too. When you are tempted, remember God’s love and God’s laws. Try not to let the devil win. But remember, when you do mess up, God loves you anyway.

#### Take It With You

##### Activity: Resisting Temptation

Say: Each one of us faces temptation. It may be someone you know trying to get you to help them cheat on a test. Or it may be that little voice inside your head that is trying to talk you into lying to your parents about whether you have homework because you want them to let you go

out with a friend instead. Every day each one of us must try to resist temptation and do what God wants us to do. I am going to read you a scenario. Listen carefully, because then I am going to ask you some questions!

Read: You are at the grocery store with three of your friends buying an after school snack. You are having fun thinking up unusual food combinations such as broccoli and chocolate sauce. You finally decide to buy a bag of popcorn and some M&M's. While you are checking out, you see one of your friends put a pack of gum in his pocket without paying for it.

Ask: What are some possible things that you could do in this situation? Which action or actions would be the easiest? Which action or actions would be consistent with God's laws? What might help you do the right thing?

Divide the youth into 3 or 4 small groups. Instruct each small group to think of a scenario which involves a difficult choice. Let the groups know that they will present their scenario to the whole group.

*Note to leaders: The groups do not need to act out the scenario; they may simply describe it as you did. However, if you have some aspiring actors in your group, feel free to offer acting out the scenario as an option.*

Allow time for each group to decide on a scenario.

Have each small group present their scenario. After each small group shares, ask the four questions from earlier to the entire group. (What are some possible things that you could do in this situation? Which action or actions would be the easiest? Which action or actions would be consistent with God's laws? What might help you do the right thing?)

After all of the scenarios have been shared and discussed, say: Remember that when you don't know what to do, you can always ask God for help.

Have the youth stand up. Say the Youth Strike 2010 Focus Statement together using the rhythm learned previously. (See session 1.) Wherever we / are in Life and / Faith, Jesus invites / us to follow.

Ask for a youth volunteer to close the session with a prayer.

*or*

Close the session with the following prayer: Loving God, life is full of temptations. It isn't always easy to follow you and live as you want us to. Be with us. Help us. Thank you for loving us when we fall short. Help us to keep trying. Amen.

## Session 4

### Portable Faith – All Charged Up

Supplies needed for this session: Bibles; small pieces of heavy paper 2 ½ inches x 3 inches (3 x 5 index cards cut in half) – you will need 4 small cards for each youth; pencils or pens

#### Plug In

##### Activity: Pass the Clap

Have the youth stand in a circle.

Explain that you are going to pass a clap around the circle. The person who starts the clap will turn to the person on his or her left. These two people will make eye contact and clap; the goal is to clap at the same time. The second person will turn to the person on his or her left and pass the clap. The process will be repeated until the clap makes it around the circle.

Choose one person to begin the clap and pass it all the way around the circle.

Say: Now let's make it more interesting. Let's start a rhythm going and see if we can pass the clap in time with the rhythm.

Get the group started stomping in an even rhythm. Start with a fairly slow rhythm.

Once the rhythm is established, choose a person to start the clap. The two people who are clapping do not have to stomp. The rest of the group will keep the rhythm going. Encourage the youth to try to pass the clap in rhythm with the stomping.

Each time the clap has almost made it around the circle, say, "A little bit faster" and increase the speed of the stomping rhythm slightly.

See how fast you can stomp and still be successful in passing the clap in rhythm.

Optional: For an additional challenge, slow the rhythm back down and choose two people on opposite sides of the circle to start passing claps at the same time. Can you get three claps going around the circle at the same time?

#### Recharge

##### Activity: Exploring Scripture – Hebrews 4:12-16

Say: This is our last small group session. We have been talking about God's laws, God's promise to always love us and God's presence with us helping us to make good choices.

Have a volunteer read Hebrews 4:12-13.

Ask: How do these two verses make you feel? Does the tone of these two verses seem consistent with the messages of God's love and forgiveness that we have talked about? How does it make you feel to know that God knows all of your thoughts?

Say: Let's read these verses again, but this time we will continue through verse 16.

Have a volunteer read Hebrews 4:12-16.

Say: It used to be thought that the high priest was the only one who could talk to God directly and ask for forgiveness of sins. If you did something wrong, you would have to take a sacrifice to the high priest who would offer it to God and ask for forgiveness for you.

Ask: According to these verses, who is our high priest? (Jesus) Why is Jesus capable of sympathizing with us when we sin? (He was human and faced temptation just as we do.) Do we need a high priest to ask God for forgiveness for us? (No, we can pray directly to God anytime and anywhere.) How does verse 16 say that we should pray, or "approach the throne"? (with boldness) What does verse 16 assure us that God will give us? (grace and mercy)

Say: Jesus was the example of how we should live. He was human like we are. He prayed often to God, and we can, too. Jesus preached about God's love for us. That's a message that we can remember wherever we are.

### **Take It With You**

#### Activity: Portable Reminders

Say: The theme of Youth Strike 2010 is portable faith. Faith is something we can take with us everywhere we go, because we know that God is with us all the time.

Ask: Thinking about all the things we have talked about, what might you say to someone (or to yourself) to reassure them when they are facing temptation, feeling lonely, needing help or feeling far from God.

Have the group brainstorm statements of reassurance.

Give each youth four small cards and a pen or pencil.

Say: Choose two of the statements of reassurance that we have listed, or come up with two statements of reassurance on your own. Write one statement on one side of each of your four cards. Write your second statement on the other side of each card.

Allow time for writing.

Say: You have just created some portable faith reminders. You can read them whenever you need a little faith boost. You will take them with you when we are finished. You might carry one in your pocket, leave one in your sock drawer or place one in your school planner; it's up to you. Right now you have four identical faith reminders. After you leave our small group, find three junior high youth who were in different small groups and trade one of your cards for one of theirs. This way you will have four different faith reminders.

Have the youth stand up. Divide the youth into two groups and have the groups each form a line so that the two groups are facing one another. Have one group say the Youth Strike 2010 Focus Statement, using the rhythm and actions we have learned (see session 1). Have the second group respond in kind. Repeat this two more times, getting a little bit louder each time. Wherever we / are in Life and / Faith, Jesus invites / us to follow.

Say: Remember that there is nothing that you can't pray to God about and nothing that you can do that will ever make God stop loving you.

Close this session in prayer:

Before we pray, take a moment to think about your life. Think about times in your life when you struggle to follow God's laws. During the prayer, you will have an opportunity to ask God to help you with these areas.

Let's pray: Loving God, we thank you for every member of this group. We ask that you watch over each one of us and help us to remember to take our faith with us wherever we go.

Specifically, we ask you to help us when we are tempted not to follow your rules. We silently bring our specific challenges before you and ask for your help and guidance in our lives. (Allow a few moments for silent prayer.) Thank you for loving us. Thank you for your son Jesus. As we go our separate ways after Youth Strike, help us to continue to feel the connections that we have with each other through you. Amen.