



PATHS TO A JOYFUL EXPRESSION OF SELF

This lesson is designed as a bible study with youth around the question of "Who Am I Before God?"

ENHANCER OF JOY

Scripture

DURATION

65 minutes

LESSON DEVELOPED BY

Joyce Ann Mercer

GOAL

A Bible Study

MATERIALS CHECKLIST

- Bibles- New Revised Standard or New International Versions.
- The youth minister or facilitator will need to ensure that everyone in the youth group has writing instruments and 4" x 8" index cards.
- Printed handouts of the following Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 2:11-13; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 4:8-9; and Luke 12:22-23.
- Access to a photocopier.
- Through either a computer or smartphone, the facilitator will need access to one or two YouTube videos of songs, or audio versions through SoundCloud or similar service, from popular culture that are known by the youth group.
- Through either a computer or smartphone, the facilitator will need access to one or two YouTube videos of songs, or audio versions through SoundCloud or similar service, from Christian artists that may or may not be known by the youth group.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

- 1 Corinthians 2:11-13
- 1 Corinthians 13
- Philippians 4:8-9
- Luke 12:22-23.

Purpose

The purposes of this 60-minute session are:

- To encourage each student to critically reflect on his or her identity before God by figuring out a word or phrase that describes his or her identity based on his or her discernment of the “G.I.F.T.” that the healthy SELF has to offer to the world
 - To encourage the students to express their identities in edifying ways before God and the world.
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Further Study

On YouTube.com, Christ Embassy Lagos, Nigeria, “Teens on Fire: Self Esteem.”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKs75N00Cbk>

Kenda Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Kenda Dean, ed., *OMG: A Youth Ministry Handbook*, Nashville, Abington Press, 2010.

Joyce Mercer, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood*. Chalice Press, 2005.

Gather

Gather (5 minutes)

- In order to attract people’s attention, the youth minister will play part of a video or audio (about 2 minutes) of a Christian artist who portrays healthy images of SELF.
- Then the facilitator along with one or two volunteers from the youth group will share what stuck out to them from the Second Session on Substance Abuse as an inhibitor of Adolescent Joy: “Who am I before God?”

Opening silence and prayer.

- Before prayer, an opening silence of about 10 seconds will be helpful for the students to gain focus on listening to God and to each other during the session.
- The leader may ask one or two students to begin the prayer by thanking God for certain lessons they learned in the first and second sessions. Then the youth minister can invite anyone in the circle to pray about their hopes for the third session.

Introduction of the Session:

- Today we will have a review of who we are before God, followed by an in-depth discussion about how we can express our spiritual understandings of ourselves in society. We will review our understandings of a healthy S.E.L.F. and discover the G.I.F.T. that God can help us become in the world. We will figure out the word or phrase that identifies who we are before God and what we have to offer the world.

Engage

Engage (40 minutes)

Activity 1: Review of the Healthy S.E.L.F.

- In this part of the session the students will be asked to reread their notes on how they can improve the health of the four dimensions of SELF.
- The facilitator asks for volunteers to read out loud each of the target Scriptures and review the healthy qualities to which each Scripture can refer.
- 1 Corinthians 2:11-13 – The **Spiritual self**, which includes our awareness and engagement of God and of our life purpose; intuition; faith and future-mindedness.
- 1 Corinthians 13 – Our **Emotional self**, which includes our feelings and their creative expression; our sociability and individuality.
- Philippians 4:8-9 – Our **Learning self**, which includes our ability to understand; our education received or expected; our ability to discern and direct thoughts.
- Luke 12:22-23 – Our **Fleshly or physical state**, which includes our physical health, personality, living conditions and socio-economic status.

Activity 2: What is Your Unique G.I.F.T.?

- After having a large group review about the health of the SELF, the facilitator will divide the students into two or four smaller groups and help the students to discern the unique GIFT they have to offer the world.
- Here the facilitator gives everyone an index card and pen and asks each person to discuss and then write their answers to the following questions:
 1. What are my **Gifts**, talents or abilities?
 2. What in my life is most **Important** to me?
 3. What significant events in my life have **Formed** who I am or have influenced who I have become?
 4. What are the dominant **Traits** of my personality?
- The youth minister must be ready to offer sample answers to the questions to help the students along in their conversations. Below are some sample answers.
- What are my **Gifts**, talents or abilities? *Anything from singing, writing, dancing to certain academic subjects or even simple things like being able sit, listen, talk, etc. EVERYONE has abilities (even the shy students who say they cannot do anything)!*
- What in my life is most **Important** to me? *Responses to this question can include family, friends, school, money, silence, home, money, sex or any answer that illustrates the people, places and things that influence a young person's daily decisions and actions.*
- What significant events in my life have **Formed** who I am or have influenced who I have become?

Responses to this question can include events like the birth of a sibling, divorce, marriage, changing residences, a car accident, falling in love, a fight or disagreement with a loved one, or any other event that positively or negatively influenced a person's attitude toward life.

- What are the dominant **Traits** of my personality? Responses to this include general personality traits covering the spectrum of introversion to extroversion like boldness, shyness, "speaking one mind," keeping one's thoughts to oneself, offering help with solicitation, nervous about speaking in front of people, in need of many or few friends, etc.
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Reflect

Reflect (15 minutes)

Activity: What Word or Phrase Best Describes Who You Are Before God?

- At this point, the facilitator asks the students to do the following:

"Imagine that you are able to keep healthy all dimensions of your SELF as we discussed in Session 2. With a healthy SELF and knowledge about who and what has shaped your unique outlook or GIFT in life, please write on your index card a word or phrase that best describes you and what you can offer to the world that helps others and glorifies God." (The students will have 7-8 minutes to write)

- The students are then asked how they can express before God and in the world the word(s) that describe their identities. *For example: if my word is "genuine," they how would "genuine" find friends, handle disagreements, choose activities for the day, etc.?* (The students will have 2-3 minutes to name their identities)
- After asking these sample questions and perhaps others with a few students, the facilitator will play about two minutes of the selected pop culture song on YouTube or SoundCloud, etc. and ask the students share how their named identities would address the positive or negative images portrayed by the song. (The students will listen and discuss for about 5 minutes)

OPTION: The facilitator can go to a website like Lyrics.com to print out and distribute the lyrics of the selected songs.

Send Forth

Sending Forth (5 minutes)

- The youth minister will make copies of the students' named identities and will offer opportunity to talk after the session about creative ways to express their identities through music, visual art, discussion groups, etc. in the future.
- Closing Prayer

For the prayer, the youth minister can invite everyone to get into a circle and to pray out loud for any concerns that they have. When the facilitator believes that everyone has had ample opportunity to pray, she or he then offers a prayer that God would reveal to everyone in the circle opportunities to share the word or phrase that describes them and what they can offer to God and to the world through their decisions and their relationships.