



Pass the Bag

A Biblical Affirmation Exercise

OVERVIEW

Most young teens love to hear good things about themselves, but many rarely get that chance. This affirmation exercise familiarizes them with scriptural values, increases their vocabulary, and builds their self-esteem.

Suggested Time

45 to 60 minutes

Group Size

This activity works best with groups of ten to twenty-five people.

Materials Needed

- ☀ Bibles, one for each person
- ☀ newsprint and markers
- ☀ masking tape
- ☀ paper lunch bags or plain popcorn bags, one for each person
- ☀ pens or pencils

PROCEDURE

- ☀ 2-by-4-inch pieces of paper, enough so that every person in the group has one paper for each person in the group including themselves
- ☀ 4-by-6-inch index cards, one for each person

Preparation. Write the following scriptural citations on newsprint and post it in the meeting space.

- ☉ Matt. 5:1–10
- ☉ Rom. 12:9–21
- ☉ 1 Cor. 12:4–11
- ☉ 1 Cor. 13:3–13
- ☉ Gal. 5:22–26
- ☉ Eph. 4:25–32

In each paper bag, put the number of small pieces of paper equal to the number of participants in the group; that is, if you have twenty people in your group, put twenty pieces of paper in each bag.

1. Form the participants into six small groups or pairs. You may want to consult another volume in the HELP series, *Community-Building Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*, for creative ideas for forming small groups.

Give each person a Bible and each group a sheet of newsprint and some markers. Assign to each group one of the passages listed on the newsprint that you prepared before the session. Tell them to look up the passage and make a list of the positive qualities of a follower of Christ. They may need to think hard about what quality a passage is referring to. For example, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph. 4:26) means that a follower of Christ is forgiving, reconciling, and does not hold a grudge.

Allow about 10 minutes for the groups to list the Christian qualities from their assigned passage on newsprint. Some groups may need help from you or another adult.

2. As the groups finish the task, give them some masking tape and have them post their newsprint on a wall so that everyone can see the lists. Gather the young people in a central location. Review each list and point out the variety of positive qualities that a follower of Christ possesses. Be sure that the following qualities are on the lists:

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| ☉ loyal | ☉ just | ☉ truthful | ☉ prudent |
| ☉ honorable | ☉ faithful | ☉ joyful | ☉ wise |
| ☉ dependable | ☉ loving | ☉ compassionate | ☉ forgiving |
| ☉ responsible | ☉ kind | ☉ generous | ☉ patient |
| ☉ hopeful | ☉ helpful | ☉ fair | ☉ gentle |
| ☉ courageous | ☉ respectful | ☉ honest | |

3. Give each person a bag and a pen or pencil. Pass around some markers and tell the young people to write their name on their bag. Call their attention to the slips of paper in their bag. Explain the following directions in your own words:



Take one slip of paper from your bag. Choose three words from the lists on the wall that describe your character strengths and write them on the paper. Put a star on your paper, fold it, and put it back in the bag.

When I give you a signal, pass the bag to your left. Look at the name on the bag you receive, pull out a slip of paper, choose three qualities from the list that describe that person, and write them on the slip. Think carefully about the person whose bag you have. Do not be afraid to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in choosing the best words for that person. Do not put a star on this or any other slip, but fold it and put it back in the bag.

Follow the same procedure for every bag that comes to you until you get your own bag back.

4. When the bags have returned to their owners, give the young people time to read the contents of their bag. They might want to tally the characteristics and compare them with the ones they wrote about themselves in the first part of the exercise.

5. While the young people are reading their notes, distribute one 4-by-6-inch index card to each person. When they are finished reading, ask them to complete the following sentence-starters on the index card. They should not write their name on the card.

- ⊙ Something I liked about this activity is . . .
- ⊙ Something I didn't like about this exercise is . . .
- ⊙ The quality others see in me that surprised me is . . .
- ⊙ A quality I would like to develop more in myself is . . .

6. Collect the cards. Encourage the young people to take their bag home to remind themselves of the good qualities other people see in them.

Close by reading 1 Thess. 5:13b–23.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- ⊙ Some young people may be conscious of others identifying their handwriting. If this is true in your group, suggest that they print or write with the hand they do not usually write with.
- ⊙ Personalize the closing scriptural passage by inserting a name or names of people in your group between exhortations. For example:
 - ⊙ Be at peace among yourselves, Rashid and Bryan. And we urge you, Vanessa, Haley, and Jana, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. Jerome, Tiffany, and B.J., see that none of you repays evil for evil . . ." (adapted from 1 Thess. 5:13b-15).

NOTES

Use the space below to jot notes and reminders for the next time you use this strategy.

