



Making it  
REAL  
AND  
RELEVANT

A  
Multi-Media Enhanced,  
*Lectionary-Based*

Bible Study for Youth

Propers 18-25

1st Quarter, Year CA

By Heidi K. E. Hawks. M.A., M.Ed

Published and distributed by

LeaderResource  
P.O. Box 302  
Leeds, MA 01053

[www.LeaderResources.org](http://www.LeaderResources.org)

800-941-2218

[staff@LeaderResources.org](mailto:staff@LeaderResources.org)

Copyright 2006-2010

Heidi K. E. Hawks

See Spirit Grow  
7211 Piglet Place  
Pfafftown, NC 27040  
hhawks@seespiritgrow.com

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR LIMITED-USE LICENSE

### General Terms:

- This agreement covers all printed and electronic copies of this resource, including material downloaded from the LeaderResources website or obtained in any other manner.
- Licenses are normally issued to a church or other single-entity, non-profit organization. For information on multiple-entity organizations (such as dioceses and other judicatories, national organizations with local subsidiaries, etc.) or a one-time use license, please contact LeaderResources at the numbers below. Licenses are never issued to an individual person.

### What you CAN do:

- If you have purchased the license to this resource or a membership including this resource, you may make as many copies of the material as needed for use in your congregation or organization ONLY. If this resource is part of a membership/subscription program, you may only use it as long as your membership/subscription is current. When your membership/subscription expires you must destroy all copies.
- You may make as many copies of the material (in part or in whole) as needed to implement and promote the program in your congregation or organization
- You may burn additional CDs or save the material on disk to distribute to teachers or other members of your congregation (for use as part of this program ONLY)
- You may use artwork images or graphics in posters, church bulletins, newsletters or other documents used for the program

### What you can NOT do:

- Distribute material to anyone who is not a member of your organization for any reason
- Use any part of these materials outside your organization
- Use any part of these materials after the expiration of your membership/subscription term.
- If this is a Resource Center copy you may not use the program or any portion of it without purchasing a license or membership.
- Sell copies of these materials in any form (including images on t-shirts, mugs, etc.) for any reason without permission from LeaderResources
- Use images or graphics to create or have a third party create a stained glass window, wall mural, statue or other permanent artwork installed in a building without permission from LeaderResources.
- Use images or graphics on a website without permission from LeaderResources

### PLEASE DON'T VIOLATE THESE RULES

*First of all, it's illegal: violating a copyright can result in substantial fines, a criminal record and embarrassment. Secondly, our program developers, artists and staff are paid from the revenues generated by your fees. If you use resources without paying, they don't get paid. We trust you to observe the conditions of your license and invite you to help educate others about the importance of respecting copyrights in a day when photocopying and computerizing data make the theft of intellectual property easy.*

If you have questions or if your vendor (like Kinko's) requires additional verification  
Call LeaderResources at 1-800-941-2218 or email us at [staff@LeaderResources.org](mailto:staff@LeaderResources.org)  
P.O. Box 302, Leeds, MA 01053-0302 <> [www.LeaderResources.org](http://www.LeaderResources.org)

## Before Classes Start...

### An Overview of Making it Real and Relevant

*Making it Real and Relevant* is a youth Bible study curriculum for use in a 45-55 minute class period. The course is available in two formats, a lectionary-based format and a topic-based format. The **lectionary-based format** follows the 3-year lectionary cycle as found in your choice of the Revised Common Lectionary, Roman Catholic or Book of Common Prayer. Therefore, one or more of the readings that will be heard in church during the Sunday morning service will be the focus of the class that Sunday. Readings are usually based on the New Testament readings, although Old Testament readings and occasionally the Psalm assigned for that Sunday become the focus reading for a lesson as well. The **topic-based format** examines a topic in some detail over a 3 to 4-week period of time. The topics are based on the characteristics of spiritual development, which are to learn that one has a life-purpose and that it is possible to discern what that purpose is; to seek connection with the inner self (the spirit, as opposed to the outer self, the ego); to seek connection with God and with the world around one, both natural and human; and to experience transcendence (meaning seeing how one fits into the bigger picture). The year will progress from inward to outward, focusing on “me” issues first, then progressing to “God” issues, and then examining “community and world” issues.

Regardless of the format (lectionary-based or topic-based) you have chosen, the weekly lessons in *Making it Real and Relevant* follow the same structure. The curriculum is designed to address multiple learning styles by incorporating small group and general group discussion, movie clips, music, current events and a variety of interactive activities to bring Bible readings to life. Through this varied style of presentation, youth can explore God, Jesus, the Bible, their faith and values in ways that show them how real and relevant these topics are in their lives. The curriculum is sectioned into four parts: an “Opener,” “The Heart of the Lesson,” “Wrapping it Up,” and a “Closing.” The “Opener” is primarily used to bring everyone’s attention to the class and the topic being studied. “The Heart of the Lesson” and “Wrapping it Up” offer the substance of the class, and the “Closing” allows youth the opportunity to reflect on the discussion and readings for the class. The lessons are designed to be usable for small (2-6 students) or large (7 or more students) classes, and directions are included in each lesson plan for leaders of groups of both sizes.

There will be two opportunities for outreach during the year. The lessons during the seasons of Advent and Lent suggest projects and build in time to work on those projects, since they are perfect times to be thinking about how we can be more Christ-like as we remember why Christ was born into this world and why he died and rose again.

## Some Words About Time and Discussion

### Timing

Making it Real and Relevant lesson plans include suggested times for each section of a lesson. Times are located in parentheses in the line below each of the lesson section headings. For example, for the first section of the lesson you will see,

Opener  
(10 minutes)

These times are only suggestions, based on pilot study results. Every class is different, however. You may have a class that really enjoys discussion but is not musically inclined. In this case, you may decide to not use the music clips and to extend the discussion time. Or, you may have a group that prefers to do the opening activities or spend more time in prayer at closing than in discussion following a Bible passage or movie clip. Again, you may choose to extend the time given for the activities the students like and seem to be getting the most out of.

Consequently, you will need to decide whether or not you will follow the suggested times for each section. If you choose to follow the suggested times, plan on cutting activities and discussions off at the end of the allotted time in order to move through the whole lesson in one class. If you choose to extend the time on a section that is holding your class's attention, think about what other section of the lesson you are willing to skip or condense. You may also decide to extend a lesson over two Sundays because the class is finding a lot to talk about or is taking time to absorb concepts being presented.

### Discussion Questions

Making it Real and Relevant makes use of discussion questions following movie clips, Bible passage readings, music clips, and some activities. The questions are designed to get conversation rolling. There are often more discussion questions than you will have time to cover, so think about the questions that will be most meaningful for your group, and start with those questions first. You may also find there are questions not listed in the curriculum that would be appropriate for your unique group. You are encouraged to add questions as you would like. Remember that when asking questions, frame your questions so that students are required to give more than a "yes" or "no" answer. One way to do this is to ask students, "Why?" or, "Explain your reasoning."

Sometimes the conversation that develops from a discussion question will lead away from the original topic. As long as it is a topic of relevance to the spiritual growth and moral and faith development of your youth, allow the conversation to have a life of its own. It is amazing what can be learned and discovered when you get "off track." If you wish to cover a certain number of the discussion questions, you can place a time limit on "off track" conversations that develop out of a discussion and move the class back on topic by introducing the next question.

## Some Words About Multimedia

This curriculum makes use of popular movie and music clips and information from recent world events. Therefore, it is very important that you, the instructor, take the time before class to familiarize yourself with what will be seen or heard in class. To save yourself from unpleasant or uncomfortable surprises, always have your movie clip cued up before you start class and watch it before you show it to your students. G, PG and PG-13 rated movies are the primary resources for video clips, but occasionally an R-rated movie (such as *The Matrix*) will have a scene that is too good not to use. The clips shown in class will be acceptable for any audience; however, unacceptable content may be in the preceding or following scenes, which is why it benefits you to know what is happening around your clip before you show it and why you should have the scene cued up ahead of time.

A separate page listing all the movie and music clips is included at the beginning of each unit so that you can plan ahead. Most classes will make use of either a video clip or a music clip. Sometimes lessons will have both music and video and occasionally there will be neither. You can rent videos or music DVDs, borrow from church members who are movie fans, or purchase used videos inexpensively through sites such as amazon.com or a local video store. It is not legal to burn a DVD with the movie clips; you *must* use the original (as per the July 2010 ruling) and queue it up to the starting point ahead of time. You need to obtain a license to play movies from an organization such as [www.cvli.com](http://www.cvli.com). Some argue that short movie clips used in an educational context are exempt but I encourage you to get a license to be safe – and it allows your church to show a movie whenever you choose! While printed lyrics used in an educational context may be covered under “fair use,” it is best to get a license from an organization such as [www.ccli.com](http://www.ccli.com) or a comparable group.

When you are preparing for classes that include music clips please consider making copies of the lyrics available for youth. Sites such as [www.christianlyricsonline.com](http://www.christianlyricsonline.com) or [www.lyricsondemand.com](http://www.lyricsondemand.com) offer lyrics – all you have to do is cut and paste the lyrics into a separate document and then photocopy the lyrics for the youth to follow along when you play music clips. I highly recommend doing this because this music is chosen for the lyrics—no matter how good the music is, there is always a point where words get lost because of the drums, guitars, or poor annunciation on the singer’s part. When the youth don’t hear the lyrics, they lose part of the meaning of the lesson. It is also helpful to have lyrics to refer back to when discussing the song after playing it. Again, getting a license before copying lyrics ensures that you are legal. And in any case, make sure you destroy the copies when you are finished so no one inadvertently uses them illegally.

Finally, current events do not stay current for long. If you find something that fits with the lesson plan that is more current than the plan suggests, use it! For example, at the time of this writing, Hurricane Katrina had just devastated the Gulf States. Lessons that may have used 9/11 or the tsunami as examples or discussion starters will have much more impact if they refer to Hurricane Katrina or whatever may have happened recently.

## Some Words About Group Discussion

Some portion of each class will be devoted to group discussion. Therefore, facilitators should go into the first class with some goals regarding group discussion rules and building trust and a sense of community in a group. Here are some things to think about:

Respect is the key to making a discussion format work.

*Respect silence.* Let silence happen after a question. Respect the students' need to ponder a question, to have the time to think about how they want to put words together, to let the Holy Spirit go to work in that space of silence. The first ten seconds after a question has been asked can be the most anxious ten seconds a group leader will endure. Please endure! Curb the inclination to fill the silent space with your thoughts and reflections. This class is about their thoughts and reflections—let them own the silence.

*Respect for each other* is also important. There will be talkative youth and silent youth. You'll know pretty quickly who is not going to talk in your class, but there will inevitably be a class that strikes a spark for the silent one; make sure that the ones who like to talk respect the right of all other group members to speak.

Along that line, remember to *temper your enthusiasm*. It's good to have examples from your life experiences to share that encourage discussion, but try to keep your input to a minimum.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, respect each other by making it clear to the group before you start the lesson that personal reflections offered during class stay within the group and are not to be shared with people outside of class. Nothing kills trust in a group more quickly than having something personal and private shared with the world. *Show respect for each other by fostering trust.*

If you find typos, errors, activities that went "splat," or if you or your youth have suggestions for music clips or opener activities and games, please email me so that I may continue to improve upon this work in progress. If you find things that go exceptionally well, I'd love to know that too! My email address is included below. Please put "real and relevant suggestions" in the subject line so I don't mistake it for junk or infected mail.

Thank you!

Heidi K.E. Hawks

hhawks@seespiritgrow.com

## Making it Real and Relevant: Propers 18-25 (Year CA)

### Movie and Music Clips

#### **Proper 18 (September 5, 2010)**

Music clip “Coming Attractions” by Steven Curtis Chapman from the album, *All Things New*

*Step Up*: The first clip starts at 23:56 (the beginning of chapter 4 on DVD) with Nora welcoming students to the audition and ends at 27:20 with Tyler saying, “Tights! What?”

The second clip starts at 38:48 (the beginning of chapter 6) when Tyler comes running in to the rehearsal room, and ends at 41:19, when Tyler says, “It didn’t look like you needed me anyway.”

#### **Proper 19 (September 12, 2010)**

*The Guardian*: The clip begins at 1:54:04 (in Chapter 11 on DVD) with a voice saying “Swimmer’s ready!” as Jake Fischer prepares to jump out of the helicopter and ends at 1:59:40 when Jake says to the man he just rescued, “Ready to go home?” (Turn it off immediately after he says this, because the next scene is rather graphic).

#### **Proper 20 (September 19, 2010)**

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*: The clip starts at 1:34:13 (Just after the beginning of Chapter 25 on DVD) when Harry says to Sirius Black and Remus Lupin, “Tell me about Peter Pettigrew!” and ends at 1:38:40 when Pettigrew whines to Ron and Hermione, “I was a good rat! Clever girl.”

#### **Proper 21 (September 26, 2010)**

“The Face of Christ” by Chris Rice from the album *Smell the Color 9*

*Hook*: The first clip starts at 13:34 with Peter passing Granny Wendy in the hall, where she asks him, “Oh, Peter do you like my dress?” and ends at 15:35 with Moira throwing Peter’s cell phone out the window.

The second clip starts at 19:43 (Chapter 3 on DVD) as Peter Banning starts a speech with “I read recently that...” and ends at 21:44 with “I guess we do have something in common; we’re orphans.”

#### **Proper 22 (October 3, 2010)**

*Second Hand Lions*: Starts at 1:10:41 (part way through Chapter 14 on DVD), when Uncle Hub turns to Walter and asks, “You cold, son?” and ends at 1:12:35 when Walter tells Uncle Hub, “That was a good speech.”

“A Shame” by Pillar, from the Album, *Fireproof*

**Proper 23 (October 10, 2010)**

“Thank You” by Rebecca St. James from the album, *If I Had One Chance to Tell You Something*

**Proper 24 (October 17, 2010)**

*The Day After Tomorrow*: The first clip, where Sam calls his father, starts at 55:50 (chapter 16 on DVD) when Sam says to the librarian, “Excuse me, are there any pay phones on the upper floors?” and ends at 58:46 when Jack says over the phone, “Do you understand me?”

The second clip starts at 1:08:46 (Chapter 19 on DVD) as the dog starts barking at people who are walking down the street, and ends at 1:11:22 as Sam watches people walking by him and outside.

**Proper 25 (October 24, 2010)**

Music clip of “Two Sets of Jones” by Big Tent Revival, from the album, *Big Tent Revival or Greatest Hits*

*Shrek*: The clip starts at 1:16:11 when Shrek bursts into the church, yelling, “I object!” It ends at 1:19:42, when the congregation says, “Awww.”

## Proper 18: Sunday closest to September 7

### Focus Reading

Luke 14:25-33

### Opener

(10-15 minutes)

Before opening class, consider having donuts and coffee, hot chocolate, or juice available in the class. The saying about supplying food and they will come is a true statement!

Have any movie and music clips queued up and ready to go.

Place a variety of every-day objects on a table before the class arrives. Try to have as many objects as the number of students expected. Objects can be things like a flashlight, a bell, a candle, an empty journal or a book, the Bible, a roll of duct tape, a band aid, a bottle of conditioner, a stapler, a paper clip, a notepad, and so on.

After students arrive and get settled, invite them up to the table to choose an object. Explain that the object they choose should be one that represents them in some way. For instance, a student could choose a data CD, saying that it represents her great memory. After students have chosen their objects, have them take turns introducing themselves and explaining how the objects represent them. Since this is your first Sunday back to Sunday school, take your time with this getting to know you ice-breaker.

### The Heart of the Lesson

(25 minutes)

Today's lesson is based on the gospel, Luke 14:25-33. The message is simple- Jesus is asking us to consider the question, "What does it mean to be a Christian?" In typical Jesus style, he starts his message by giving some extreme examples – he tells us that we must hate our families in order to become disciples. Once he has the audience's attention with that opening line, he then asks people to really think about what it means to be a Christian and whether they have thought about what this responsibility or way of life really entails. His example of a builder estimating what he needs and the costs involved before starting a project serves as a practical reminder that we should first consider the cost to us of everything in life before we commit.

## Supplies

### For the School year:

Bibles for students

Flip chart or dry erase/chalk board

Markers/chalk for chart or board

Pens, pencils

### For Today's Lesson

Household objects for Opener

Movie clip from *Step Up*

Music clip "Coming Attractions" by Steven Curtis Chapman from the album, *All Things New*

Copies of lyrics for "Coming Attractions"

To start the lesson off, show students the picture at the end of the lesson. Ask:

- What do you think is going on in this picture? Describe what you see.

Share the following information with the class.

Construction of this house began shortly after the land was purchased in 2000. There has been no activity on the house since 2005.

Ask:

- Give some reasons why the builder has not finished the house?

If you need to, lead the students to the solution that the builder did not accurately estimate the cost of completing the house before starting the project and ran out of money before he could complete it.

Follow the discussion with an introduction to the Luke passage being read today, by saying something like, “Jesus had things to say about builders and how they should estimate costs.”

Read or invite a volunteer to read aloud today’s Bible passage from Luke. After the passage has been read aloud, ask:

- What is the point of Jesus’ lesson? While this lesson talks about a builder, it also talks about disciples and kings preparing for war. How are the three alike?

**Leader’s Tip:** Remember that this is the first Sunday back after a three month break and youth may be shy about talking, especially if there are new students. If you get the silent treatment, give it right back for at least 30 seconds. If you get no response after a suitable time of silence, begin leading the discussion with a question like, “What does being a disciple have to do with being a builder or a king preparing for war?” You may need to define disciple for the class; simply stated, disciple means student or follower.

When youth have arrived at the conclusion that Jesus was telling people they needed to make sure they understood

what was involved before committing themselves to be disciples, point out that this is not only good advice for deciding to be disciples, but, as Jesus showed through his examples, it is a good piece of advice for life in general.

The movie, *Step Up*, shows why estimating the costs before committing to something is important. *Step Up* is a story about a teenager, Tyler Gage (Channing Tatum) who gets caught breaking into an arts school and damaging school property. He is given community service hours, which he serves at the arts school doing janitorial work. While there, he discovers that Nora, one of the senior dancers, has lost her partner just before the final school talent showcase, which is heavily attended by owners of dance troupes who are looking for fresh talent. Tyler is a dancer with no formal training, but is very talented and loves to dance. He offers to be Nora's partner until her original partner recovers. In the clips we'll see today, Tyler and Nora convince the principal that Tyler's community service hours would be better used as Nora's temporary partner, and then Tyler shows up for practice an hour late because he decided to play basketball with his friends rather than honor his commitment to Nora.

The first clip starts at 23:56 (the beginning of chapter 4 on DVD) with Nora welcoming students to the audition and ends at 27:20 with Tyler saying, "Tights! What?" Scroll forward to the next clip. Before you begin the second clip, explain that Tyler chose to play basketball with his friends after school before going to rehearse, and his choice makes him late for rehearsal. The clip starts at 38:48 (the beginning of chapter 6) when Tyler comes running in to the rehearsal room, and ends at 41:19, when Tyler says, "It didn't look like you needed me anyway."

After the clip has finished, get discussion going by asking questions like the following. You do not have to confine your conversation to these questions; they are just to get the conversational ball rolling:

- What was the commitment involved in Tyler's partnering with Nora? Do you think he considered the costs before volunteering to be her dance partner?
- Have you ever been involved in something that was important to you that relied on other people's

- participation, and they let you down? Describe the experience (without naming names) and how you handled the situation. Was the person as committed as you were? Why or why not?
- Do you think Tyler understood how important this dance was to Nora? Why or why not? If you said yes, why do you think he treated her as he did?
  - When you are asked to do something, or are considering doing something like join a club, a sports team or be in a chorus, band or orchestra, do you think about it before you say yes or no? What is your decision-making process? (some answers might be: developing a pro and con list, talking with parents to see if they have the time to get you there and home, looking at your school work load, deciding if there is time during the week to practice on your own outside the scheduled practices and determining whether the schedule of this activity interferes with other things already scheduled)
  - Do you think people today have a similar or different understanding from early Christians concerning what it means to be a Christian and the commitment level that is involved?
  - What kind of commitment do you think is involved with being a Christian?
  - Based on the clips we just saw, do you think Tyler would have been a good disciple? Why or why not?
  - Give examples of people in your life and in the church community who show their commitment to being Christian? How do they show their commitment?

### **Wrapping It Up (10 minutes)**

Earlier we discussed the decision-making process in joining a sports team, club or other group that expects steady attendance and regular contribution. Let's think about this again before we talk about the "costs" of committing to Christianity. As students give answers to the following questions, write their responses down on a board or flip chart page, splitting the space into two columns. Label the left column "Committing to a team/club." Ask:

- What do you have to do to join a team, band or club? (show that you are interested, that you have some

- talent or knowledge of the topic)
- What costs are involved in joining? (some examples would be purchasing uniforms, instruments, getting to and from events, following a certain behavior code, practicing on your own time, attending meetings, practices and/or rehearsals, obeying the coach's/leader's direction)
- What are the rewards?

Now look at Christianity. Label the right column of your chart, "Committing to Christ/Christianity." Ask:

- What are things that you have to do to be Christian? What are the costs involved? (you should find that there are many similarities between joining teams and committing to Christianity)

NOTE: while discussing costs, you should bring up the phrase "carrying your cross," which is a phrase Jesus used in today's passage when telling people what they must do to become disciples/students of Christ. Discuss the meaning of carrying one's cross, which can be likened to being committed until death. Jesus was so committed to his faith in God and the message he was bringing the world that he literally carried his cross to his site of death and willingly died on that cross. This is the level of commitment Christ is asking us for—a lifetime commitment; an until death commitment.

- What are the rewards? (you might compare the reward of Christianity to being able to pass a final exam, which consists of one question - where will you spend eternity?)

### **Closing (5-7 minutes)**

Close with the song, "Coming Attractions" by Steven Curtis Chapman from the album, *All Things New*. This is a terrific song about how Christians model Christ through our lives, actions and attitudes.

**TIP:** When using music clips, provide a hardcopy of the lyrics for the students. Some songs have great lyrics but they get drowned out by the musical accompaniment or misunderstood because the singer isn't clearly pronouncing the words. Most album/CD dust jackets have the song lyrics inside, or you can find lyrics for free at such sites as

[www.christianlyricsonline.com](http://www.christianlyricsonline.com) or  
<http://www.christianmusic.com/lyricsmainpage.html>. Just  
copy and paste into a word document and then print!

At the conclusion of the song, thank students for joining you  
today, and conclude the lesson with prayer as a formal  
ending to the class.

## Space For Notes



## Proper 19: Sunday closest to September 14

### Focus Reading

Luke 15:1-10

### Opener

(10-15 minutes)

Today's lesson is about being lost. Almost certainly, it seems that everyone has experienced being lost or losing someone at least once in their lives; perhaps you were in the grocery store with your parent and you stopped to look at the picture on a magazine, and then you turned around to find your parent was no longer in the aisle with you. Sometimes the stories are amusing, other times they become family legends. Regardless of the story, the experience of losing someone or being lost is one of those experiences that everyone understands and empathizes with. Today, we're going to talk about being lost...and found.

Open the lesson by asking the class to go around the room and describe a time that they got lost or separated from their family or a time they were present when someone they knew and cared about got lost. As each student describes their experience, ask them how they felt at the time they realized they were lost or separated from the people they were with – or in the case of someone they know getting lost, how they felt when they realized the other person was lost. Then have them describe what feelings they experienced when they were found, or the person they knew who got lost was found.

After sharing their stories, ask the youth:

- Now that you have remembered the fear you felt at the moment you realized you, or someone you know, was lost, on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being having no fear and 10 being extreme fear, what number would you assign your fear at the time you were experiencing it? What number would you say the person who had lost you and was looking for you would have chosen?
- Why do you suppose we all feel fear of being lost or of losing someone close to us?

## Supplies

Movie clips from  
*The Guardian*

Kleenex

**The Heart of the Lesson  
(25 minutes)**

Start the next part of the lesson by reading today's gospel, which are two short parables about being lost and found. After you have read the passage aloud, ask:

- Jesus was making a point with these two stories: What is the point?
- The lost items are one sheep and one small coin. Why do the people looking for them consider them so valuable?
- Have you ever lost something (a thing, not a person) that caused you to search everywhere you knew to look and perhaps even enlist help from other friends or family? What was the item and why were you searching so hard for it? Why do we search hard for some things and not hard at all for other things? (You want students to recognize that we search for what is valuable to us, just as Christ was trying to get people to realize what was valuable to them in these two parables)

While things are often of great value to us, as Jesus pointed out in the parables and as the students also showed in their answers to the last question above, people are even more valuable. Think about this. If your house was on fire and there were people you love inside along with all your personal belongings, would you rescue the people you love first or the things you love?

Let's look at today's clip. It is about a few men who make it their life's work to save those who could easily be given up for lost. The movie, *The Guardian*, is about a group of men who undergo a rigorous training program in order to qualify them as members of the Coast Guard rescue swimmers. Their primary duty is to rescue people who are lost at sea, usually in extreme weather conditions. The instructor of this training class, Senior Chief Ben Randall, (Kevin Costner) is a pro, who is known for rarely losing anyone he sets out to rescue. Once, after the winch froze, he held a man by the wrist while hanging from a cable the entire 20 minute helicopter flight to land. One of his students, Jake Fischer (Ashton Kutcher), does very well in the training and they become friends. After graduation, Jake is assigned to Randall's base and they become colleagues.

The clip from the movie we are showing today is a scene where Fischer's team is called in to rescue four men on a fishing boat that has been overpowered by a severe storm and is sinking. The helicopter Jake's team flies can only stay for a certain period of time, and Jake has to choose between staying with one of the men who is trapped under some debris or to go back with the team and the four men he rescued. Randall, who has just turned in his resignation, agrees to go on this one last rescue mission to retrieve Jake and the boat captain.

The clip begins at 1:54:04 (in Chapter 11 on DVD) with a voice saying "Swimmer's ready!" as Jake Fischer prepares to jump out of the helicopter and ends at 1:59:40 when Jake says to the man he just rescued, "Ready to go home?" (Turn it off immediately after he says this, because the next scene is rather graphic). After the clip plays, ask:

- When Fischer reaches the men who are trapped aboard their sinking vessel, they pull him aboard and say, "Man, are we glad to see you!" When you were lost, who found you or reached out to help you? How did you feel toward that person?
- How do you think the captain of the ship felt when he heard Jake's team tell Jake he had to leave the captain behind and come back aboard the helicopter?
- How do you think the captain of the ship felt when Jake refused to leave the man behind?
- Why did Jake choose to stay behind with the captain? Why do you think Jake was able to tell his team to go back without him? (Because he knew he would not be lost or left behind. He knew someone would come back for him). If you have ever been lost, do you remember having the hope that you would be found?
- When Jesus tells the stories of the shepherd who refused to leave behind one sheep out of hundreds or the woman who refused to stop looking for a small coin, he was telling a story that had a deeper meaning than just the story itself. What is Jesus telling people that he will do for them in his parables, just as Jake and Ben do?

### **Wrapping It Up (10 minutes)**

The difference between Jake's attitude about being left on a

sinking ship and the men Jake rescued is directly related to Jake's confidence in being found. Jake has absolute confidence that someone will rescue him. His senior chief, Ben Randall, taught him that. We see this in the final clip from *The Guardian*, which offers a kind of parable of its own.

The clip starts at 2:06:15 with Ben and Jake being lifted from the sinking ship and the cable snaps, and ends at 2:10:55 when Jake (in a voice over) says, "He is known as the guardian." After the clip plays, pass out the Kleenex to those who need it 😊, then ask:

- Why does Ben release himself from the safety belt, knowing that he will fall to a certain death if he lets go of the cable? Who is saving whom in this scene?
- Jake asks, "What makes a legend? How they lived their lives or how they are remembered?" What do you think is the answer to that question? Is it one or the other, or both? Why? Think about Jesus Christ and his life, death and the religion that grew from his ministry. How does this apply to your response to what makes a legend?
- The closing speech of the clip is that there is a legend of a man who lives under the sea who is a fisher of men. How is this clip like a parable that Jesus might teach? Could this speech be applied to someone else (i.e. Christ)? Why?
- Jesus is trying to tell us with his parables that we can have absolute confidence in God. Through Christ, we will always be found, rescued from those places in or lives where we find ourselves lost and floundering. While today's clip focuses on being physically rescued, Christ's message is much greater. Can you give examples of the ways in which God finds us when we or lost, or rescues us when we are in danger?

### **Closing (2-3 minutes)**

Before you close with prayer, challenge the class to think in the week ahead about whether or not they have absolute confidence in God and whether God will always be there to find and rescue them. Ask them to think about ways in which they might increase their confidence in God if they are not absolutely confident.

Close with prayer. The *Book of Common Prayer* has some excellent prayers for those who are lost or searching for a way forward. If you have BCP's in the classroom, this is an excellent opportunity to show students where prayers can be found in the BCP. Direct them to pages 814-835 and invite them to look for appropriate prayers. You can also look at the collects (pages 211-259; see especially the last few pages) and even prayers in Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline.

## Space For Notes

## Proper 20: Sunday closest to September 21

### Focus Reading

Luke 16:1-13

### Opener

**(10-15 minutes)**

“If You Know What I Mean”

Open today taking a few minutes to play a popular party game called “If you know what I mean.” We are going to put a spin on it, because at parties it often degenerates into bawdy humor. So, the challenge will be to tell the story of Noah’s Ark. Before playing the game, you might want to have the class quickly retell the story of Noah’s Ark (or read the Bible passage) so the entire group is working from the same background story.

“If you know what I mean” works this way. People take turns telling the story, but every sentence (or two) has to include a phrase that implies the actual events or serves as a metaphor for the activity they are alluding to. They follow their story change with the statement, “If you know what I mean,” or “If you know what I’m saying.”

For example, when God is describing the flood he is going to cause, he might say to Noah, “Noah, It’s going to be so wet outside you’re going to wish you had webbed feet, if you know what I mean.”

To conserve time and to assure everyone has the chance to participate, especially if you have sleepy-looking youth or a large group, you may want to play the game by setting up two or three teams. Ask the teams to work together to create their metaphors instead of everyone working individually.

### The Heart of the Lesson

**(25 minutes)**

Today’s gospel may be difficult one to grasp; it is another of Jesus’ parables, and as such, seems to have underlying meanings, much like the opening game of “If you know what I mean.” The gospel tells us that while on earth, we should use our wealth to help others (the gospel says “gain friends”), rather than hoard our wealth. There is a reason for this; we can’t take our wealth with us when we die, but the things we have done with our lives do make a difference when we die. We either serve money and selfish desire or we serve God and share our lives, making the most of our time here improving our lives

## Supplies

Movie clip from  
*Harry Potter and  
the Prisoner of  
Azkaban*

and the lives of those around us. Jesus says, you can't do both, so which do you choose?

Read today's passage, Luke 16: 1-13 aloud or have a volunteer or two read. You will want to take a few minutes to discuss the passage. Ask:

- Let's review. Why does the owner fire the manager?
- What does the manager do in response to losing his job? How does he provide for his future?
- Why is the owner commending the manager for cheating the owner? (If you look in the next line, Jesus tells you why - he says that people who are of this world are better at dealing with their own kind...in other words, cheaters understand how other cheaters think and are impressed when they see someone being more shrewd than they themselves are. So, it sounds like the owner also cheated and was impressed by the manager's tactics to save himself).
- What does Jesus mean when he says you can't serve both God and money?
- Do you think our society has any problems choosing between serving God or money? Which do we choose to serve?
- What are some examples of serving money over God?

In Luke 16:9, Jesus advises us to use worldly wealth to gain friends for ourselves, so that when we die our wealth is gone but we have earned entrance into heaven. The manager of the land shows us how to do this, by using the power at his disposal, which is the ability to change the bills people owe, so that they will feel indebted or more kindly to him in case he should need help when he is without a job. While Jesus states that worldly wealth is to be used to gain eternal life, we can understand that this isn't just money that he's talking about. It can be argued that part of the manager's "worldly wealth" was his ability to cheat and manipulate others, in order to make sure his life (current, not eternal) was more comfortable.

We see this happening all the time in the world around us, as did Jesus, who pointed out to his followers how shrewd people are able to deal with/manipulate each other. While we do not always have worldly wealth to use, we do tend to use what we have at our disposal to make our lives better. We're going to

## Space For Notes

look at a clip from one of the *Harry Potter* movies to see one person's attempt to use the means at hand to make his life more comfortable.

In the movie *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry learns that his father's best friends, Sirius Black, Peter Pettigrew, and Remus Lupin, had sworn to protect Harry when he was a baby by keeping a magical secret. Peter proved to be weak in character and gave the Potters away to the evil wizard, Voldemort, who appeared to be the strongest wizard around. As a result, Harry's parents were killed and Harry's godfather, Sirius Black, was framed and sent to the wizard equivalent of jail; Azkaban. In the clip we are about to see, Pettigrew suddenly finds himself having to face up to the people he betrayed, and tries to weasel his way into Harry's and Ron's favor in order to save himself from prison.

The clip starts at 1:34:13 (Just after the beginning of Chapter 25 on DVD) when Harry says to Sirius Black and Remus Lupin, "Tell me about Peter Pettigrew!" and ends at 1:38:40 when Pettigrew whines to Ron and Hermione, "I was a good rat! Clever girl."

After playing the clip, ask:

- Who is Pettigrew serving besides himself? (answer: Lord Voldemort) Why did he choose Voldemort over being loyal to his friends? (this response relies somewhat on someone having seen the movie or read the book, which should not be a problem!)
- When he realizes that his life and freedom are in danger, what does Pettigrew do?
- How is Peter Pettigrew like the manager in the parable? (answer: he tries to gain support in order to avoid hardship and punishment)
- After watching this clip, what would your answers to the questions Luke 16:11-12 asks? ("So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?") Describe your answer using Peter Pettigrew and Harry Potter as examples. Remember that we're using a parable, so worldly wealth, true riches and property can describe many meaningful things, not just material objects.

- Can you think of a time when you witnessed someone's attempt to improve his or her lot in life at another's expense, like Peter Pettigrew or the manager in the parable attempted to do? Describe the time—no names please.

**Wrapping It Up  
(10 minutes)**

The movie clip from Harry Potter brings to light some other issues hidden within Jesus' parable...friendship and recognition of the need to think about one's eternal life. As a wrap up to the lesson, let's briefly examine these two issues.

- Some might call Pettigrew's behavior the actions of a "fickle friend." What does "fickle friend" mean? (If "fickle" is not in their vocabulary, try "two-faced.") Have you ever had or known a fickle friend? What did they do that was fickle? Whose interests do they hold to be most important?
- Sirius and Pettigrew are perfect examples of the difference between true friends and fickle friends- describe how Sirius proves he is a true friend, while Peter shows his fickleness.
- How are the self-centered interests of fickle friends different from those of true friends?
- When Jesus tells us to use our wealth to gain friends in order to also gain eternal reward, what do you think he means?
- Do you think Jesus is advising us to be like Sirius or Peter? Explain your answer.
- Do you think Peter is concerned about his eternal life? (yes, in the sense that he doesn't want to enter it yet!) Or is he more focused on the here and now?
- What would you say your focus is - here and now, or eternity? Why do you think this is so? Does your focus reflect whether you are serving God or money/material wealth? Explain your answer.
- Do you think you need to have your focus on only one or the other (here and now versus eternal life), or do you think balancing the two is the correct answer? Why?

**Space For Notes**

**Closing**  
**(2-3 minutes)**

Today we've touched on several important messages that Jesus buried within his parable. Who we serve, the importance of being good friends and using our lives to establish our eternal lives, are just some of the topics we covered. Close with prayer inviting youth, if they are comfortable doing so, to ask for God's guidance in any issues they are concerned about.

**Space For Notes**

## Bibliography

### Books

Bell, M. (1970). *The way of the wolf: The gospel in new images*. New York: Ballentine Books.

### Music

Big Tent Revival. (1995). Two sets of Jones'. On *Big Tent Revival* (CD). United States: Forefront.

Chapman, S. C. (2004). Coming attractions. On *All Things New*. [CD]. United States: Sparrow.

Pillar. (2003). A shame. On *Fireproof* [CD]. United States: MCA.

Rice, C. (2000). The face of Christ. On *Smell the Color 9* [CD]. 2003. United States: Rocketown.

St. James, R. (2005). Thank You. On *If I had one chance to tell you something* [CD].

### Video

Barnathan, M., McDougall, C., & Seghatchian, T. (Producers), & Cuaron, A. (2004). *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* [Motion Picture]. United States: Warner Bros. Pictures.

Bernstein, A., Blank, L., Devine, Z., & Lyons, C. (Producers), & Davis, A. (2006). *The Guardian* [Motion Picture]. United States: Beacon Pictures.

Chaskin, J.R., Cooper, K, Emmerich, T., & Kaufman, M. (Producers) & McCanlies, T. (Director). (2003). *Second Hand Lions* [Motion Picture]. United States: New Line Cinema.

Cox, P.F. (Producer), & Adamson, A. & Jensen, V (Directors). (2001). *Shrek* [Motion Picture]. United States: Dreamworks Animation.

Emmerich, U., Germain, S., & Van Horn, K (Producers), & Emmerich, R. (Director). (2004). *The Day After Tomorrow* [Motion Picture]. United States: Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation.

Fayed, D., & Hart, J. (Producers), & Spielberg, S. (Director). (1991). *Hook* [Motion Picture]. United States: Amblin Entertainment.

Garrett, D., Hayward, B., Matosich, A. (Producers), & Fletcher, A. (Director). (2006). *Step Up* [Motion Picture]. United States: Eketahuna LLC.