

5 Handbook Session Overviews

God, Revelation, and Faith

Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

The Church

Liturgy and Sacraments

Christian Morality and Justice

Prayer

Overview of

God, Revelation, and Faith



Throughout these sessions the young people will address the basic questions of who God is and how we come to know God. The indispensable part the Old Testament contributes to this understanding is explored in four Scripture study lessons. In this session the participants will be presented with the understanding of God as Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who is revealed through Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. The participants will also explore the meaning of our human existence and how God is actively involved in the work of our salvation. Though it is

God who saves us, the young people will be challenged to do their part: respond to God with faith.

Note: These sessions are supported by the guide *The Old Testament, the Trinity, and the Mission of Christ*.

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Themes

Session 1: Revelation, Sacred Scripture, and Sacred Tradition

This session explores how God reveals himself to us, focusing on the two main modes of God's Revelation: Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

Session 2: The Bible: God's Plan for Salvation

This session examines the ways God has guided humanity throughout salvation history, recognizing how God continues to lead his people back to be with him, their ultimate home.

Session 3: God the Father

This session examines God the Father and how he has revealed himself to us.

Session 4: The Holy Trinity

This session delves into the mystery of the Holy Trinity and how our one God is the union of three unique Persons.

Session 5: The Bible: The Old Testament

This session examines the four sections of the Old Testament and, in helping us to understand the Chosen People's relationship with God, helps us to understand our own faith better.

Session 6: Creation

This session looks at God's creativity at work in our world, explores the biblical story of the fall of humanity, and considers how we all must make choices between good and evil.

Session 7: The Human Person

This session investigates what it means to be made in the image of God and examines how Original Sin has affected humanity.

Session 8: The Bible: Covenants

This session explores the biblical covenants God made with his people through the centuries, especially the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David. These covenants prepared for the New Covenant made in Jesus Christ.

Session 9: Faith: Responding to God

This session examines the three elements of faith that are being taught and explores the faith of some of the greatest figures in the Bible.

Overview of

Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit



Christ stands at the center of salvation history, at the center of our parishes, and in the hearts of all believers. Throughout these sessions the participants will come to know the many faces of Jesus. They will meet the Jesus of the Gospels, finding the relationship between his story and their own. They will explore the other sources that connect us to Christ, including the Church, their parents, and their peers. Care will be taken to be sure they understand important Christological concepts such as Jesus' Incarnation, the Trinity, Jesus' miracles, and salvation. The sending of the Holy Spirit to the Church and into our lives will also be an important focus of this section.

Throughout these sessions the young people will be challenged to rely on Jesus as our Savior, a role model, a teacher, a caregiver, and a guide. The participants will have the opportunity to enter into a deeper understanding and relationship with our Lord, from Jesus' humble earthly beginnings to his glorious Resurrection, recognizing that their lives are centered.

Note: These sessions are supported by the guide *The Old Testament, the Trinity, and the Mission of Christ*.

Themes

Session 10: The Bible: The Prophets

This session focuses on how God has interacted with humanity throughout history, offering the participants an opportunity to reflect on how God continues to interact with them in their own lives through the events and people of their lives.

Session 11: Jesus Christ, True God and True Man

This session explores who Jesus is, how we find out more about him, and who we are in relationship to him.

Session 12: The Birth of Jesus

This session explores Jesus' birth, especially the mystery of the Incarnation, in which the Son of God became flesh and dwelt among us.

Session 13: Jesus Teaches

This session looks at Jesus' role as teacher and guide. Some of Jesus' parables are studied to see what they teach us today.

Session 14: Jesus Heals

This session presents Jesus as a true superhero who could truly work miracles and change the world. The participants are challenged to see where Christ's healing still is needed today.

Session 15: The Death of Jesus

This session looks at Jesus' death by praying the Stations of the Cross. The saving nature of Jesus' death is presented.

Session 16: The Resurrection of Jesus

By role-playing a talk show, the participants look at the impact Jesus' Resurrection had on his followers. Christ's Resurrection is presented as the basis for our hope of salvation and eternal life.

Session 17: The Holy Spirit

This session explores how the Holy Spirit is present in the world today and gives life to the mission of Jesus Christ.

Session 18: Grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

This session examines the gift of God's grace. As grace allows us to participate in God's life, it enables us to bring God's love to others.

Life Issues Session A: Who Am I? (Guide)

This session helps to identify the commonalities and differences among young people and also provides the groundwork to get past the superficial ways young people identify themselves. It also explores a number of Scripture passages to help us discover who we are according to God.

Life Issues Session B: Friends in Jesus (Guide)

This session looks at what we can learn from Jesus about being a good friend. The participants will practice bringing Jesus' values into their friendships.

Overview of

The Church



The Holy Spirit energizes and brings life to the Church and to all baptized believers. Throughout these sessions the participants will explore how the Holy Spirit moves in God's people and will discover concrete ways that the Holy Spirit is present in the Church today. In exploring the Holy Spirit's activity in the Church, the young people will look at how God's Spirit was present in the lives of the Apostles, examine various models that help us to understand the meaning of Church, and look at how all the baptized participate in the mission of Christ to make disciples of

all nations. The remaining sessions focus on what is needed to enter God's Kingdom and how Mary, the saints, and those whose lives reflect the qualities, values, and beliefs that characterize Jesus' followers can serve as models of faithful discipleship.

Note: These sessions are supported by the guide *The New Testament, the Church, and the Sacraments*.

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Themes

Session 19: The Bible: The Gospels

This session helps us to know Jesus through greater appreciation of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In reading the Gospels, we are invited to a new way of life through following Jesus.

Session 20: The Bible: The Acts of the Apostles

This session explores the role of the Apostles in spreading the Good News of Jesus, especially the roles of Saints Peter and Paul. The Acts of the Apostles inspires us to live our faith as well.

Session 21: The Bible: The Letters

This session looks at the Holy Spirit's activity in the early Church. The session recognizes that the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles at Pentecost marked the beginning of the Church and empowered Jesus' disciples to spread the Good News to the ends of the earth.

Session 22: The Mission of the Church

This session examines how images of the Church, specifically the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, help us to understand the nature of the Church community.

Session 23: The Structure of the Church

This session explores how all baptized Catholics are called to participate in the mission of Christ to make disciples of all nations by participating in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Christ.

Session 24: End Things: Heaven and Hell

This session reflects on God's desire for us to be with him and how choosing to follow Jesus' command to love others can lead to perfect union and happiness with God forever.

Session 25: Mary and the Saints

This session explores the special connection that we have with Mary and the saints and how they are examples for us of what it means to be disciples of Jesus.



Overview of

Liturgy and Sacraments



These sessions are designed to help young people better understand and more fully participate in the Church's life-giving Sacraments. The sessions cover basic teachings about each of the Seven Sacraments. The participants will begin with an overview of the Church's Seven Sacraments and then explore the Sacraments in more detail. The importance of the central place of the Eucharist in Catholic life will also be emphasized.

Note: These sessions are supported by the guide *The New Testament, the Church, and the Sacraments*.

Themes

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Session 26: The Bible: Worshipping God

This session explores the biblical roots of worship in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the Jewish Passover, and Jesus' celebration of the Last Supper in preparation for his own Passion, death, and Resurrection.

Session 27: Introduction to Liturgy

This session introduces the participants to the nature of liturgy and underscores how we see God through the symbols and actions of the liturgy.

Session 28: Sacraments: Celebrating Christ's Presence

This session introduces the participants to the Seven Sacraments and how they help us to recognize the invisible reality of Christ's presence.

Session 29: The Eucharist: The Heart of All Liturgy

This session introduces the participants to the Eucharist and helps them understand that celebrating the Eucharist is a way we express our thanks to God.

Session 30: The Eucharist: The Liturgy of the Word

This session explores the Liturgy of the Word and presents the Scriptures proclaimed at Mass as a living Word.

Session 31: The Eucharist: The Liturgy of the Eucharist

This session, the first of two on the Liturgy of the Eucharist, focuses on the Presentation and Preparation of the Gifts and explores the meaning of offering, gift, and sacrifice.

Session 32: The Eucharist: Communion and Sending Forth

This session explores Communion and how it leads us to mission. In addition, the Dismissal is presented as a commissioning. We are sent forth to share the Gospel message and to serve others.

Session 33: The Sacrament of Baptism

This session uses a sports metaphor to explore Baptism and Confirmation and how the Church initiates new members. Through baptismal symbols (water, oil, light, a new name, marking with the cross), the participants are helped to understand their dignity and responsibilities as Christians.

Session 34: The Sacrament of Confirmation

This session explores the Sacrament of Confirmation as being sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Gift of the Holy Spirit, conferred through the laying on of hands and the anointing with Sacred Chrism, awakens our response through sharing our gifts and talents with others.

Session 35: The Sacraments of Healing

This session helps to increase the participants' familiarity with the Sacraments of Penance and Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick so that they will be comfortable asking for them when they, a friend, or a family member would benefit from them.

Session 36: The Sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders

This session provides an overview of the Church's two Sacraments of Service and encourages the participants to consider how they can use their gifts to serve others.

Life Issues Session A: Dealing with Peer Pressure (Guide)

This session examines how peer pressure can be either positive or negative. The session emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in helping young people to deal with peer pressure and helps them to develop the skills and tools needed to resist negative peer pressure.

Life Issues Session B: God, Where Are You? (Guide)

This session focuses on finding God when God seems far away and considers how helpful the Church's Sacraments and prayer can be.

Overview of

Christian Morality and Justice



Christian morality is built on God's steadfast call to live in right relationship with God and with others. God has given us the Ten Commandments as a guide for living in right relationship. These sessions will help the participants to learn about the moral principles embodied in the Ten Commandments. In each session, the young people will explore one or more of the Ten Commandments. The participants will have opportunities to apply these Christian moral principles to various real-life situations and will be encouraged to use those principles in their own daily lives.

They will examine their own experiences and consider many of the moral dilemmas young people often face.

Note: These sessions are supported by the guide *Christian Morality and Prayer*.

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Themes

Session 37: The Bible: The Old Law and the New Law

In the Bible we find God's Law. In the Old Testament, the most important laws to guide our behavior are the Ten Commandments. They are completed by the New Law of Love revealed to us by Jesus Christ. This session explains how the New Law completes and fulfills the Old Law.

Session 38: Living the Moral Life

This session explores the components that make up our moral life: free will, the natural law of God, love as the higher law, and the cardinal virtues.

Session 39: Moral Decision Making

This session helps the participants to consider their own decision-making processes and to understand the inner workings of our choices: the object of our choice, our intentions, our circumstances, and our freedom. The session ends with a discussion of sin and our need to depend on the moral guidance offered by the Church.

Session 40: Honoring God

This session explores God's power and role as Creator. The participants will learn that the first three Commandments call us to honor God for all God's great deeds.

Session 41: Honoring Family

This session explores the role parents play in young people's lives and the Fourth Commandment's call to honor our parents.

Session 42: Respecting Life

This session explores the presence of God's image in all of us and the Fifth Commandment's call to respect all life.

Session 43: Respecting Truth and Property

This session explores the effects that lying and stealing have on relationships. The participants will learn that the Seventh, Eighth, and Tenth Commandments help us to develop trusting relationships.

Session 44: Respecting Sexuality

This session explores the messages from our culture about sexuality and sex. The participants will learn that the Sixth and Ninth Commandments protect God's true purposes for sex.

Session 45: Working for Justice

This session explores the young people's desire for fairness and how that desire can lead them to answer God's call to do acts of charity and works of justice.

Overview of

Prayer



These final sessions in *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers, Second Edition (CCH)* are based on the fourth pillar of the presentation of the Catholic faith in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: Christian Prayer. Though these sessions are grouped together under this one topic, it is hoped that catechists will choose to introduce one or more of these sessions on prayer to their students at various times during the year or on retreat days or weekends. These sessions represent “the basics” on prayer, what every Christian should know about his or her relationship with God. The last two sessions concentrate on

Jesus’ own teaching of “the perfect prayer,” the Lord’s Prayer, or the Our Father. In the guide, these sessions on prayer are followed by several life issues sessions that relate a relationship with God to the practical terms of everyday life.

Note: These sessions are supported by the catechist guide *Christian Morality and Prayer*.

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Themes

Session 46: The Bible: Models of Prayer

This session acquaints the participants with three biblical models of prayer: King David, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus. The participants are urged to consider some aspects of each of these models to incorporate into their own prayer.

Session 47: Prayer: Conversation with God

This session outlines the basic definition of *prayer* and offers practical ways to be mindful of God in everyday life, including during those times when it is difficult to pray.

Session 48: Tuning In to God

This session focuses on God’s constant presence and desire for relationship with us. It encourages the participants to consider ways they can tune in to God’s presence.

Session 49: The Lord’s Prayer: The Perfect Prayer

This session presents ten reasons for identifying the Lord’s Prayer as “the perfect prayer,” ending with the tenth: The Lord’s Prayer is a summary of the whole Gospel.

Session 50: The Lord’s Prayer: A Prayer for All Time

This session looks at the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer and involves the participants in exploring the prayer’s seven petitions.

Life Issues A: The Ultimate Question: Why Am I Here? (Guide)

This session draws on session material in the *CCH* to help the participants explore one of life’s big questions, encouraging the participants to recognize that they were created with a God-given purpose.

Life Issues B: Using Money (Guide)

This session explores the differences between wants and needs. The participants will learn that God calls us to set priorities and to use our money wisely, keeping those differences in mind.

Life Issues C: Using Technology (Guide)

This session explores how using technology involves making choices. The participants will learn that God calls us to use technology in ways that develop good relationships with God and others.

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Life Issues D: Using Time (Guide)

The participants will consider how they use their time and relate it to the concepts of *chronos* and *kairos*. The session highlights that time spent celebrating Sacraments is special because of God’s unique presence. It also points out that we can recognize the special quality of all our time if we keep our eyes open to God’s constant presence and love.

Life Issues E: Times of Trouble (Guide)

The participants will consider the help Jesus brings us during times of trouble. They will be encouraged to rely on prayer, parents, and peers; these are some ways we experience Christ’s love and support during difficult times.

Life Issues F: Saints as Role Models (Guide)

This session explores how role models, especially the saints who have lived the Christian life before us, help us to become the people we want to be. The participants will be helped to identify the qualities and values characteristic of Christian role models and to consider how they can live these qualities and values in their own lives.