

SUMMER

WORLDWIDE JOURNAL  
**MSJ**  
WEEKLY

■ Scott Adams: How to Get  
A Real Education  
■ Dressing for Dinner  
**TOMORROW**

**DOW JONES**  
DJA 12409.49 ▲ 17.26 -0.1%  
**NASDAQ**



★ ★ ★ ★ \$2.00

APRIL 8, 2011 - VOL. CCXIV NO. 81  
10-YR TREAS 3.52 ▲ 43.566  
STOXX 500

GOLD \$1,858.50 ▲ \$0.82  
OIL \$110.90 ▲ \$1.47  
EURO \$1.4164  
YEN 84.99

# Is God Really My Father?

According to the letter and people familiar with the matter, the likely changes would include raising from 499 the number of shareholders private companies can have without being required to open their books, and also making it easier for such companies to publicize share offerings. Such a shift would upend the normal path for fledgling companies to raise funds, in which

can participate. Instead, companies could remain private and raise money by selling shares to a wider number of investors. The move could potentially delay or derail IPOs by tech companies that want to grow but would rather avoid having to disclose vast amounts of information. It could also shut out many ordinary investors from one of the fastest-growing mar-

An SEC spokesman declining to comment. The possible changes could raise concerns about a dearth of IPOs on both sides of the worry could hurt American. Please turn to the

■ Portugal will need as much as \$120 billion under a bailout by the EU and the IMF, people familiar with the situation said. A9

■ Google and the U.S. are near a deal that would let the search giant's \$7.9 billion acquisition of Israeli data company ITA Software. B1

■ U.S. securities regulators are mulling toward easing decades-old constraints on share issues by privately held companies. A1

■ The Dow industrials pared losses after being down nearly 100 points, but the blue chips closed down 17.26 points, or 0.1%, at 12409.49. C5

■ Prosecutors are investigating whether a lawyer accused in an alleged insider-trading scheme passed on tips from a fourth law firm. C1

■ U.S. chain stores reported nearly 10% in blue-chip sales, or 0.1%, at 12409.49.

A GOP provision that would strip Planned Parenthood of federal funding was one issue holding up final agreement.

■ Libyan rebels said fighter jets bombed tanks readying for an attack on Gadhafi forces in what appeared to be a friendly fire strike by NATO. A11

■ The White House has frozen aid to Yemeni President Saleh after concluding he is no longer a reliable ally in the fight against al Qaeda. A11

■ Northeast Japan was rocked by a 7.1 magnitude earthquake, leaving two dead, knocking out power and raising alarms about nuclear-plant safety. A6

■ Japan is considering extending the evacuation zone around the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant as it reassesses radioactivity risks. A6

■ An antitank missile fired by Hamas militants hit an Israeli school bus. Israel retaliated with artillery and helicopter missiles.

■ Prosecutors are investigating whether a lawyer accused in an alleged insider-trading scheme passed on tips from a fourth law firm. C1



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Study 3.02

Nihil obstat: Benjamin Akers, STL

Imprimatur: Most Rev. James D. Conley, STL Apostolic Administrator of Denver

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Augustine Institute

6160 S. Syracuse Way, Suite 310

Greenwood Village, CO 80111

Information: 303-937-4420

YDisciple.org

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# Overview

“Who’s your daddy?” When we hear this phrase in popular culture today, it isn’t necessarily asking who our biological father is—it’s a slang phrase to express the domination of one individual over another. And unfortunately, that’s how many people today view fatherhood in general—one person’s domination over another. No wonder people often have a difficult time grasping the concept of God as our Father.

The mere mention of the word “Father” can stir a wide range of emotions: from security and joy to pain and resentment. Many teens today have fathers who are absent—either physically or emotionally. Some have never even met their biological fathers, and others may wish they hadn’t—because of the physical or emotional pain inflicted on them. How can these teens trust or believe in a Heavenly Father when their experience of their earthly fathers has been so negative?

In this study we’ll begin to unwrap the mystery surrounding God the Father by taking a look at our deeply imbedded image of what a “good” father is—and then we’ll learn how deeply God longs for us and waits for us to surrender our hearts to Him. No matter what teens’ experience with their fathers has been, they’ll be introduced to a Father who will never leave them—one who is waiting and watching for them with open and forgiving arms. Teens will discover that this Father can’t wait for them to come home to Him. And when they do...well, let the party begin!

Below is the outline for the study. Use the time allotments as a guideline, as the length of time spent on each section will vary from group to group. Also, be sure not to spend too much time on the first few scenes! The most fruitful discussion will come during later scenes.

Time	Section	Section Overview
10 minutes	Dig In 	Fatherhood in the Movies
5 minutes	Plant Seeds 	Lead the opening prayer to set up the theme of this study.
45 minutes	Sink Roots 	In this section, you will:  Scene 1—Explore the question “Is God really our Father?”  Scene 2—Recognize God as the Father of the Trinity.  Scene 3—Learn that God is our Father because He created us.  Scene 4—Discuss how God’s Fatherhood is revealed in Jesus.
15 minutes	Live It! 	Scene 5—Realize that God the Father is longing and waiting for us to turn our hearts to Him.
5 minutes to review	Take It to Prayer 	Review the prayer application. Encourage your group to reflect on this meditation during the week.
5 minutes	Bear Fruit 	Summarize the main points from the study, and encourage teens to set resolutions for how they can live out what they have learned.



# Dig In

10 Minutes

Use this opening activity to draw your teens into the study. It should help create an engaging atmosphere for active learning and participation. You'll be setting the tone for the session—so have fun with it!

**Supplies:** a TV or computer and the following video clips: “Ground Rules” from *Despicable Me* (clip found at these two sites: [youtube.com/watch?v=\\_dP7gkKXTs8](https://youtube.com/watch?v=_dP7gkKXTs8) or [wingclips.com/movie-clips/despicable-me/ground-rules](https://wingclips.com/movie-clips/despicable-me/ground-rules)) and “Cal’s Birthday” from *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs* (clip can be found at this site: [wingclips.com/movie-clips/cloudy-with-a-chance-of-meatballs/cals-birthday](https://wingclips.com/movie-clips/cloudy-with-a-chance-of-meatballs/cals-birthday))

## Fatherhood in the Movies

**SAY:** We all have a lot of ideas about what a “father” is or should be. Our opinions are formed by our personal experience, our observations about dads in our friends’ families, or the images we acquire from our favorite TV shows and movies. Let’s watch these movie clips from two animated movies that depict stereotypical takes on fatherhood.

*Play the clips from Despicable Me and Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs.*

**SAY:** These two movies show how many of us may view fatherhood—men who are rigid and have a lot of rules, and the softer side of fatherhood, men who love their children and would do anything for their happiness. Form groups of three or four and talk about the following questions:

1. When you hear the word “father,” what images or descriptions come to mind?
2. Why can the word “father” stir up all sorts of emotions for people?



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*Remember to check in with your teens about the Bear Fruit activities from the previous week. Did they try any of the suggested activities? Were any particularly challenging or did any questions come up? Ask if anyone wants to share their faith story, and then use the follow-up questions found in last week’s Bear Fruit section for discussion.*

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*This week's session could evoke a lot of emotions for the teens in your group, depending on their experience and/or relationship with their own fathers or father figures. Be sensitive to how teens are feeling, and provide understanding and guidance if they seem hesitant to embrace God the Father. Pray for your teens in the week prior to this study, that their hearts may be open to accepting and receiving God as their Father—no matter what their experiences have been with their earthly fathers.*

*For a bonus during this activity, serve teens spumoni ice cream while they watch the video clips and engage in discussion.*



## Plant Seeds

5 Minutes

Ask one of your teens to read the following quote from the Catechism. When he or she is done, lead the group in the Opening Prayer.



**READ:** “God’s almighty power is also fatherly, ‘I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters.’ (2 Corinthians 6:18)

God’s power is not arbitrary. “Nothing can be in God’s power which could not be in his just will or his wise intellect.” (St. Thomas Aquinas) –CCC 270-271 (simplified)



**Opening Prayer**

**PRAY:** Almighty God, my Eternal Father, from the fullness of my soul I adore you. I am deeply grateful that you have made me in your image and likeness, and that you ever hold me in your loving embrace. Direct me to love you with all my heart, with all my soul, and with my whole mind. Direct me to love all your children as I love myself. O, my Father, my soul longs to be united to you, and to rest in you forever. Have the Holy Spirit touch my soul so that I may love you as He does, and as your Beloved Son Jesus does.  
Amen.



# Sink Roots

45 Minutes

## Scene 1

*This clip will last approximately 2 minutes.*



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- We will be looking at one of the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith—the Fatherhood of God.
- Many people ask the question “Is God really our Father?”
- This can be a difficult subject because people often have strained relationships with their earthly fathers.
- We all have a deep, inner sense of what a “good” father should be.



*When the video pauses, have your teens take a moment to discuss the question on the screen.*

### 1. What makes a father a “good” father?

*After the discussion, start the video to begin the next scene.*



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*According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24 million children in America—one out of three—live in biological father-absent homes.*

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## Scene 2

*This clip will last approximately 2½ minutes.*



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Fundamentally, we call God “Father” because He is the Father of Jesus and the Father of the Trinity.
- The Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) is a community of Persons.
- In the Gospel of Mark, we read about Jesus’ baptism, when the whole Trinity is present.
- God’s Fatherhood is tied up in the fact that He is Jesus’ Father.
- Again in the Gospel of Mark, we see the entire Trinity present at the Transfiguration.



*When the video pauses, have your teens discuss the following question:*

### 1. What does God’s Fatherhood mean for us?



**READ: Genesis 5:3**

*After the discussion have teens read Genesis 5:3 in preparation for Scene 3. Then start the video to begin the next scene.*



### Scene 3

*This clip will last approximately 3½ minutes.*



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- God the Father is also God the Creator—He is our Father because He created us.
- The language used to describe Adam’s relationship with his son, Seth, is the same language used in Genesis when God created us. God really is our Father.
- We all understand what a good father ought to be because we have a deeply imbedded image of a good father—God.
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains that because of original sin we let our trust in the Creator die. We started to view God as a tyrant, someone who won’t let us do the things we want to do.
- Most people believe that there is a Deity, but the question of our world is whether or not God is good.



*When the video pauses, have teens discuss the following questions:*

- 1. Is God really good? Can God really be trusted? And can He be trusted as a Father?**
- 2. Why is it sometimes easy to doubt God’s goodness? Why is it sometimes difficult to trust God?**

*After the discussion, start the video to begin the next scene.*



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*For an Old Testament example of the intercessory role of the Queen Mother, check out 1 Kings 2:13–23. Ask your teens: Why did Adonijah go to Bathsheba instead of King Solomon with his request? Why do you think Solomon said “no”? What does this tell us about how we should pray?*

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## Scene 4

*This clip will last approximately 4 minutes.*



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Some people get confused by who God is: In the Old Testament, he seems vengeful, wrathful, and unforgiving. But in the New Testament, God seems loving, kind, and forgiving.
- Sometimes we just don't understand what God is up to. God is a loving Father—when you realize this, everything comes into perspective.
- God's Fatherhood isn't fully understood until Jesus comes to earth.
- When Jesus, God's Son, suffers and dies for us—this is when the depth of God's love for us is finally revealed.
- We can't fully know God as Father unless we know His Son.
- Jesus teaches His disciples to pray with the words "Our Father."
- Sin has hijacked our vision of fatherhood, but Jesus shows us how much God loves us as Father.



*Have the teens pray the Our Father together. Encourage them to pray slowly and attentively as if they were speaking these words for the first time.*

### **Our Father**

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.



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*If you'd like to express the Our Father prayer in a different way, play a CD or view a video of the prayer being sung by artists such as Andrea Bocelli or Charlotte Church. The vocal rendition of this prayer is beautiful and may speak to teens in a new and unique way.*

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**LEADER  
TIP**

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*The Catholic version of the “Our Father” prayer doesn’t contain the doxology: “For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours. Now and forever. Amen.” An organization called the United Bible Societies, representing 145 national bible societies, concur that the doxology doesn’t belong in the original manuscripts of St. Matthew’s gospel. In 1969, the doxology was added to the Catholic Mass, not as part of the “Our Father” prayer, but it follows shortly after. The people and the priest pray the “Our Father” together, then the priest prays, “Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.” Then the people and the priest pray the doxology.*

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Instruct the teens to answer the following questions, and then have them share and discuss their answers.

- 1. As you prayed the Our Father with your group, listening deeply to what you were saying, what new insights did you gain about what you were praying?**
- 2. What are some of the confusions you’ve had because of the differences between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament?**

*After the discussion, start the video to begin the next scene.*

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**LEADER  
TIP**

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*“The traditional expression ‘the Lord’s Prayer’—oratio Dominica — means that the prayer to our Father is taught and given to us by the Lord Jesus. The prayer that comes to us from Jesus is truly unique: It is ‘of the Lord.’ On the one hand, in the words of this prayer the only Son gives us the words the Father gave Him: He is the master of our prayer. On the other, as Word incarnate, he knows in his human heart the needs of his human brothers and sisters and reveals them to us: He is the model of our prayer.”—CCC 2765*

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# Live It!

15 Minutes

## Scene 5

This final clip will last approximately 4½ minutes.



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Scott revises the story of the Prodigal Son to illustrate that a “good” father who followed the traditions of Jesus’ time would have punished a rebellious son and sent him away.
- Unexpectedly, Jesus introduces a different kind of father—a father who is waiting and watching with anticipation for his son’s return, one who embraces and celebrates his son’s return, despite his poor choices in the past.
- God, the Father, is longing and waiting for us to return to Him with our hearts.
- God will run to us because He wants to take us back, no matter what we’ve done in the past.
- God is a Father who wants to give Himself completely to us.



Give teens a few minutes to answer the questions on their Teen Sheet. Then encourage them to share and discuss their responses.

1. In what ways are you like the Prodigal Son?
2. Are there areas of your life where the brokenness has become a roadblock for you to know and embrace God as your Father? How can you get past the roadblocks in your life?
3. In what ways do you need to return to God with your heart, and how can you accomplish this in the upcoming week?

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### LEADER TIP

*For extra impact, create a party atmosphere at the end of your time together. Have balloons, streamers, confetti, and serve cake and ice cream. Talk to teens about how it makes them feel to celebrate a joyous occasion or about how they feel when they see someone they haven’t seen in a long time. Then remind them that this is how God feels when we return our hearts to Him.*

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*“God asks little, but He gives much.”—Saint John Chrysostom*

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# Take It to Prayer

5 minutes



*This is an activity teens can do during the coming week to incorporate all that they have discussed in this session into an experience of prayer for themselves. Encourage them to take time during the next week to enter into this prayer experience.*

**SAY:** Today’s study gave us great insight into seeing and accepting God as our Heavenly Father. Jesus gave all of us an incredible gift when He taught His disciples how to pray, encouraging them to approach God in prayer as their Father.

**In the upcoming week, use these five steps to guide your daily prayer time. Write the steps down to use as a book marker, write them on a sticky note and post it near your bed, or use a dry erase marker to write them on your bathroom mirror as a daily reminder. As you come to God, our Father, in prayer, touch on each of these “P’s”:**

- Praise (honoring God)
- Purpose (seeking God’s will, not your own)
- Provision (trusting God to care for you)
- Pardon (asking for forgiveness)
- Protection (from temptation and evil)

*Be sure to take time before this study to try the exercise yourself. Your personal reflection will inspire the teens to experience this prayer on their own.*

*Consider modeling this type of prayer during your group time, either by leading teens in a prayer that touches on each of these steps or by providing examples and then offering a time of silence so teens can try it on their own.*

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# Bear Fruit

5 minutes



**Supplies:** Pen or pencil and a piece of paper for each teen

**SAY:** Our study today revealed that people often have a misperception about who God is. I'd like you to pair up with someone you don't know very well and find a spot where you can face each other and write on your piece of paper.

*Allow time for teens to find a partner, and then continue with the following instructions:*

**SAY:** I'm going to give you two minutes to observe your partner. Without speaking to them, I want you to write down as many things about them as you can guess, based on what you see. For example, if someone is wearing a New York Yankees hat, you may assume that he or she is a Yankees fan. **Remember: No talking!**

*Allow two minutes for teens to write down their observations. Then continue.*

**SAY:** Okay, now I'd like you to take turns sharing with your partners the assumptions you wrote down about them. Please let your partners know if their assumptions were true or false.

*Allow one minute for teens to share their assumptions.*

**SAY:** I'm guessing that not all of you made correct assumptions about your partners, based on just looking at their appearance. If you were able to talk with them, you would have learned more.

Many people assume God is like their biological fathers or like fathers they may have viewed on TV or in the movies. Or maybe they view God as unkind, based on an Old Testament Bible story that depicted God's consequences for poor choices. But just as we made wrong assumptions in this activity, we can't assume God is not a good father, based on past experiences or a first impression. When we take the time to build a relationship with God and trust Him, we begin to understand what a good Father our God is—a Father who loves us unconditionally, who wants to shower us with His love, and a Father who desires to give Himself to us completely.



*Encourage teens to try some of the additional Bear Fruit activities found on their Teen Sheet during the upcoming week.*



*Before you close the study with the Our Father, take a few minutes to find out what the teens need prayer for this week. Then invite everyone to hold all these intentions in their hearts.*

**SAY: As we close, now that we have a greater sense of what it means to know God as our Father, let's join together once again to pray the Our Father prayer:**

### **Our Father**

**PRAY: Our Father, Who art in Heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name;  
Thy kingdom come;  
Thy will be done  
on earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. Amen.**



*Here are some extra activities your teens can do later in the week. You may want to do these activities yourself, so that you can ask teens about them next time you are together.*

## **ADDITIONAL BEAR FRUIT IDEAS**

- Create a list of your favorite father figures—these may be people you know personally or characters depicted in books, TV shows, or movies. Write down the attributes that describe what makes these people good fathers. Then write down the things you learned this week that describe the goodness of God as our our Father.
- How can you be a representative of God's goodness this week? Find a concrete way that you can be an example of God's love to others. Consider mowing a neighbor's yard, helping a younger sibling with homework, buying lunch for the person behind you in the lunch line, or offering to help your school custodian pick up trash around the campus after school. Your example can be exactly what someone else may need to accept and embrace God as his or her Father.
- Jesus taught His disciples how to pray to God as our Father. Who can you teach about talking to God? Use the "5 P's" that we discussed in "Take It to Prayer" and teach a younger child, a friend, or maybe even a parent about these simple steps to help them build a stronger relationship with their Heavenly Father.

- Spend time this week getting to know your earthly father, grandfather, uncle, or father figure better. Ask him what his favorite activities were when he was your age. Ask what he dreamed of doing when he grew up. There's great wisdom in getting to know people from different generations and learning from all they have to share.
- God is our Father because He is God the Creator. Draw what you imagine the earth was like in those first days after God created it. Display the drawing in your room with a photo of you next to it as a reminder that your Heavenly Father created the earth and He created you.



A billboard on a road with the text "is God really real?". The billboard is rectangular with a white border and is mounted on a metal structure. The text is in a white, sans-serif font. The word "is" is small and positioned to the left of "God". "God" is the largest word. "really" is smaller and positioned below "God". "real?" is the largest word and positioned to the right of "really". The background of the billboard is a dark, textured color. The billboard is set against a background of a road with a dashed white line, trees, and a cloudy sky.

is **God**  
really **real?**

**Study 3.01**

Nihil obstat: Benjamin Akers, STL

Imprimatur: Most Rev. James D. Conley, STL Apostolic Administrator of Denver

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6160 S. Syracuse Way, Suite 310

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# Overview

“So who is this God guy, anyway?”

In our modern age of doubt and skepticism, it’s no surprise that many teens are confused about God. Media personalities, political candidates, and even school teachers constantly saturate youth with falsehoods about God’s existence, the origins of the universe, and the nature of faith. When it comes to helping teens discover the truth about God, the culture is working against us.







Teens are on the front lines of this cultural battle over God. And that’s why it’s crucial to equip them with the timeless truths of the Catholic faith and tradition, so that they might grow in their knowledge and love of God and become confident defenders of the faith and witnesses of the truth.

In this study we’ll cover a few of the most common questions teens (and adults, for that matter) wonder about: God’s existence, the problem of human suffering, and faith. We’ll look at proofs for God’s existence—intellectual proofs, such as the argument from causality, and “in-the-flesh” proofs, such as the life of Blessed Chiara Luce Badano. And we’ll tackle the question of faith, seeing that it’s not just a “warm, fuzzy feeling,” but a courageous response to God’s gift of grace.

The topics you’re about to cover are big ones. It’s important that you, as the discipleship leader, have an idea of where your teens stand on these questions. Some of your group members may struggle with belief in God or the idea of human suffering. Other teens may not struggle with these issues themselves but may have close friends or family members who do. Be sensitive to your teens, listen to their questions, and take opportunities to lead and teach.

May God bless you and your teens as you continue your discipleship journey!

Review the outline for the Bible study below. Use the time allotment as a guideline, as the length of time spent on each section will vary from group to group. Also, be sure not to spend too much time on the first few scenes! The most fruitful discussion will come during later scenes.

Time	Section	Section Overview
10 minutes	Dig In 	Introduce the session with a game of “Two Truths and a Lie.”
5 minutes	Plant Seeds 	Read <i>Hebrews 11:1</i> and lead the opening prayer to set up the theme of this study.
45 minutes	Sink Roots 	In this section, you will:  Scene 1—Explore the meaning and consequences of atheism.  Scene 2—Examine three arguments for the existence of God.  Scene 3—Discuss how pain and suffering cause people to doubt God’s existence.  Scene 4—Learn how saints bear witness to God through their lives.
15 minutes	Live It! 	Scene 5—Wrestle with the reality of faith as a decision.  Using the questions from the video, discuss how we can choose faith in the midst of challenges.
5 minutes to review	Take It to Prayer 	Review the prayer application. Encourage your group to reflect on this meditation during the week.
5 minutes	Bear Fruit 	Summarize the main points from the study, and encourage teens to set resolutions for how they can live out what they have learned.



# Dig In

10 Minutes

Use this opening activity to draw your teens...study. It should help create an engaging atmosphere for active learning and participation. You'll be setting the tone for the session—so have fun with it!

*Start this session with the activity below.*



## Two Truths and a Lie

**Supplies:** Sticky notes, pens or pencils

**SAY:** In today's study we'll tackle the question of God's existence. This question is neither easy nor new; people have argued over the existence of God for thousands of years, and many continue to wrestle with it today. One might think about the question in terms of truth and falsehood: Is it true or false that God exists? To get our minds going, let's first see if we can figure out what's true and false about one another.

*Give each teen a sticky note. Have each of them write three statements about him/herself that other members of the group may not know. Two statements should be true and the other should be false.*

*Have teens take turns reading their statements aloud while the rest of the group tries to guess which statements are true and which are false. After everyone has had a turn, wrap things up with a quick discussion. How did your teens determine which statements were true?*



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***Be prepared to demonstrate how the game works by first revealing two truths and one lie about yourself before the game begins. Then have teens try to guess which thing you revealed is the lie.***

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**1) When have you struggled to find the truth about something or someone in your life?**

**2) Did you eventually arrive at a conclusion? If so, how were you able to do so?**

**SAY:** It's not always easy to discern the truth, especially when it comes to something about God, without concrete, visible proof. But as we'll see today, God does make His existence known to us—we just have to know what to look for. And when we become passionately convinced that God is real, we will desire nothing more than to share this good news with the world.



# Plant Seeds

5 Minutes



**READ:** Hebrews 11:1



**SAY:** Let us pray.

## Opening Prayer

**PRAY:** Father in heaven, we pray to You, our good and gracious God. We ask that You guide this study, showing us Your presence and Your love. Help us to see Your hand in all that we do. Keep us faithful to You as we guide others into Your holy presence. Let us worship You in spirit and truth, as convicted individuals bound by Your endless love and grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



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*A 2004 survey by the CIA in “The World Factbook” estimates about 12.5% of the world’s population are non-religious, and about 2.4% are atheists. If time allows, reiterate this information to your teens. Then discuss the difference between being an atheist and non-religious. How might a non-religious person be considered a practical atheist?*

*Baal, the god of fire, storm, fertility, and life, should have been able to bring rain and provide water for the people. Nevertheless, they experienced a severe drought for over three years. When Elijah drenched the sacrifice with precious, scarce water, he did it to humiliate Baal and emphasize the enormity of God’s power. Only a miracle from God could burn the soaked sacrifice.*

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# Sink Roots

45 Minutes

## Scene 1

*This clip will last about 3 minutes.*



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Atheism is a growing trend in our culture.
- Despite this trend, the CIA reports that less than 3% of people on earth don't believe in God.
- People have a natural sense that there has to be a "creator" or "maker."
- The complexity of life disproves the theory that life originated from an accident.
- People desire to believe in God; it gives them a sense of hope.
- Faith in God helps people answer some of life's most puzzling questions.



**READ: 1 Kings 18:22-24, 27, 32-39**



*When the video pauses, have a teen read 1 Kings 18:22, 23, 27, 33-39 aloud while everyone else follows along. Then discuss the following questions:*

- 1. What do these verses tell us about God?**
- 2. Do you think you could have had the kind of trust in God that Elijah did?**

*After the discussion, start the video to begin the next scene.*



## Scene 2

This clip will last about 4 minutes.

Use the following page to take notes about the Arguments for God, and encourage teens to take notes on their Teen Sheet.



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- The Argument from Design: Order and beauty in the world imply an intelligent creator (see CCC 32).
- Wisdom 13:1: For all men who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know Him who exists.
- The Argument from Causality: Everything is here because of something else. This leads to the problem of “Infinite Regress”—nothing can breathe life into itself, at some point, there has to be a cause.
- The Argument from Your Heart: For every need, there is something to fill it (see CCC 27).



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*“The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.”—CCC 27*

*“The world: Starting from movement, becoming, contingency, and the world’s order and beauty, one can come to knowledge of God as the origin and the end of the universe.”—CCC 32*

*The Big Bang Theory is based on a cosmological model that proposes that the universe began with a big bang. According to this theory, the release of hot and dense matter caused the universe to expand rapidly and incessantly.*

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# ARGUMENTS FOR GOD

## DESIGN:

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## CAUSALITY:

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## YOUR HEART:

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*According to Webster's Dictionary, infinite regress is "a causal relationship transmitted through an indefinite number of terms in a series with no term that begins the causal chain." Ask your teens to imagine an infinite regress—betcha they can't!*

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*Pause the video, then lead teens through a role-play activity: Have the teens form pairs and practice giving the three arguments for God's existence, with one person playing an atheist and the other playing a believer. Then have the pair switch roles.*

After teens role-play, debrief this experience with the following questions:

- 1. How did it feel to be the atheist? the believer?**
- 2. Which argument was most difficult for you to express? Why?**
- 3. If you had to share these arguments with a non-believer, what reservations would you have? How could you overcome them?**

*Start the video to begin the next scene.*

### **Scene 3**

*This clip will last about 3½ minutes.*



The following notes summarize this scene and will help guide your discussion.

- Some people may be called anti-theists—they have difficulty believing in God because of the hurt or pain they've experienced.
- God sees things from the eternal perspective—from beginning to end.
- God doesn't cause bad things to happen but allows it so that a greater good may come, either in this life or the next.
- In the midst of suffering, we must remember that God loves us enough to suffer with us, as Christ suffered on the cross.
- God doesn't promise us freedom from suffering, but He does promise us His presence in our suffering.



*After pausing the video, have students discuss the following questions:*

- 1. What situations are you aware of where people are struggling with the problem of pain? How do you see people coping with this?**
- 2. When you face pain in your own life, what helps you deal with it?**

*After the discussion, start the video to begin the next scene.*



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*Teens in your group may have experienced periods of intense suffering. This portion of Chris' talk may hit home for them. Treat the issue of suffering with sensitivity, and encourage your teens to believe that God ensures a greater good for us in the end.*

*In Genesis 50:20, Joseph says to his brothers, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."*

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## Scene 4

*This clip will last about 5 minutes.*



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- The Prophet Elijah faced a culture that was hostile to his faith.
- We live in a world that can be hostile to our faith.
- God reveals Himself to the world through saints and believers and the way they live their lives every day.
- Blessed Chiara Luce Badano is a powerful witness of God's love through her joy in the midst of pain.
- We can all be "evidence" for God by the way we live our lives.



- 1. What does it mean to be a "living example" of the Christian faith?**
- 2. On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (completely), what rating would God give you for being a sign of Him in this world—and why?**
- 3. How can you be a more effective "sign" from God to the world that He exists?**

*After the discussion, start the video to begin the next scene.*



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*Blessed Chiara Badano was beatified in September of 2010. She was the first member of Generation X to receive the distinction. Generation X includes people born between the early 1960s and the early 1980s.*

*"Art and the Saints are the greatest apologetics." —Pope Benedict XVI*

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# Live It!

15 Minutes

## Scene 5

This final clip will last about 4 minutes.



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- There are a lot of ways to grow in your faith: being in a community with other believers, studying your faith, and getting to know the rational reasons for faith.
- God reveals himself to us, we study about Him, but at some point we need to be willing to give ourselves to the God who gives Himself to us.
- When we choose faith, that's when joy and hope are born.
- In the midst of pain, we can keep making the choice for faith. This can be proof to the world that God exists.
- *“Seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.”*  
— St. Augustine



Give teens a few minutes to write their answers to the following questions on their Teen Sheet. Then invite volunteers to share their answers.

1. What are you doing to grow in your faith?
2. What does it mean to surrender yourself to God and your faith?
3. When do you feel your faith is challenged the most? How do you feel during those times? What does choosing faith look like in those difficult times?



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*Express to teens that by overcoming challenges to our faith, we can grow into stronger, more mature Christians. Encourage them to embrace each challenge as an opportunity for God to mold and strengthen their faith.*

*Chris talks about giving ourselves to the God who gives Himself to us. To help teens explore this concept, talk about how you give yourself to God. Share with your group your successes and failures on this journey of surrender.*

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15 Minutes

## Scene 5

*This final clip will last about 4 minutes.*

The following is a summary of the video segment:

- There are a lot of ways to grow in your faith: being in a community with other believers, studying your faith, and getting to know the rational reasons for faith.
- God reveals himself to us, we study about Him, but at some point we need to be willing to give ourselves to the God who gives Himself to us.
- When we choose faith, that's when joy and hope are born.
- In the midst of pain, we can keep making the choice for faith. This can be proof to the world that God exists.
- *“Seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.”  
— St. Augustine*

*Give teens a few minutes to write their answers to the following questions on their Teen Sheet. Then invite volunteers to share their answers.*

- 1. What are you doing to grow in your faith?**
- 2. What does it mean to surrender yourself to God and your faith?**
- 3. When do you feel your faith is challenged the most? How do you feel during those times? What does choosing faith look like in those difficult times?**



# Take It to Prayer

5 Minutes

*This is an activity teens can do during the coming week to draw all that they have discussed in this session into an experience of prayer for themselves. Encourage them to take time during the next week to do this prayer experience.*



Find a quiet spot to reflect on all that you've learned about the gift of faith in your life. Review the pages of this study, and consider the implications of all that you have discussed and written. Then pray the Apostles' Creed, the affirmation of what a Catholic believes. It contains three sections—one for each person of the Trinity. In each section, God reveals who He is and His relationship with us, His children. As you pray, take comfort in the things you believe about God. Find hope in them. Let them inspire you to be a powerful sign of God's existence in the world.

## The Apostles' Creed

*I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.*



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*Be sure to take time before this study to try the exercise yourself.  
Your personal reflection will inspire the teens to experience the  
Apostles' Creed from a new perspective.*

*“We begin our profession of faith by saying: ‘I believe’ or ‘We believe.’ Before expounding the Church’s faith, as confessed in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy and lived in observance of God’s commandments and in prayer, we must first ask what ‘to believe’ means. Faith is man’s response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life.”—CCC 26*

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# Bear Fruit

5 Minutes



**Supplies:**

- Medium-sized, gift-wrapped box

**SAY:** We began our time together today by exploring the question of God’s existence. We learned about the logical proofs for God’s existence, and that man can know God with certainty by the light of natural human reason. That said; there’s more to faith than the intellectual. Faith is a gift.

*Place the wrapped gift box in the center of your group. Invite teens to each share about a gift they recently received. Have them tell who gave it to them and what made that gift special.*



**READ:** Ephesians 2:8-9

**ASK:** How is *this* gift, the gift of grace, special to you? What will you do with it, and how can you share it with others?



*Direct kids to the “Bear Fruit” ideas on their Teen Sheet, and encourage them to try some of these ideas during the week.*



**READ:** “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” – C.S. Lewis

*Take a few minutes to find out what the teens need prayers for this week. As you close the study with a time of prayer, lift up their personal needs and intentions.*

**PRAY:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of faith in our lives. Your goodness and grace are endless. Help us to align our lives with your purposes. Guide us as we walk by unwavering faith in you. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so we may become vibrant signs of your existence in this world. Amen.





You may want to do these activities yourself, so that you can ask teens about them next time you are together.

## ADDITIONAL BEAR FRUIT IDEAS

### Number 1

1. Part of this study’s focus was on the topic of atheism, or the denial of God’s existence. Think of someone you know who may not believe in God. What do you notice about that person’s life?
2. Now think about your life with God.
3. What is the person who doesn’t believe in God missing?
4. Can you define the word “believe”? In the space below, attempt to write a definition of the word “believe.” How does your understanding of belief and faith affect the painful or difficult events in your life?

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### Number 2

Your study last time focused on your faith being a gift from God that is to be prayed for, nurtured, strengthened, and shared. Take some time to write your personal faith story.

Then gather as a group during the next week and share your stories.

**After everyone has shared, discuss these questions.**

1. When you hear the faith stories of others, how do you feel about your faith?
2. How can you strengthen your faith?
3. In what way does being a member of this group strengthen your faith?

**Number 3**

Think of the road signs you see every day.

Draw some of them here:

What does each sign communicate?

Draw yourself as a sign that God exists:

What are you communicating to the people in your life? How is your life pointing others toward God?

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**is Jesus really  
Divine?**

Study 3.03

Nihil obstat: Benjamin Akers, STL

Imprimatur: Most Rev. James D. Conley, STL Apostolic Administrator of Denver

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Augustine Institute

6160 S. Syracuse Way, Suite 310

Greenwood Village, CO 80111

Information: 303-937-4420

YDisciple.org

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# Overview







“Who do you say that I am?” Jesus posed this question to the disciples and received various answers. In the Gospel of Matthew the disciples responded, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

Clearly people were confused. Unfortunately, times haven’t changed much. In modern culture, the divinity of Christ is constantly being challenged. A quick search on the Internet reveals movies, blogs, and books that are filled with wild claims about the truth of Jesus’ identity. One of the most common ideas is that “Jesus was a good guy who did nice things.” The majority of these claims are wrong and misguided. How do teens sort through this sea of mixed messages to determine what is truth and what is fiction? It requires God’s grace and our compassionate, consistent guidance. As committed followers of Jesus, we can help teens see the truth about Jesus’ divinity as revealed to us in the Scriptures and evidenced by His presence in our lives.

In today’s study, we’ll guide teens through a careful exploration of who God is, focusing on the person of Jesus and His divinity, and look at several Scripture passages to determine that Jesus’ claim to be God was real and radical. Then we’ll dive into C.S. Lewis’ famous “Lord, Liar, Lunatic Trilemma” to understand that Jesus is either Lord of all or He is not Lord at all. Finally, we’ll consider what it takes to fully commit to a life devoted to Jesus.

These topics address our intellectual and emotional relationship with Jesus. Some of your teens may “know” in their heads that Jesus is Lord, but have not experienced His presence and transformation in their hearts. Be sensitive to their current faith journey by allowing time for questions and doubts during small group discussions. Let your teens know that God isn’t angry when we question. Instead, He’s listening and providing answers through prayer, brothers and sisters in the faith, and the Holy Spirit.

Review the outline for the Bible study below. Use the time allotment as a guideline, as the length of time spent on each section will vary from group to group. Also, be sure not to spend too much time on the first few scenes! The most fruitful discussion will come during later scenes.

Time	Section	Section Overview
10 minutes	Dig In 	Introduce the session by examining popular images of Jesus.
5 minutes	Plant Seeds 	Read and reflect on a quote from H.G. Wells. Lead the opening prayer to set up the theme of this study.
45 minutes	Sink Roots 	In this section, you will:  Scene 1—Explore how Jesus’ identity has been confused.  Scene 2—Examine Jesus’ own claim that he is God.  Scene 3—Consider C.S. Lewis’ logical argument that Jesus is Lord.  Scene 4—Discover how Jesus’ divinity is provable.
15 minutes	Live It! 	Scene 5—Wrestle with the question “Who is Jesus?” and what this means for each one of us.  Discuss what might prevent us from fully giving our lives to Christ.
5 minutes to review	Take It to Prayer 	Review the prayer application. Encourage your group to reflect on this meditation during the week.
5 minutes	Bear Fruit 	Summarize the main points from the study, and encourage teens to set resolutions for how they can live out what they have learned.



# Dig In

10 minutes

Use this opening activity to draw your teens into the study. It should help create an engaging atmosphere for active learning and participation. You'll be setting the tone for the session—so have fun with it!



**Supplies:** Various images of Jesus

## Who Am I?

**SAY:** In this study, we'll examine who God is by focusing on the person of Jesus and His Divinity. During our time together, we'll explore several Scripture passages to determine that Jesus' claim to be God was real and radical.

Let's get started by examining various popular images of Jesus throughout His life.

*Present the images of Jesus to the teens. After giving them a few minutes to review, ask the following questions:*

1. Which image do you think is the closest likeness to who Jesus really was? Why?
2. What different aspects do these images convey about the person of Christ?
3. What image do you identify with the most? What is it about the image that attracts you?

**SAY:** We all identify with Jesus in different ways. Some of us may see Him as a loving brother or as a strong Savior, while others wrestle with His claim to be God. It's normal to have questions about God, and we're not alone in our doubts. Even some of Jesus' closest followers struggled to see Him as Lord. Today we'll explore how we can answer the question Jesus posed to His disciples years ago: "Who do you say that I am?"

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*Before your group meets, gather about a dozen images of Jesus for teens to view. Look for images from Jesus' birth, ministry, miracles, and Passion to include all stages of His life. If you do not have images readily available, a quick search online will give you several options that you can print or bookmark on your computer. Then create a simple PowerPoint presentation with a soundtrack.*

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*To get teens thinking about the concept of divinity, serve divinity fudge as a snack during your group time. Have teens brainstorm why this sweet treat would be named “divinity.” What makes it divine? How do most people understand the word “divine,” and what does it really mean?*

*Remember to check in with your teens about the Bear Fruit activities from the previous week. Did they try any of the suggested activities? Were any particularly challenging or did any questions come up?*

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## Plant Seeds

10 minutes



**READ:** Matthew 16:13-15



**Opening Prayer**

**PRAY:** Jesus, we ask that you be with us today as we begin to look more deeply at who you are and how you have impacted the world. May our hearts be open to understanding the amazing gift of your divinity and love for us. Thank you for the gift of that love and for humbling yourself to become one of us, so that through you we may know how to live. Amen.

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*“I am a historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.”—H.G. Wells, historian and author*

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# Sink Roots

45 minutes

## Scene 1

This clip will last about 1½ minutes.



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Christ has left many varied impressions on humanity over time.
- Popular culture offers thousands of different images and interpretations of who Jesus is.
- Among believers and non-believers, much confusion exists about Jesus' true identity.
- Some people say Jesus is the same as any other religious leader.



When the video pauses, discuss the question on the screen.

### 1. What makes Jesus unique or different from other religious leaders out there?

Start the video to begin the next scene.

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*As a follow-up to this scene and study, have your group videotape man-on-the-street interviews and ask random people, "Who is Jesus?" Compare and contrast people's responses. Discuss why you think people have such varied responses to this question.*

*In Matthew 16:13-14, Jesus asks His disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" The disciples' responses are just as varied as the responses we hear today. The disciples responded to Jesus, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*

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## Scene 2

This clip will last about 3 minutes.



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Christianity, unlike other religions, is based on the person of Jesus.
- In no other religion in history did the messenger claim to be God.
- We know Jesus is God because of what He says about Himself in Scripture (e.g. John 11:25; John 8:58). Jesus tells us He is God and to believe in Him is to believe in God.
- Jesus' divinity claims were scandalous violations of Jewish Law.
- We can trust the Bible as the most reliable text in all of history.



When the video pauses, have teens discuss the questions on the screen:

1. What do you find most convincing about Jesus' claim to be God?
2. What's most challenging for you about Jesus' claim?

Start the video to begin the next scene.

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*There will be a future YDisciple Bundle that specifically addresses the reliability of the Scriptures.*

*“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’. And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14). Jesus is claiming to be the same “I AM” (God) in John 8:58. “I am” was the most holy name for God. It reminded the Israelites of God’s absolute supremacy.*

*In John 10:30, Jesus’ claim of divinity is quite specific. Here He claims to be one with the Father, equal to the Father in His divine nature.*

*In John 14:6 and Matthew 11:27, Jesus claims to be the only way to God. No other religious leader, including Buddha, Mohammed or Confucius, made this claim.*

*If time allows, have teens discuss the filters they use to judge the reliability of modern day claims. On what basis do they accept or question people’s claims about themselves or various issues? How could these filters be used to argue the case for Christ?*

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### Scene 3

This clip will last about 4 minutes.



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Is Jesus' claim to be God true? C.S. Lewis said we have three options: Jesus is Lord, Liar, or Lunatic.
- The Liar scenario is flawed because telling lies didn't benefit Jesus. He could have lied when He was asked if He was King of the Jews; instead, he told the truth, resulting in His death on the cross.
- The Lunatic scenario is implausible because Jesus was kind and compassionate. He also had consistent and lucid answers to his followers' and enemies' questions.
- The Lord option is plausible because liar and lunatic are implausible.



**READ: John 20:24–29**

Have teens read the Scripture passage. Take time to discuss the passage briefly.

1. Are there situations where you've refused to believe something until you saw it with your own eyes? How do you relate most to Thomas' doubts?
2. Have you ever experienced a sudden change from a lack of faith to a strong sense of belief? If so, what brought about this change?

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*Tell teens they will explore C.S. Lewis' "Lord, Liar, Lunatic Argument" in this next segment. As teens listen to each argument, have them rate the plausibility of each argument using a scale of 1–5, with 1 being completely implausible and 5 completely plausible. Then have them discuss their ratings and explain the rationale for each one.*

*C.S. Lewis was a famous writer, poet, scholar of English literature, and Christian apologist. Lewis' argument of liar, lunatic, or lord refuted the claim that Jesus was a great moral teacher, but not God.*

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If you are not familiar with C.S. Lewis' Trilemma argument, there is more information available online in the supplemental resources for this study.

*Start the video to begin the next scene.*

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*In his book, Mere Christianity (p.55), Lewis writes, "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."*

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## Scene 4

This clip will last about 4 minutes.



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Jesus proved He is God by His actions—He performed numerous miracles. These acts aren't just recorded in the Bible; historical documents also speak about Jesus performing miracles.
- The Resurrection is the greatest proof of Jesus' divinity.
- When the disciples saw the risen Jesus, they were looking at God Himself.
- The story of Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection is amazing and unbelievable. Even the disciples doubted it, especially Thomas.
- Thomas needed to personally encounter the risen Jesus before recognizing Him as Lord and God.



Give teens a few minutes to write their answers to the following questions on their Teen Sheet. Then invite volunteers to share their answers.

1. **What do you think about the claims that Christ made? How can you know that Jesus' miracles are real?**
2. **Describe a time when you had a "Thomas moment"—when you knew Christ was God? What stands out most about that experience?**

Start the video to begin the next scene.

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*In John 14:11, Jesus tells His believers to believe in Him, based on the evidence of the miracles they have seen. Think about the miracles Jesus has performed in your life or in the world around you. How do they help you believe in Him?*

*“The truth of Jesus’ divinity is confirmed by his Resurrection. He had said: ‘When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he.’ The Resurrection of the crucified one shows that he was truly ‘I AM’, the Son of God and God himself. So St. Paul could declare to the Jews: ‘What God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’ Christ’s Resurrection is closely linked to the Incarnation of God’s Son, and is its fulfillment in accordance with God’s eternal plan.” —CCC 653*

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# Live It!

15 minutes

## Scene 5

*This final clip will last about 3 minutes.*



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Jesus wants each of us to decide “who He is” in our lives. He posed this question to the disciples and he poses it to us today.
- “Lord” expresses the recognition of the Divine Mystery of Jesus.
- We come to the same point in our lives as Thomas did—we know that Jesus is Divine, but what does that mean? We have a choice to make.
- When Jesus is Lord of your life, you’re called to something higher. It’s a hard choice, but when you make it, it will change your life.



*Give teens a few minutes to answer the following questions, and then have them share and discuss their answers.*

- 1. What prevents you from taking your relationship with Jesus seriously and truly giving your life to Him? Why is this an obstacle between you and Jesus?**
- 2. What concrete things can you do this week to more fully give your life to Christ?**
- 3. How can the members of this group hold you accountable to do the things you just mentioned?**

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*“The title ‘Son of God’ signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God his Father: He is the only Son of the Father (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18); he is God himself (John 1:1). To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37; 1 John 2:23).”—CCC 454*

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*Some teens may not be ready to choose Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Be sensitive to this delicate situation, and create a safe space for teens to discuss where they are at this moment in their faith journey. The grace you extend to them now will help form their future decision to become part of the Body of Christ.*

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## Take It to Prayer

5 Minutes

*This is an activity Teens can do during the coming week to draw all that they have discussed in this session into an experience of prayer for themselves. Encourage them to take time during the next week to do this prayer experience.*



**Say:** Find a quiet spot to reflect on all that you learned about the divinity of Jesus. Then pray St. Francis of Assisi's prayer in praise of God, given to Brother Leo. Brother Leo was St. Francis' confessor and faithful friend, who supported Francis through times of anxiety, insomnia, doubt, and fear. This prayer is St. Francis' only prayer of true thanksgiving, worship, and praise. It has no mention of sin or its outcomes. As you pray this prayer, rejoice with St. Francis. Celebrate your belief in a God that possesses all these attributes — the God you call Lord and Savior.

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*Be sure to take time before this study to try the exercise yourself. Your personal reflection will inspire the teens to experience the prayer on their own.*

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*“By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation. Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. This he does by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. God has fully revealed this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.”—CCC 50*

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**St. Francis of Assisi’s prayer in praise of God, given to Brother Leo**

*You are holy, Lord, the only God,  
and your deeds are wonderful.  
You are strong.  
You are great.  
You are the Most High.  
You are Almighty.  
You, Holy Father, are King of heaven and earth.  
You are Three and One, Lord God, all Good.  
You are Good, all Good, supreme Good.*

*Lord God, living and true.  
You are love. You are wisdom.  
You are humility. You are endurance.  
You are rest. You are peace.  
You are joy and gladness.  
You are justice and moderation.  
You are all our riches, and you suffice for us.  
You are beauty.  
You are gentleness.  
You are our protector.  
You are our guardian and defender.  
You are our courage. You are our haven and our hope.  
You are our faith, our great consolation.  
You are our eternal life, Great and Wonderful Lord,  
God Almighty, Merciful Savior.*





# Bear Fruit

5 Minutes



**Supplies:** 1-gallon glass jar, 10 to 12 fist-sized rocks, 1-gallon resealable bag of sand, and a pan

**SAY:** When we make a decision to seek Jesus as Lord of our lives, it changes our lives. Sometimes we find that it isn't always easy to put Jesus first.

Think of a list of things that are important in your lives right now. Such as a sport, a girlfriend/boyfriend, a job, or getting good grades.

*Allow one minute for teens to come up with a list.*

**SAY:** We're going to do a little experiment. I want you to call out some of the things that are important in your lives today. As you name things, I'm going to pour sand into this jar to represent your lists.

*(Take answers until all of the sand is in the jar.)*

**Wow!** You all have a lot of things going on in your lives that are important. Now I'd like you to take another minute and think about the things you need to do every day to make sure you're following Jesus and putting Him first in your lives, such as prayer, Bible reading, serving others, or attending Mass.

*Allow one minute.*

**SAY:** Okay, as you say the things you came up with, I'm going to place these rocks in the jar.

*(For every idea, place a rock in the jar, they won't all fit into the jar.)*

**If we're not careful, the things that are important in our lives quickly take up our time and energy, and then it appears our lives don't have time or space to put Jesus first.**

*(Take out the rocks and pour out the sand into the pan. Then start placing the rocks back in the jar until they're all in the jar. Pour the sand in afterward. Do this as you talk.)*

But if we make a decision to have Jesus be Lord of our life and we put Him first every day, our lives fill with Jesus first, and the other stuff that's important will quickly and easily fall into place. As Jules said in our video today, when Jesus is Lord of your life, you're called to something higher. It's a hard choice, but when you make it, it will change your life.

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*Practice this ahead of time to determine the exact amount of sand to use.*

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**READ:** “The title ‘Son of God’ signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God His Father: He is the only Son of the Father; He is God Himself. To be Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (CCC 454).



*Take a few minutes to see what the teens need prayers for this week. As you close the study with a time of prayer, lift up their personal needs and intentions.*

**PRAY:** Heavenly Father, thank you for Your Son, Jesus, and the eternal relationship we can have with Him. Help us to choose Him as our “Lord and our God” today and from this day forward. Guide us as we grow stronger in our faith and live as devoted examples of your peace, strength, and grace in this world. Amen.

*Remind teens about the Bear Fruit ideas on their Teen Sheet. Encourage them to try the activities during the upcoming week.*



### **Bonus Activity**

#### **Mural of Miracles**

**READ:** Jesus says, “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.” (John 14:11)

*Create a group mural that depicts the miracles Jesus performed in the Bible. Check out a few of these passages for ideas:*

John 2:1–11

Matthew 14:15–21; Mark 6:35–44; Luke 9:12–17; John 6:5–13

Matthew 15:32–38; Mark 8:1–9

Matthew 14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52; John 6:16–21

Matthew 8:23–27; Mark 4:37–41; Luke 8:22–25

Matthew 21:18–20; Mark 11:12–14, 20–24

*As you draw and paint, talk with your group about this quote from Jesus: “You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” (John 20:29)*

*Then talk about these questions:*

- 1. Why do some people have to see to believe, while others believe without seeing?**
- 2. Which type of person are you and why?**
- 3. How can the members of this group help you believe more completely?**



## Bear Fruit



Here are some extra activities for your group to do later in the week. You may want to try these activities so that you can discuss them with teens next time you are together.

### ADDITIONAL BEAR FRUIT IDEAS

#### **A Letter to Jesus**

In *Reflections on the Psalms*, C.S. Lewis wrote, “It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men.”

Listen to the worship song “Jesus Messiah” by Chris Tomlin or “We Love You Jesus” by Shane and Shane. Reflect on the lyrics and images that come to mind as you hear the song. After the music stops, allow a few seconds of silence for contemplation.

Then write a letter to a friend explaining who Jesus is to you. Consider your intellectual beliefs about Jesus (what’s in your head) and your spiritual affirmations and experiences of Jesus (what’s in your heart) as you write the letter.

When you finish, mail the letter to your friend, or keep it in your Bible to read periodically. Make note of how your relationship with Jesus changes over time.

## Who Do You Say I Am?

Read the “I Am” statements of Jesus as found in the Gospel of John.

- “I am the bread of life.” (John 6:35)
- “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12)
- “I am the door.” (John 10:9)
- “I am the good shepherd.” (John 10:11)
- “I am the Resurrection.” (John 11:25)
- “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6)
- “I am the true vine.” (John 15:1)

Now read Mother Teresa’s quote below. In this quote, Mother Teresa proclaims who the “I Am” is to her.

*“I follow Christ: Jesus is my God. Jesus is my Spouse. Jesus is my Life. Jesus is my only Love. Jesus is my All in All. Jesus is my Everything. Because of this I am never afraid.”—Mother Teresa*

Now write or draw your responses to Jesus’ “I Am” statements. For extra impact, go to [Wordle.net](http://Wordle.net) and create a graphic poster using your words. (Wordle creates images out of words.) Post your graphic on your Facebook page, email it to the members of your group, or print it and use it as a bookmark for your Bible.

Spirit of Truth  
Fear of the Lord  
Joy  
Peace  
Holy Spirit  
Love  
Kindness  
Faithfulness  
Spirit of counsel  
and might  
Spirit of knowledge  
Goodness  
Peace  
Spirit of Love  
Truth  
wisdom and understanding  
Love  
Spirit of Truth  
Fear of the Lord  
Joy  
Peace  
Holy Spirit  
Love  
Kindness  
Faithfulness  
Spirit of counsel  
and might  
Spirit of knowledge  
Goodness  
Peace  
Spirit of Love  
Truth  
wisdom and understanding  
Love  
Spirit of Truth  
Fear of the Lord  
Joy  
Peace  
Holy Spirit  
Love  
Kindness  
Faithfulness  
Spirit of counsel  
and might  
Spirit of knowledge  
Goodness  
Peace  
Spirit of Love  
Truth  
wisdom and understanding  
Love

Is the

*Holy Spirit*

really a PERSON

Nihil obstat: Benjamin Akers, STL

Imprimatur: Most Rev. James D. Conley, STL Apostolic Administrator of Denver

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Augustine Institute

6160 S. Syracuse Way, Suite 310

Greenwood Village, CO 80111

Information: 303-937-4420

YDisciple.org

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# Overview

Who is the Holy Spirit? Is He fire? Is He wind? How about a bird? That might be the impression you get from reading Scripture because that's the only way He shows up. He doesn't have a face. He doesn't really have a name. So who is this Holy Spirit? Well, we know the Holy Spirit is a Person, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. But WHO exactly is He? That's what we're going to explore!







In this study, we'll help teens come to a deeper understanding of not only who the Holy Spirit is, but also that His being a real Person means we can have a relationship with Him, just as we do with the Father and the Son. Then we'll consider the question, What does a relationship with the Holy Spirit look like?

We'll take a look at the symbols used for the Holy Spirit in Christian artwork. What do they say about the Holy Spirit? Do they contradict who He is as a Person? Our first understanding of the Holy Spirit will come from examining His critical role in the creation of the universe and mankind.

Then, through a study of the Feast of Pentecost, the conversion of St. Peter, and the conversion of St. Paul, we'll gain a thorough understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and what He can do in our lives. The Holy Spirit really is a Person, and a relationship with Him is never boring. In fact, if the stories we read are any indication, a relationship with the Holy Spirit is extremely life-changing!

Do you know the Holy Spirit? Do you want to develop more of a relationship with Him? This study will definitely set you and your teens on the right track.

Below is the outline for the study. Use the time allotments as a guideline, as the length of time spent on each section will vary from group to group. Also, be sure not to spend too much time on the first few scenes! The most fruitful discussion will come during later scenes.

Time	Section	Section Overview
10 minutes	Dig In 	Introduce the session with “A Beautiful Instrument of God” activity.
5 minutes	Plant Seeds 	Read CCC 1695 and lead the opening prayer to set up the theme of this study.
45 minutes	Sink Roots 	In this section, you will:  Scene 1 – Introduce concepts for understanding the Holy Spirit as a Person.  Scene 2 – Consider the symbols of the Holy Spirit as ways to understand Him.  Scene 3 – Explore the significance of Pentecost.  Scene 4 – Examine the conversion of Peter.
15 minutes	Live It! 	Scene 5 – Pondering the conversion of St. Paul, teens will be challenged to enter a life-changing relationship with the Holy Spirit.
5 minutes to review	Take It to Prayer 	Review the prayer application. Encourage your group to reflect on this meditation during the week.
10 minutes	Bear Fruit 	Summarize the main points from the study, and encourage teens to set resolutions for how they can live out what they have learned.





# Dig In

10 minutes

Begin this session with the activity below. The goal of this activity is to have teens consider how the Holy Spirit moves in their lives. The Holy Spirit is difficult to understand, and we often don't have a sense of who He is or what He does. This activity draws the teens into understanding how they might need the Holy Spirit in their lives.



## A Beautiful Instrument of God

**Supplies:** Items, phrases, or images associated with historical figures, such as the following:

A penny—Abraham Lincoln  
Imagine—John Lennon  
Romeo and Juliette—Shakespeare  
I Have a Dream—Martin Luther King Jr.  
 $E = mc^2$ —Albert Einstein  
A quarter or dollar bill—George Washington  
New World—Christopher Columbus

**SAY:** During your time as a student, you've likely learned about many famous people throughout history. Often all you have to see is a symbol or image to immediately be reminded of a significant historical figure, such as a penny and its association with Abraham Lincoln. I have a variety of images for you to observe—let's see if these images prompt you to think of a famous person in history.

*Show teens various images that can be tied to historical figures.*

**SAY:** It's amazing how often we link someone to something they either said or did. All it takes is for us to see a particular phrase or image and our minds immediately go to the significant thing that person accomplished. Today we're going to explore the Holy Spirit—not only the images that come to mind when we hear the words "Holy Spirit" but also the action of the Holy Spirit within our lives.

*Then direct the teens to find something made of metal and hold it in their hands, such as a piece of jewelry, coins, a watch, or keys. For extra impact, the leader could bring a piece of raw metal ore or a photo of it to the group.*

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*Remember to check in with your teens about the Bear Fruit activities from the previous week. Did they try any of the suggested activities? Were any particularly challenging or did any questions come up?*

*You might need to prompt the teens with the answers or help them with the right terminology. They'll probably have an image in their heads of what raw metallic ore looks like before it's refined. It's okay if they don't get the exact answer. The important thing is that they have the image in their heads.*

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**ASK:** Where did the metal to make these objects come from (e.g., the ground, the earth, a mine)? What does raw metal look like when it comes out of the ground (e.g., rock, ore, a rough hunk with no real shape)? How did that unshaped hunk of raw material become the items you're holding in your hands? (It was melted with fire, refined, purified, and then shaped by a craftsman who transformed it into that shape.)

**SAY:** When we first come to God, we're like the raw metal. We're hard, rough, rocky, and unshaped. The Holy Spirit is like fire that refines and purifies us. He works in our lives to change and transform us. He makes us moldable so we can become beautiful and useful instruments to fulfill God's will.



Give teens time to consider and discuss the following questions:

- 1. What parts of your life are rough and rocky?**
- 2. Where does the Holy Spirit need to work in your life to shape you into a beautiful and useful instrument for God's kingdom?**



# Plant Seeds

*5 minutes*

*Ask one of your teens to read the following quote from the Catechism. When he or she is done, lead the group in the Opening Prayer.*

**READ:** “Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God...Christians have become the temple of the Holy Spirit. This ‘Spirit of the Son’ teaches them to pray to the Father and, having become their life, prompts them to act so as to bear ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ by charity in action. Healing the wounds of sin, the Holy Spirit renews us interiorly through a spiritual transformation. He enlightens and strengthens us to live as ‘children of light’ through ‘all that is good and right and true.’” —CCC 1695



*Have teens join you in the Opening Prayer, which is found on their Teen Sheet.*

## **Opening Prayer**

**All:** Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

**Leader:** Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created.

**Response:** And You shall renew the face of the earth.

**Leader:** Let us pray:

**All:** O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.



# Sink Roots

45 minutes

## Scene 1

*This clip will last approximately 2 minutes.*



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- The big question for this study—is the Holy Spirit really a Person?
- Most people can understand God as Father and relate to Him in prayer as a Father.
- Jesus is probably the easiest to relate to because we have images of Him. We know how He lived on earth and related to other people.
- It's hard to get our heads around who the Holy Spirit is and understand that He is someone we can have a relationship with.



*When the video pauses, have your teens take a moment to discuss the questions on the screen in preparation for Scene 2.*

**1. What do you already know about the Holy Spirit?**

**2. What images come to mind when you hear the name “Holy Spirit”?**

*After the discussion, start the video to begin the next scene.*

## Scene 2

This clip will last about 3½ minutes.



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Fire, a dove, and wind are symbols commonly used for Holy Spirit. These symbols are ways of representing the Holy Spirit. They don't mean He's not a Person.
- The best way to understand and know the Holy Spirit is to discover what He's done. The Book of Genesis gives us a great glimpse of how the Spirit works, as the Holy Spirit moves over the waters of creation and gives life to mankind.
- In Genesis God says, "Us," referring to a community of Persons and not just Himself alone.
- The Baptism of Jesus reveals each of the Three Persons and establishes that the Holy Spirit is a Person.



When the video pauses, have teens open to the index of the Catechism. Under "Holy Spirit," have them find "The Holy Spirit in the Economy of Salvation," read the list under this heading, and then discuss the following question:

### 1. Based on what you've just read, what things do you notice that the Holy Spirit does?



**READ: Acts 2:1–3**

After the discussion, have the teens read Acts 2:1–3 in preparation for Scene 3.

Then start the video to begin the next scene.

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*We give people nicknames associated with symbols all the time. We may call someone "Lightning" if they're a fast runner. UFC fighters and other sports figures have nicknames that describe their personalities or athletic abilities. Point this out to the students to help them understand why the Church uses symbols for the Holy Spirit. The symbols remind us of what the Holy Spirit has done and give us insight into the Holy Spirit as a person. Often we learn more about a person from what they do than from what they say. A person's "true colors" shine in their actions.*

*"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets."—Nicene Creed*

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### Scene 3

This clip will last about 4½ minutes.



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- Pentecost is a significant moment for the Holy Spirit because it's when He's fully revealed.
- Tongues of fire recall Elijah and the prophets of Baal. John the Baptist came in the power of Elijah, saying the Holy Spirit would come like fire.
- Fire transforms and changes things. Fire is an image of the Holy Spirit because that's what He does in us.
- Another image of the Holy Spirit is wind or breath. We can't see wind but we know it's there because of its effects. The Holy Spirit's work is evident throughout salvation history.
- The Old Testament revealed God as Father. The New Testament revealed Jesus as the Son in His work and ministry. But after Pentecost, in the age of the Church, the Holy Spirit is revealed and is moving in these end times.



**READ: John 18:15–18; John 18:25–27; Acts 2:14–36**



When the video pauses, have the teens read the verses on the screen in preparation for Scene 4. Ask for reading volunteers and assign one verse to each teen. If possible, it's best that they look up the verses in their Bibles and read from there. Have them read their verses aloud in the order above and then discuss the following questions:

**1. What change do you see in Peter?**

**2. Where does Peter's courage come from?**

After the discussion, start the video to begin the next scene.

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*The Old Testament passage where Elijah confronts the prophets of Baal is in 1 Kings 18:17–40. Elijah asks God to answer his prayer and fire falls down from heaven consuming the sacrifice, the altar, and the 450 prophets who opposed him! It's a great story and actually quite funny. Check it out!*

*John the Baptist was the precursor to the Messiah. You can read about him in Matthew 3:1–12. He dressed like Elijah wearing “a garment of haircloth, with a belt of leather about his loins” (2 Kings 1:8). Malachi 4:5 said Elijah would return before the Messiah to help Israel repent.*

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## Scene 4

This clip will last about 5 minutes.



The following is a summary of the video segment:

- From the Crucifixion to Pentecost, we see a huge change in Peter; he's become a completely different person.
- This is the transformation that the Holy Spirit can bring about in us. He can take away the fear and hesitation we have about really responding to God.
- After the Crucifixion, Peter was afraid; he didn't know what to do next. After Pentecost, he became a fearless spiritual warrior of the Holy Spirit.
- Peter spoke to thousands at Pentecost, and his words struck people to their hearts. This was the Holy Spirit speaking powerfully through him. The Holy Spirit can come alive in us and even give us the right words to say.



Give teens time to consider and share their thoughts about the following questions, found on their Teen Sheet:

- 1. Describe a time when you felt like Peter did after the Crucifixion—a time when you were hesitant or afraid to talk about Jesus.**
- 2. What are some ways the Holy Spirit could work in you or through you if someone challenged your beliefs or your faith?**



**READ: Acts 9:1–18**

Have teens read Acts 9:1–18 in preparation for Scene 5.

Then start the video to begin the next scene.

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*The Hebrew word for spirit is “ruah.” It can also mean “wind” or “breath.” So it’s as if the wind were the breath of God. The Old Testament prophets said that in the end times, when the Messiah came, the Spirit present at creation would re-create the world. It would bring a spiritual renewal by enabling humankind to turn back to God. The blowing wind at Pentecost is the breath of God blowing renewal into the world, transforming the apostles, and giving them the power to renew mankind’s relationship with God.*

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*The Old Testament Feast of Pentecost commemorated the giving of the Old Law on Mt. Sinai. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the New Law is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost. Christians no longer follow laws written on tablets of stone, but the guidance of the Holy Spirit who speaks directly to the heart. Just as Moses came down the mountain with the Old Law, so the apostles came down from the upper room with the New Law.*

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## Live It!

15 minutes

### Scene 5



*This final clip will last about 5 minutes.*

The following is a summary of the video segment:

- The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. Because He's a Person, we can have a relationship with Him.
- The story of Paul's conversion is a perfect image of how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. Paul hated and persecuted Christians—but after a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit, he undergoes a total transformation and becomes one of the most significant evangelists in the history of the Church.
- This kind of transformation can happen to us. The Holy Spirit is the indwelling of God's Spirit inside us. He speaks to us within our hearts so we can understand how God wants us to live.



*Give teens time to consider and discuss the following questions.*

- 1. In what ways are you like Paul before his conversion? How can you experience a transformational change in your life?**
- 2. How can the Holy Spirit come alive in you? How can the Holy Spirit help you to see things differently and get closer to God?**
- 3. God speaks to you in the depths of your heart through the Holy Spirit. How can you recognize that little voice of God inside you? What concrete steps can you take this week to be more attentive to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit?**



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*Was St. Paul riding a horse when he was blinded by the Holy Spirit on the way to Damascus? In Acts 9 it only says he fell to the ground. The image of Paul being knocked off his horse comes from various depictions of the scene in art. That's where we get the saying "Getting knocked off your high horse."*

*In the Book of Exodus, God led Israel through the desert to the Promised Land as a pillar of fire and smoke. Wherever the fire led, the Israelites followed. Remember that fire symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, God continues to lead His people on their journey to the real Promised Land—Heaven. Remind teens that the Holy Spirit will lead them if they are open; all they have to do is be willing and ask.*

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## Take It to Prayer

5 minutes

*This is an activity teens can do during the coming week to incorporate all that they have discussed in this session into an experience of prayer for themselves. Encourage them to take time during the next week to enter into this prayer experience.*



**SAY:** Today's study reflected on the Holy Spirit and what a relationship with Him is like. By knowing what He's done in salvation history, we know what He can also do in us. He was pivotal in the creation of the universe, and contact with Him brings life. He is a transforming fire that gives courage and strength. As we saw in the stories of Peter and Paul, the Holy Spirit is capable of dispelling fear, changing hearts, and illuminating minds to the truth of God. Through Him, God can speak to us and guide us in our day-to-day lives.

Take a few minutes each morning this week to pray St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit. As you read each sentence, reflect on a concrete way you could put these words into action each day. Is there something you could actively do or avoid that would keep your thoughts more holy? In what ways can your actions be animated by the Holy Spirit? How can you ask the Holy Spirit to draw you closer to God throughout the day?

## St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.*

*Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.*

*Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.*

*Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.*

*Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.*

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*Be sure to take time before this study to try the exercise yourself. Your personal reflection will inspire the teens to experience this prayer on their own.*

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# Bear Fruit



**Supplies:** Ingredients for s'mores—graham crackers, Hershey's chocolate bars, large marshmallows; stovetop (with either electric or gas burners) or microwave, and long-handled forks or microwavable plates

**SAY:** In the story of Pentecost, we saw how the Holy Spirit came down on the apostles as tongues of transforming fire. Before the Crucifixion, Peter ran away and denied he even knew Jesus. After the Holy Spirit came down on him, Peter stood in front of 3,000 people and proclaimed Jesus as Lord and Christ! The Holy Spirit's presence in your soul is like that transforming fire. It's meant to change you and mold you into the image of God—this is God working in your soul. The more you follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and allow God to shape you, the happier and more fulfilled you'll become. We're going to illustrate how this works by making s'mores today—right after our closing prayer.



Take a few minutes to find out what the teens need prayer for this week, and lift up their personal needs and intentions.



Have the teens heat their marshmallows on the stovetop or in the microwave. Then give each teen a graham cracker to break in half, and have them place a piece of chocolate on one of the halves and a heated marshmallow on top of the chocolate; next have them put the other half of the graham cracker on top of the marshmallow and squeeze the two halves of the graham cracker together.

While teens are making the s'mores and enjoying them, use questions like the following to help them reflect on what they've learned about the action of the Holy Spirit:

- **What similarities can you think of between our s'mores-building process and the way God is molding us into His image? For example, what might the marshmallow represent? the graham cracker?**
- **Can you think of a time when you felt "squeezed" by God, but it was still hard to follow Him? When have you felt that squeeze and it was easier, so it felt great to follow Him?**

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*The heated marshmallows are like our souls under the action of the Holy Spirit. The graham cracker is like God molding us into His image. Through the fire of the Holy Spirit, we become softened and moldable. Sometimes the transformation comes through trials, and it's a little painful. Sometimes it's sweet and makes us feel great as it draws us closer to God (that's the chocolate!).*

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Here are some extra activities for your group to do later in the week. You may want to try these activities yourself so that you can ask discuss them with teens next time you are together.

## ADDITIONAL BEAR FRUIT IDEAS

### The Holy Spirit and Me

Reflect on the questions below and consider how a relationship with the Holy Spirit might help you in these situations. Write your answers in the space provided.

In the first chapters of Genesis, the Holy Spirit has a vital role in the creation of the universe and mankind. The Spirit is a creative force and gives life. Contact with the Holy Spirit renews and re-creates life in us as well. In what parts of your life do you feel spiritually drained? Are there areas of your spiritual life in need of renewal and re-creation?

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St. Peter denied knowing Jesus because he was afraid of what might happen to him. However, after the Holy Spirit worked in his soul, he was fearless. Are there times when you've been afraid to tell people you're Catholic because of what they might think? How does that make you feel?

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At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is seen as a transforming fire. He comes down on the apostles and they're ignited with courage, zeal, and the ability to speak about Jesus openly. Do you shy away from answering questions about the Catholic faith because you don't know what to say? What are some ways you could feel more empowered to talk about your faith?

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St. Paul was full of hatred and anger. He saw Christianity as a threat to God and wanted it stamped out. He even went so far as to imprison and kill people to carry out his mission. But the Holy Spirit came in a blinding light and enlightened his mind to the real truth of God's plan. Describe a time when you were angry and resentful because things don't work out the way you wanted. Why is it easy to get angry with God when He's not working according to your plan?

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### **Symbols of the Holy Spirit**

In the study, Jim talked about how hard it is to wrap our heads around the Holy Spirit because He's only represented by symbols like fire and wind. But these symbols tell us a lot about the Holy Spirit; they show us who He is by what He's done. Think of them like the nicknames people get because of stuff they've done. Then reflect on these questions:

Have you ever received a nickname for doing something great (or not-so-great)? What was the nickname and how did you earn it?

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How is that similar to symbols for the Holy Spirit?

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Write down some names/nicknames, you would you give the Holy Spirit based on what you've seen Him do:

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**As the Breath of God in creation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**As fire:** \_\_\_\_\_

**As a rushing wind:** \_\_\_\_\_

**In St. Peter's conversion:** \_\_\_\_\_

**In St. Paul's conversion:** \_\_\_\_\_



### **Transform Me, Holy Spirit!**

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is symbolized by a rushing wind. This symbol represents the power of wind to transform even hardened hearts. To find some amazing examples of the transforming power of wind, type “Paria Canyon Vermilion Cliffs in Arizona” into Google Images. Thousands of ridges and smooth curves were carved into these rocky canyons by wind! Think of how the Holy Spirit can carve and shape you into a holy man or woman of God. Write about or draw an image that reflects how you’d like the Holy Spirit to transform you.

### **Will You Listen, or Ignore?**

The Holy Spirit is continually moving in our lives, guiding and helping us make wise choices. You can choose to listen and act on these inspirations, or you can choose to ignore them. It’s like the wind. You can turn your face toward the wind, embrace it, and breathe in the fresh air. Or you can turn away from it, pull your hood down over your head, and let it pass by without affecting you.

Do you listen to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in your conscience when He’s trying to steer you toward the right decisions?

Can you remember a time when you refused to listen and ended up in a less-than-perfect situation?