

DWTX Christian Formation Youth Lessons for 2022 Bible Study

At the start of 2022, the Rt. Rev. David Reed introduced the annual diocesan scripture theme from First Thessalonians 5:11, “Encourage one another and build one another up” “animaros y edificarnos unos a otros.” Linked with this theme is the call to study Ephesians and Philippians in 2022. During pre-council meetings, Bishop Reed shared the following reflection about these two letters:

“Paul’s beautiful descriptions of the essential nature of the church renews hope and calls on us to look higher, to remember God’s purposes in the midst of our daily work. The letters also speak to churches that are threatened by outside forces, by things beyond their control. They recall us to trust in the living Christ who gives us strength to resist despair. Both letters echo our theme of building up.”

In light of Bishop Reed’s recommendation to read the books of Ephesians and Philippians, the Christian Formation Committee is releasing a set of eight youth lessons, four on Ephesians and four on Philippians. These lessons are meant to be used at any time of year that best works for your congregation. The lessons include some opening discussion, scripture to read, questions to wonder about, an activity and a closing prayer.

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For assistance with these lessons or more Ephesians and Philippians resources for all ages email Suzanna Green at formation@dwtx.org or visit the diocesan Adult Formation webpage and the Children & Youth Formation webpage, online at www.dwtx.org/resources.

For even more content and resources follow Christian Formation on Facebook, at www.fb.com/DWTXChristianFormation.



Ephesians 2:11-22 Unity- Connected Through Christ

Opening Discussion:

- What brings people together? Are there special events/holidays that seem to bring out the “togetherness” in people?
- What happens when conflict happens in a group? How does that typically get handled?

Read the Passage: Ephesians 2:11-22

- Focus Verses (14-18)
 - In verses 14 -16 Paul talks about Jesus being our peace. It was Jesus who broke down barriers and brought groups of people in conflict together. Those who were Jewish were still struggling with keeping the laws of the old covenant and were in conflict with the Gentiles (non-Jewish) who did not want to follow these laws. Paul continues to talk about Jesus’ death and resurrection made the old laws no longer necessary and made a path for harmony between the two groups.
 - Have you ever been in a situation where old and new ways have caused conflict? How was it resolved?
 - Verses 17-18 continues on to show how Christ set the example with his ministry and life by preaching peace and unity. His message of God’s love and of a new covenant was not just for the Jewish people but for all people-near and far. By doing this, Jesus gives us another example of unity by being *of the Father*. Jesus wasn’t just on his own but was *of* God the Father being part of the Trinity (Father-Son-Holy Spirit).
 - Knowing that Jesus left us with an example of peace and unity to follow is a pretty big ask sometimes. Is dealing with conflicting peacefully or without anger always easy? When is it the hardest for you?

Activity:

- Dealing with Conflict Worksheet- What Kind of Animal Are You? (pg. 4)
 - What animal do you most closely identify with when it comes to conflict?
 - What pros and cons do you find with your conflict animal?
 - Do you wish you had the conflict style of another animal?
 - In dealing with conflict, what has been the healthiest or most effective strategy you’ve used or seen?

Scripture Discussion:

- Focus Verses (19-22)
 - Verse 19 Paul talks about no longer being strangers but members of God's household. What do you think Paul meant by that?
 - Paul is talking about all being welcome into God's family. You do not have to be from a certain nation or worry about feeling out of place because we are all connected to one another through Christ.
 - In Verses 20-21, it continues to say that Christ is the cornerstone and the whole building is joined together to become a holy temple -what does this mean?
 - Christ is the cornerstone -or the building block- that our faith is built on. We as a community of believers are able to come together as one (from many different backgrounds and nations) and live our lives using the example Christ has given us.
 - Paul uses the phrase "become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" in verse 22- what does this phrase mean for us?
 - Paul is talking about living our lives every day as best we can remember that the Holy Spirit lives within us and is there to guide us. This can look differently for each of us: maybe it means listening more than we speak, or helping out a friend in need, or spending more time in prayer, or sitting with kid at lunch who is by themselves, or not participating in gossip, or just any way to show God's love in the world.
 - What is the overall theme of Paul's message?
 - Paul is calling us- just like the church in Ephesus- to put aside their differences and to focus on the cornerstone: Jesus. To remember the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and what that means. The house of God is not just for a few or for those who have it all together, but is for everyone.

Closing Discussion and Prayer:

- Paul talks about being unified in God's household and our differences no longer mattering- So how can we manage our differences in healthy ways while still showing each other God's love? In what ways are you able to see others' differences as strengths?
- Paul also focuses on being Spirit filled. What does that mean for you in your life? How are you listening to God's direction in your life? Are there ways you can be more proactive in your spiritual journey?
- Close with a prayer about differences and being Spirit filled.

The Animal in You

The Turtle – Withdraws from conflict. “I don’t care... I don’t know... Don’t ask me... I don’t want to be involved.”

The Shark – Forces and tries to make opponents accept his/her solution. “Listen to me... I have the best idea... I don’t like your idea!”

The Teddy Bear – Wants to avoid conflict. Tries to build harmony in the group. “That’s ok... We need to get along... Everything will be all right.”

The Fox – Compromises, giving up part of his/her goals while persuading others to give up part of theirs. “Let’s listen to all the ideas first and find a solution we can all live with, maybe a compromise.”

The Owl – Views conflict as problems to be solved. The owl confronts the problem, seeking solutions that will satisfy everyone involved. “OK, here’s the problem as I see it, let’s try this solution.”



Ephesians 4:1-16 One Body in Baptism

Opening Discussion:

- What is unity?

Read the Passage: Ephesians 4:1-16

- Focus Verses (1-3)
 - Paul suggests that walking worthily of one's calling is closely linked with the way that God strengthens our inner being when we are connected to God and the way that Christ makes a home in our hearts.
 - What does it mean to you "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called?" or maybe to lead a life worthy of being a follower of Jesus?
 - Paul indicates that it means acting with humility, gentleness, and patience.
 - How valued are humility, gentleness, and patience in our world?
 - Can you name a person or people you admire who have one or more of these qualities?
- Focus Verses (4-6)
 - These verses may have been used in an early baptismal liturgy.
 - We still say these verses at the beginning of our baptismal liturgy on page 299 of the Book of Common Prayer.
 - Paul's focus in this letter and specifically this passage is the unity of the church. Paul is telling Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. Paul is telling them that there is one Lord, one God that we serve, not one for the Jewish Christians and a different one for Gentile Christians. There is one baptism, one Spirit, one faith. This is why Episcopalians do not rebaptize Christians who join the Episcopal Church from other denominations. For us and several other denominations, once you are baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit with water, you are brought into the family of God, and that does not need to be repeated wherever you choose to attend church.
 - How else would you apply these verses to us today?
 - Ex: All of the different denominations that believe in the unified, uncreated Trinity have the same Lord and same faith (that is practiced differently and different focuses).
- Focus Verse (7)
 - We all receive gifts of the Spirit or talents of ministry and works we are called to because of Christ, not dependent on our own merit.
 - Grace is the free, unmerited gift from God.

- Focus Verses (11-13)
 - Thus, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are simply members of the church, who are called to use the gifts of Christ given to them for the purpose of equipping other members of the church to carry out their own ministries in daily life.
 - The little ‘s’ saints are all of God’s people, all of you.
 - Each person has a part to play. No one and none of those gifts are more important than any other. If we don’t each do our part, then the body is missing one of its members and the people that you are called to minister to or serve miss out on the blessings of you.
 - By living into the ministry of Christ in our own lives, we come to know Christ and God more deeply as we take our place in the cosmic body of Christ that God empowers.
 - Notice, then, that the diversity of gifts characterizes a unified church: unity is based on the common commitment of all members to walk worthily (i.e. to embody) the ministry of Christ in their own lives.
 - How do you feel about being called a saint?
 - How have you seen people in your church equipping others for ministry and equipping others to grow into the full stature of Christ?

Activity:

- Play a version of the Fruit Basket Turnover game.
 - Start with one person sitting or standing in the middle of a circle and they say something like, “anyone wearing green” or “everyone who likes ice cream” and anyone who identifies with that has to switch spots with another person. The idea is that someone else will end up in the middle and be the next person to call out an attribute.

Closing Discussion/Prayer:

- Focus Verses (14-16)
 - Christian maturity suggests the ability to recognize and reject teaching that leads people away from being “rooted and grounded in love.”
 - That means that love must govern all relationships in the church.
 - Through acts of love, we grow into the full knowledge of Christ in every way and, at the same time, build up the cosmic body of Christ.
 - How does this unity through common ministry and based on love differ from unity based on making people agree either with each other or a certain doctrine or with one leader?
 - Discuss differences in speaking the truth in love verses just speaking the truth?
- Close with a prayer about unity and love

This lesson comes from and uses material from the Ephesians adult lesson seven created by the Rev. Dr. John Lewis and the Rev. Dr. Jane Patterson.

Ephesians 5:3-14 Light vs. Darkness

Opening Discussion/Introduction Activity:

- Watch Nooma Video #10 “Lump” ([10 Nooma Rob Bell LUMP 010](#)) (Video is 10:31)
- Discussion Questions:
 - Is it possible to keep something secret and never get caught?
 - Do you have something in your life that you are hiding? How is that making you feel? How might you take steps to bring the truth out into the light?
 - Do you believe deep in your heart that “there is nothing you could ever do to make God love you less?”
 - Do you have people around you that are struggling with a secret? If so, how can you help them?

Read the Passage: Ephesians 5:3-14

- Discussion Questions:
 - In your own words, how would you describe what is happening in this passage?
 - What amazes you about the passage?
 - What bothers you about the passage?
 - What confuses you about the passage?
 - What delights you about the passage?
 - Is there a word or phrase that stands out to you in this passage? Why?
 - How will you take this passage and our discussion of the video and apply it to your life this week?

Activity:

- Prayer Station: Light Prayer Tubes
 - Using a white lunch bag, draw pictures (or write names/phrases) of situations that may seem very dark right now. These can be personal and/or global in nature.
 - Turn on a tea light and place it inside the bag.

Closing Prayer:

- Pray (individually or as a group) and ask Jesus to be the light, in the midst of these dark situations. As you go about the rest of your week, continue to pray daily for these things. (You may even want to add pictures, names or phases to your bag as you go throughout the week.) “Encourage one another and build one another up.”
 - Additional prayer station ideas on *light* can be found on Pinterest.

Ephesians 6:10-20 The Armor of God

Opening Discussion:

- Does anyone know what soldiers wore back in bible times?
- Why did they wear this?
- We are going to read about a different type of armor that we can wear to protect ourselves from life's daily battles?

Read the Passage: Ephesians 6:10-20

- What kind of battle are we a part of as children of God?
 - We are in a spiritual battle against evil. Evil wants to destroy our relationship with God, but God knows this and gives us the armor of God to aid us in this battle that occurs in our daily life.
- Belt of Truth
 - Why did the soldiers wear belts and why do we still wear belts?
 - What does truth mean?
 - What do you think God's truth is? What are ways you can find it?
 - How is the world's truth different from God's truth?
 - Knowing this, what is the purpose of the belt of truth?
 - Like a belt we wear everyday it holds everything in this world together. God's truth is the glue that keeps us close while holding up the rest of the armor so each part can serve its purpose.
- Breastplate of Righteousness
 - Do you know what a breastplate does and what it protects? Why do we need to protect these things?
 - It stops things from attacking your heart and Proverbs 4:23 says Above all else guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.
 - What does Righteousness mean?
 - What happens when you put on the breastplate of righteousness?
- Shoes of Peace
 - Does anyone know what Roman soldiers' shoes were like?
 - They wore heavy soled military sandals. They had nails at the bottom like cleats today that allow them to stand firm and not slip when in battle
 - What does peace mean?
 - If we are in a battle why are we wearing the shoes of peace?
 - Where does peace come from?
 - How do we use the shoes of peace?

- The peace that God brings us can be used when we feel down. We can center ourselves towards God, in many ways whether it be taking a few breaths, a prayer, a song or anything else. John 16:33 says I told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome this world.
- Shield of Faith
 - What is a shield used for and do you know anyone that uses a shield?
 - Can you explain what faith is or what it means?
 - Hebrews 11:1 says “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” Faith is opposition is not doubt but rather the opposite of faith is knowing everything because sometimes in our journey with God we must trust that what he says is true.
 - How can we use faith as a shield in our spiritual battle?
 - Who does the shield of faith protect?
- Helmet of Salvation
 - What activities make people wear a helmet, and why do they wear it?
 - Why do you need to protect your brain?
 - How does the helmet of salvation function?
 - It is knowledge and understanding of salvation, which blocks external voices from entering your mind and distracting you from God’s voice. The helmet lets you hear God’s calling clearer.
 - Salvation, what does it mean?
- Sword of the Spirit
 - Where does the sword of the spirit come from?
 - What is a huge component of the sword of the spirit?
 - The sword of the spirit, uses the word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says “For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joint and marrow; judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”
 - After reading Hebrews 4:12 what is this verse trying to convey?
 - What are some things in the world that can affect our thoughts and hearts?
 - How do we use the sword of the spirit?

Activity:

- Split into 2 or more groups.
- Give each group a poster board or several sheets of paper and some pencils, crayons, markers, etc.
 - Tell each group to draw or write their version of the Armor of God.
 - Ask: what would your metaphor be for the way that God surrounds us in our daily lives?
 - ____ of Truth
 - ____ of Righteousness
 - ____ of Peace
 - ____ of Faith
 - ____ of Salvation
 - ____ of the Spirit

Closing Discussion/Prayer:

- What is something you found in common with all the pieces of Armor?
- When we put on the Armor of God, will evil still exist or will our lives automatically get better/easier?
 - The armor of God doesn't promise us that it will eliminate evil from attacking us but rather gives us the tools to protect ourselves when things in our lives try to separate us from God. When we put on the armor we protect ourselves and the others around us. Life is hard but with the armor of God we now have the strength to face it head on and win.
- After learning about the Armor of God, how can we take this knowledge and apply it to our lives?
- Which piece of the Armor of God do you believe that you need the most and why?
- Close with a prayer asking God to provide the armor each student needs for the week to come.

Philippians 1:1-11 Prayers and Thanksgiving

Opening Discussion

- What is thanksgiving?
- What is prayer?
 - Talking to God in word, silence, or song
- When, in your life, have you or do you give thanks?
- When do you pray?

Read the Passage: Philippians 1:1-11

This is the beginning of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

- Philippi was a Roman colony and a city. The converts in Philippi welcomed Paul, embraced the Gospel, and supported Paul with encouragement and money.
- Paul appears to have written this letter while he was in prison.
- What stood out to you in the letter?
- Focus Verses (3-5)
 - Who do you give thanks for in your life? Who do you pray for in your life?
 - Who do you think your youth ministers and priest/s give thanks for in your church? Who and what do you think they pray for in your church?
 - In our Eucharistic Prayers, the priest says "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God." And the people answer "It is right to give him thanks and praise." This is followed by what God has done because of who God is and usually followed by something that we have gained in the life, death, and/or resurrection of Jesus.
 - Why would you say that it is right to give God thanks and praise?
- Focus Verse (6)
 - Paul lets the Philippians know that they are not alone, that God is with them to help them to continue and complete the work and the seeds of the Gospel that began in them when Paul first started preaching to them.
 - Paul also lets them know that it is not by their own power that these works and conversions are done and that God has been with them, is with them, and will be with them. They, like Paul, are also being persecuted.
 - What has the Holy Spirit started in you or your youth group or your church that you may need encouragement that God will help it to be continued/completed and that it is not by your own power that it will be continued/completed but by God working through you or your youth group or your church?

- Focus Verses (7-8)
 - Paul is addressing a community who are deeply committed to the cause of the gospel, and actively share in defending and confirming the gospel. Paul expresses his confidence because he is sure that the Philippians will continue along this road. And as they do so, so also God will work powerfully in their lives to change and transform them, causing love to overflow from them.
- Focus Verses (9-11)
 - What an awesome prayer for each of us!
 - Who knows what righteousness is?
 - Being in right relationship with God and others; acting in accordance with divine law or an agreement/covenant; being morally right
 - The word that he uses for love is agape, the pure, sacrificial love that God has for people and people for God. This love is not superficial or dependent on what other people do.
 - The knowledge Paul refers to is the knowledge of God's holy will and of the blessings which he has bestowed and constantly bestows on people through Christ
 - So Paul prays that they (and we) will grow in the kind of pure love that God has towards people and people have towards God. In growing in this love, they (and we) will know the perfect will of God to determine what is best in their lives and their common life of the church and produce the fruits that come from living a morally just life.
 - What might be some of the things that a church and community would be like and do or produce if they lived into this prayer?
- There are many ways to pray. The catechism at the back of the Book of Common Prayer on page 856 lists the principal kinds of prayer as adoration, praise, thanksgiving, penitence, oblation, intercession, and petition.
 - Adoration is lifting up our hearts and minds to God just to be in God's presence.
 - Praise is telling God how awesome God is, who God is, and what God has done.
 - Thanksgiving is telling God what we are thankful for.
 - Penitence is telling God our sins or those things that we have done that are not morally righteous, either how we have hurt God, others, or ourselves.
 - Oblation is offering ourselves to God.
 - Intercession is praying for the needs of others.
 - Petition is praying for our own needs.

Activity:

- Offer stations for youth to participate in different kinds of prayers.
 - The hand prayer is a common prayer taught to younger children. Have the students finish each initial sentence. For instance “I love you God... (for giving me life).” “I’m thankful God... (for my friends and family).” “I’m sorry God... (for being mean to others).” “Help others God... (especially Grace whose grandparents died last week).” “Help me God... (to get all of my work done on time).”
 - If you are the industrious type, you can have different colored strips of paper for each of the above prayers and make a paper chain. Students can choose to have the writing not show for “I’m sorry God” and “Help me God.” At the end of the youth group time, you could have everyone hold the chain and take turns reading a certain color strip. You probably want to discreetly look at the prayers first.
 - Have the students write a letter of thanks to someone in the church, youth group, or their school.
 - Have students write a note to prescribed parishioners who may live alone or be sick or be on the prayer list. You could buy bulk cards or make them with part of this Philippians passage in the card.

Closing Prayer:

- Close with a prayer of thanksgiving. If time allows, let each student share a prayer silently or aloud and have the leader close the prayer after every student has prayed.

Philippians 2:1-13 Humility

Opening Discussion:

- What is the definition of humility?
- Would you say that humans are consumed with themselves or others?
- How does social media help or hinder humility?
- Do you regard others as better than you? Explain
- Aside from Jesus, who do you know that demonstrates humility? What actions demonstrate their humility? How will you be more like this person?
- How do you respond to others when you are able to do something well? How do you respond to others when you do not do something well?

Read the Passage: Philippians 2:1-13

- Discussion Questions:
 - In your own words, how would you describe what is happening in this passage?
 - What amazes you about the passage?
 - What bothers you about the passage?
 - What confuses you about the passage?
 - What delights you about the passage?
 - Is there a word or phrase that stands out to you in this passage? Why?
 - How will you take this passage and our discussion of the video and apply it to your life this week?

Activity:

- In advance, schedule a service project as a final project for this lesson. A few examples are below:
 - Clean-up day at church or a park/community space nearby
 - Pack manna bags to give to a local homeless shelter or organization:
<https://www.lifecreativelyorganized.com/make-manna-bags-for-the-homeless/>
 - Make prayer squares through diocesan Immigration Ministries:
<https://dwtx.fellowshiponego.com/external/form/6f68cd59-c5ce-49ed-971e-7e87a5a26d92>
 - Make cards to give to a local organization the church supports

- Or play one of these games:
 - Egg Roulette (very messy): <https://ourpastimes.com/play-egg-roulette-2099453.html>
 - Elephant March – Minute to Win It: <https://www.liveabout.com/minute-to-win-it-elephant-march-1396717>
 - Junk Trunk – Minute to Win It: <https://www.liveabout.com/minute-to-win-it-junk-trunk-1396657>

Closing Discussion/Prayer:

- Discussion Questions:
 - How will you encourage one another and build one another up this week?
 - As a Christian, what do you want to be known for?
 - Who will you serve this week? How will you serve them?
- Close with a prayer about serving others.

Philippians 2:12-18 Joy

Opening Discussion

- How would you describe joy to someone?
- Are joy and happiness the same or different? Why?

Read Passage: Philippians 2:12-18

- Focus verses (12-13)
 - Verse 12 Paul talks about salvation. What is salvation?
 - Salvation is the gift that was given by God and Jesus, when he died for our sins on the cross, this allows us to be born again anew person filled with the grace and love of God, which means that all your sins are forgiven when you ask God to forgive. This is all because of salvation.
 - Paul talks about “your own salvation”, what does this mean?
 - When Paul says “obey me” and “fear and trembling”, what is he talking about and who is me?
 - Me is not a word in the Greek text but rather Paul is speaking in the commendation of Jesus Christ, who obeys God.
 - While fear and trembling is just a Jewish way to say you are in awe and respect God.
 - What is Paul’s central theme in verse 12?
 - What does verse 13 tell you about yourself and how your relationship with God works?
- Focus verse (14-18)
 - In verses 14 and 15 Paul explains if the Philippians control their arguing and bickering they would shine in a broken world. How impactful are these two verses in your lives and today's world?
 - Verse 16 is a foreshadowing of Paul’s sentence to death, and how Paul taught the pattern of Christ life till that very end. How does Paul’s faithfulness inspire you in your journey to walk with Christ/ and how long does this walk last?
 - Verse 17 needs a little background information. In the temple during this time they would take a grain sacrifice, in this case the Philippians faithfulness, and libation of oil or wine poured over it. The libation in this metaphor is Paul’s death. Verse 18 is a representation of a suitable offering to God.
 - The last part of verse 17 and then 18 is a call to rejoice in the offering to God. In this offering Paul is sacrificing his life but is still joyful and is also asking the Philippians to rejoice in the same way. Why is Paul feeling and asking the Philippians to do the same?
 - Paul's sacrifice is a great example of joy, he is willing to let go of everything for God's plans and is what Christ would do and be joyful when it happens. As believers we need to remember that no matter what the circumstances, we need to be joyous about salvation and the life we are received into.

Activity:

- Play one of these games:
 - Name that Tune:
 - Play ten-second snippets of 6 songs with the word Joy in them (ex. Joy to the World, Joyful, Joyful, Joy by Bastille, I've got the Joy, Joy, Joy Joy Down in my Heart) (totaling one minute).
 - Have participants write down the songs they think they just heard. Winner is the person with the most correct!
 - Post-It Note Face Challenge:
 - Give each student a stack of post-it notes
 - Instruct them to stick as many post-it notes to their face in 60 seconds as they can when you say go
 - Set timer and watch the silliness begin

Closing Discussion/Prayer:

- Paul is teaching us about salvation, and what a special gift that is. Each of our journeys with God is unique and special so remember that “your own salvation” is as it says yours and you should never compare yourself to others.
- Salvation is a powerful gift and it calls us to live as Christ would in every aspect of our lives. If as followers we can remind ourselves of this gift and how Jesus would handle the situation then it can make difficult decisions easier to make knowing we are following the word of God.
- Paul's realization about the sacrifice of life in the future and the faithfulness of the Philippians is a great reminder about how our own faith and the sacrifices we make every day are an offering to God and are a shining light in this broken world. Our journey is not one that ends at death but rather is just a new beginning to eternal life. Lean on this when you are down and broken, knowing that you have a special gift to be a light in this world, while God is by your side. Paul shows that no matter what is going on we are joyous because of the promises of Christ.
- Close with a group prayer about Joy.

Philippians 4:1-9 God's Peace

Opening Discussion:

- What is your favorite way to relax after a long or difficult day?
- How do you feel when you are dealing with big stressors or worries? Do you have things that you do to help with those feelings?

Read the Passage: Philippians 4:1-9

- Focus verse (4-7)
 - In verses 4-5, Paul starts out by saying to his readers to “Rejoice in the Lord Always” and then he repeats the word “Rejoice” for emphasis. Paul is wanting to be encouraging in his letter that even in difficult times to find ways to be thankful and positive. He also talks about being gentle and kind to those around you.
 - When Paul talks about rejoicing always, does that feel realistic to you? When do you find yourself rejoicing? When do you find it to be more difficult?
 - Verses 6-7 continues to work to be encouraging to the reader when it comes to dealing with anxiety and worry. Paul wants the Philippians to try to remember that God is with them in all things. Even when things are difficult or cause worry, God will not abandon us. Paul lets them know that through God, peace will be granted. Not just any peace, but true peace that only God can provide since God is our loving creator.
 - Prayer and connecting to God is a helpful way to find calm during anxious times- what spiritual practices have you used before to help with your feelings of worry/anxiety?

Activity:

- Lectio Divina using Philippians 4:1-9
 - **READ** a brief passage of Scripture – A few verses. It does not need to be long. You can do this as a group out loud together or individually.
 - **REFLECT** and reflect on the word or phrase– After your first read through, take another look at it with the focus of reflecting. The second time, let the words work with your thoughts, feelings, and your life.
 - **RESPOND** in prayer to what God called to your notice- The third time of reading through is for your response. Maybe you are led to prayers of praise, joy, giving thanks, or to pray for someone on your heart.
 - **REST** in God in meditation- As you read through the verses the fourth and last time, focus on being in God's presence. You don't need to do anything. Just *be*. The quiet can be awkward for at first and you might want to stop; but, this step becomes easier and even more inspirational the more you do it!
- Control/Can't Control Activity Worksheet (pg. 20)- Sometimes our worries and anxiety come from where we confuse what we can control vs. what we can't control. Understanding the difference between the two can help us let go of unnecessary worry/anxiety in our lives- remembering where God has it handled!

Closing Prayer/Discussion

- Paul talks about not worrying but that is not always an easy thing to do. However, God leads us in a variety of ways to tackle our worries and anxiety. We are not alone in our feelings or our struggles- *we are a community of faith*- which means we can reach out to each other (youth and youth leaders) when we may need help or extra support! Asking for support when things feel too big is part of being in a community and we aren't meant to go it alone.
 - Who are the people in your life that you find support from? When do you know it is time to reach out and ask for support?
- When Paul talks about rejoicing and being thankful in Verse 4, it isn't just for the material things we have, but it is also for our bodies, minds, and spirits. One of the things we aren't always good at taking care of is *ourselves*! Many of us get too busy and wrapped up in our stressful lives to take care of ourselves. This can create a cycle of poor sleep, exercise, and eating habits which can lead to higher rates of stress and anxiety. When we aren't taking the time to take care of ourselves, then it can be harder to live our lives to its full potential the way we have been created to be. *Self-care isn't selfish*! When we are more balanced we are able to connect more fully to others and to God.
 - What does self-care look like for you? Is it easy for you to do or do you find it difficult?
 - Self-care can look different to different people. It is whatever recharges their batteries. Here are a few ideas that may spark your interest:

Listen to music
Take a shower
Talk to a friend
Watch a movie
Read a book
Go for a walk
Ride your bike
Exercise
Play with your pet
Stretch your muscles
Do yoga

Meditate or pray
Talk to a friend on the phone
Get a haircut
Take a nap
Plan an outing with friends
Go for a jog
Write in a journal
Invite a friend to your house

Go for a swim
Go for a hike
Try a new activity
Play board games
Play a video game
Cook with your parent
Go outside and watch the birds and other animals
Make a list of things you like about yourself

- Paul talks about not worrying and not being anxious because God is always with us. God does show up for us when we struggle! God provides us support within our communities of faith, our outside support systems, ways to take care bodies/minds/spirits, and even connection through spiritual practices. Our lives may not always be easy but God does equip us with some incredible tools to connect with others and connect our loving creator to work through the tough times.
- Close with a time of prayer. Give every student a chance to give their worries to God, either silently or aloud. Leader can close the prayer after each student has prayed.

STUFF I CAN'T CONTROL

STUFF I CAN CONTROL