



Making it
REAL
AND
RELEVANT

An Overview and Description
of the Topics

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A Note to Leaders About The Topics

This version of *Making it Real and Relevant* takes a topic and examines it in some detail over several lessons with the goal of addressing characteristics of spiritual development. Some of these characteristics 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).

While the topics can be used in any order, I recommend starting with Topic 1, which was written specifically to build a sense of community. The first year topics, Topics 1-9, were written intentionally to progress from inward to outward, focusing on “me” issues first, then progressing to “God” issues, and then examining “community and world” issues. However, topics can be used in any order you prefer. This document provides a brief description of the topics and how many lessons are included in each topic in order to help you plan your year.

A separate page listing all the movie and music clips is included at the beginning of the unit so that you can plan ahead. My advice is to save money on the music and either burn the clips yourself or find a tech-savvy youth who can burn these clips onto one CD for you from sites such as Napster, I Tunes etc. You can rent videos, borrow from church members who are movie fans, or purchase used videos inexpensively through sites such as amazon.com or a local video store. If the software is available to do so, burn a DVD with the movie clips in order ahead of time as well.

When you are pulling these pieces of media together, please consider making copies of the lyrics of the songs available for youth as well; sites such as christianlyricsonline.com or lyricsondemand.com offer lyrics for free. All you have to do is cut and paste into a separate document and 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 and no matter how good the music is, there is always a point where words get lost because of the drums, guitars, rap, or poor enunciation 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, the first topic will be handled a little differently from the rest. It serves as an overview topic, rather than a topic with a specific aim, but it will serve as a good start up for the year and will also allow some getting to know you time through group discussion and ice breaker type activities.

Please contact me at hhawks@seespiritgrow.com or (336) 816-4555 if you have any questions or you have suggestions for topics for the coming year; I’d love to hear them!

Thanks-
Heidi Hawks

**Making It Real and Relevant:
A Multi-Media Enhanced, Topic-Based Bible Study for Youth**

Topic 1: At Ground Level (4 lessons)

Lesson 1: Creating

God created humans from ground. What does it mean to know that you were created by God? We are like God in that we have the ability to be creative too. What are the responsibilities of the Creator (you or God)?

Lesson 2: Reforming

God is like the potter, who creates with clay. If what the potter has created doesn't work right, the clay is soft, malleable and can be squashed back together and reformed. Out of the mistakes and failures can come something beautiful. When have you made a mistake or failed at something and found that redoing your error produced something better than you had even imagined?

Lesson 3: Transforming

Jesus transformed a man's life by using a mud pack to change how the man saw things. Have you ever experienced transformation, where something happened that changed how you looked at or saw something? Is there somewhere in your life that needs transforming now?

Lesson 4: Creating, Reforming, Transforming the World

God, in creating us in God's image, has given us the abilities to be creative, to reform and to transform our lives. These abilities can change the world. How can we make change happen with these three gifts?

This topic will have an ongoing activity that youth will spend some time on each lesson. During the first lesson, they will create an object. The second lesson they will squish their object and create something new. The third lesson, their object will be transformed into something else. The fourth lesson, the objects will be melded together into one new object in the shape of a Christian symbol. (The facilitator will bake the object after the fourth lesson.)

Topic 2: Who am I? (4 lessons)

This topic will help students explore who they are. They will assess their likes, dislikes, how they think, learn and communicate with others, how they are like other people and how they are unique, and most importantly, they will begin to discuss what it means to have been created with a purpose. What is my purpose? This question will lead ultimately to a deeper understanding of one's self and will encourage one's spiritual development.

Topic 3: Fact Finding Mission: Who is God? (4 lessons)

How do we envision, describe, understand God? When we were young versus how we see God now – has that changed? How do other people describe and understand God (Biblical, clergy, parents, friends)? What is your experience of God? Have you had any experiences of God? How do you know that it was God you experienced? This topic will request a clergy person to come to class one lesson and talk to youth about who God is.

Topic 4: Preparing (3 lessons) [Advent Year C]

What is Advent? What are we preparing for? What are some ways I can prepare? How can I be a part of the change that Jesus came to earth to bring about? Advent project: Changing The World (a little at a time). If you follow the lectionary cycle, the lessons used in this topic reflect the lessons found in lectionary year C.

Topic 5: The Gifts God Gave Me (3-4 lessons)

This three lesson topic focuses on spiritual gifts, what they are, who has them, what they are used for and helping students identify their spiritual gifts.

Topic 6: Family- Does It Matter? (3 lessons)

The continuation of Jesus' family story – the day the wise men came to visit. Family history. What are the stories in my family that make my family special? How do those stories help form who I am? (family history gives us values, roles, traditions, ties to other people in other places and in other times). Are the stories in the Bible part of my family history?

Topic 7: Temptation (5 lessons) [Lent Year C]

Lent is a great time to talk about dealing with temptation; Jesus wandered the wilderness for 40 days after dealing with the temptations Satan presented him, and Christians often use this season to set aside temptations in the form of fasting. How do we deal with the tests and temptations that life throws our way? How do we overcome temptation? If you follow the lectionary cycle, the lessons used in this topic reflect the lessons found in lectionary year C.

Topic 8: Why Can't We Be Friends? (3 lessons)

Who are my friends? Why are they my friends? What do I look for in a friend? What do my friends expect from me? Can I count on my friends to be there for me? What do I depend on my friends for? What does the Bible say about friendships? Do I consider Jesus as a friend? What are Jesus friends like? How do your friends compare? How do you compare as a friend?

Topic 9: Can I Make A Difference In The World? (2 lessons)

Topic 9 centers on two ideas- the Great Commandment, found in John 13: 31-35 (Love one another) and having convictions and sticking with those convictions-what causes do students believe in and what people would they follow? Why? Is belief in Christ and his cause a conviction students share?

Topic 10: Making Life Decisions (5 lessons)

Our culture in the 21st century demands people to constantly make split-second decisions and this cultural phenomenon is creating some unique problems for the individuals living in this framework. Sometimes with all the decisions we have to make, we find ourselves in times of indecision; unable to decide between the choices placed before us. Other times, we decide too quickly and then have to deal with the consequences of making poor decisions. We are going to examine the phenomenon of the abundance of choices we have, how we make decisions, and how we deal with the aftermath of making a decision—how we can stand by our decisions even when they go against the flow, how we find role models and why we need them, and how we handle our response when our decision is tested

Topic 11: Faith (4 lessons)

This topic focuses on faith, and invites students to explore the idea of faith. What is faith? Do we have faith today? How easy is it for us in today's culture to have faith in God? Can we be half-hearted in having faith in God? What does it mean to have faith in ourselves? How does having faith in ourselves help us to have faith in and be faithful to God? Finally, the students answer the question, How do we decide what we will believe in?

Topic 12: The Great Commandment: Love (4 lessons)

A brief review of the ten commandments that segues into a discussion of Jesus' Great Commandments; Lessons 2 – 4 focus first on what love means (honor, respect, value) and then discuss what it means to love God, love our neighbors, and love ourselves.

Faith (what is faith, having faith in god, having faith in yourself)

What is a church? (how churches came about, gifts and working together, church today)

Topic 13: Caretakers and Stewards (3 lessons)

Topic 13 examines the ideas of being a good steward of our time and talent and being good caretakers of what God has given us. Students will discuss what it means to be a (good) steward and what the difference between a steward and a caretaker (if there is any difference) is. They will also discuss how they use their time, talent and income, and then talk about being caretakers.

Topic 14: Preparing for the Coming of Christ (3 lessons) [Advent Year A]

Preparing for the coming of Christ is the theme for this series of lessons around the season of Advent. The season of Advent, the beginning of the new church year, is like preparing for the birth of a new child; you can make preparations, but you don't know exactly when the child will arrive, nor can you know ahead of time all of the changes that that new life will make in your life. The lessons discuss being prepared for Christ's coming, living as Christians in the present, and being Christ-like through service to others. If you follow the lectionary cycle, the lessons used in this topic reflect the lessons found in lectionary year A.

**Topic 15: Christ Revealed and what it means to be Christian (5 lessons)
(works well during Epiphany)**

What does it mean to be a Christian? This topic covers several key elements of this question. Lesson one reviews how Christianity came into being, with the birth of Jesus Christ, recognized by many even as an infant as a savior, a king, and messiah. Lesson 2 examines baptism, one of the foundations of the Christian faith, before discussing what people understood Jesus to be and why they chose (and still choose today) to follow him (lessons 3 and 4). During lesson 5, students will talk about the final act of revelation by God, the transfiguration of Jesus, and how witnessing this act affected the followers of Christ.

Topic 16: Living in Faith or Living with Doubt (5 lessons) [Lent Year A]

During this Lenten topic, the lessons are built around stories that come primarily from the Gospel of John. Taken individually, each of these stories contains important messages that describe values we as Christians should be embracing. Together, these stories teach a valuable lesson that Jesus Christ wanted his followers to learn; to have faith in God. The stories all provide examples of the difference between having faith and allowing doubt to interfere with faith. The Lenten lessons start with Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, and examine stories such as the Samaritan woman at the well, the blind man who was healed, the story of Nicodemus and conclude with Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. In each story two themes will be examined; the overall theme for the Lenten season, which is about the need for Christians to live a life based on faith, rather than one filled with doubts; and the secondary theme, which will be specific for each lesson. . If you follow the lectionary cycle, the lessons used in this topic reflect the lessons found in lectionary year A.

Topic 17: The Ten Commandments: Do They Still Apply? (8 lessons)

This topic is longer than other topics because there is much to discuss about how we treat ourselves, God and each other based on our obedience to the Ten Commandments. The lessons explore each of the commandments and demonstrate how these laws still apply to our lives today, and in fact, apply in some ways that students (and leaders) may have never thought about before.

Topic 18: Preparing the Way (4 lessons) [Advent Year B]

The lessons in this topic reflect the theme of preparing the way for Jesus. During the month before Christmas and the celebration of the birth of Christ, the church reflects on how we both prepare for the end and the beginning. Bible passages students will read will examine what we prepare for from a faith perspective, as well as stories of people in the Bible who prepared the way for Christ. Are there things we can do in our lives to prepare the way? An optional service project is recommended as part of this topic. If you follow the lectionary cycle, the lessons used in this topic reflect the lessons found in lectionary year B.

Topic 19: What did Jesus Do? (5 lessons) [Lent Year B]

The passages used in this 5 lesson topic will reflect on the ministry that Jesus had and how he dealt with the realities of life; mainly that life isn't always a bed of roses-it is often full of hardship, rejection, disappointment, loneliness, and judgment. Youth will learn through these

lessons that Jesus, by modeling how he lived through all these life challenges, taught that the downs in life are bearable and even necessary in order for us to come to and really appreciate the ups. Furthermore, there are appropriate ways to act as we face the challenges of life, ways that will also bring us closer in our relationships with God. If you follow the lectionary cycle, the lessons used in this topic reflect the lessons found in lectionary year B.

Coming for the 2010-2011 Sunday School Year

Topic 20: Change and How We Deal With It (4 Weeks)

One of the consistencies of adolescence is that everything about a youth's life is undergoing change. As the student changes, the people he or she interacts with respond to those changes, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. This lesson looks at change, how we deal with it in our own lives and in the lives of those we interact with, whether change is good or can be controlled and when we should resist change. Youth will also explore what Jesus said about change and how he dealt with change as a model for dealing with change in our own lives.

Topic 21: Accessory vs Intentional Faith (3 Weeks)

This topic explores the difference between an accessory and an intentional faith. Accessory faith is faith that is not regularly practiced, but is only called upon in times of great need—it is treated like an accessory one pulls out when needed. Intentional faith is faith that is practiced regularly and because of this, grows deep and provides comfort and shelter throughout one's life. Youth will discuss the two types of faith and then discuss why they might want an intentional faith life and how they can develop one.

Topic 22: The Parables: Metaphors for Life (5 weeks)

Youth will examine some of the parables Jesus told and why he told them, then discuss how these parables apply to our lives today. Youth will have the opportunity to create a parable that reflects the world as they know it and then present their parable to their church to invite conversation and reflection.

Topic 23: The Benefits of Believing (3-5 weeks)

Topic 24: Prayer and God's Time vs Our Time (2-3 weeks)

Topic 25: Judging and Being Judged (3 weeks)

Topic 26: Wandering the Wilderness (5 Weeks)