



SESSION 5: BREATH

TOPIC: Does a Relationship with God Matter?

GOAL

The goal of this session is for the teens to understand that they were created to be in relationship with God and through this relationship, they will find fullness of life.

KEY CONCEPTS

God created us through love. We are sustained by the love of God.

God is a personal God, never ceasing to draw us closer to Him.

The fullness of life is found in acknowledging God's love and responding to it.

KEY TERMS

Free Will: The power of the will to determine itself and to act of itself, without compulsion from within or coercion from without.

Fullness of Life: In order to reach the perfection of charity the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ's gift, so that, doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor.

Identity: Quality of sameness. Absolute identity is total sameness, without any change or difference; relative identity is all other sameness, which allows of numerous differences in nature and degree.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 6:18

Genesis 1:25-27

Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24

Genesis 3

Psalms 39:11-12

CATECHISM

27

30

295

301

1730

2196

ABOUT THIS SESSION

The Gather is a game of "would you rather" with a twist. The Proclaim encourages the teens to make their faith a priority by reminding them of God's love and explaining where we find fullness of life. The Break is a small group Scripture study on the creation narratives. The Send provides the teens with an opportunity to respond to God in worship.



AS YOU GET STARTED

For an alternative Send, consider having the teens complete a journal reflection. Create a prayerful environment by dimming the lights and playing instrumental music in the background. Invite the teens to spend some time reflecting on and journaling about their relationship with God, specifically where it is currently at and where they would like it to be when they get confirmed. Challenge them to identify concrete ways they can grow in their relationship with God over the course of this program. If time allows, encourage the teens to share their reflections with a partner, their small group, or the large group.

GATHER

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)

Gather the teens in the main meeting space. Welcome them to the session and begin in prayer.

“Would You Rather” with a Twist (10 min)

Gather the teens in the main meeting space and instruct them to remain with their small groups. Give each teen a notecard with the number “1” written on one side and the number “2” written on the other. Give each Core Member a list of “would you rather” questions. Once a question is read, the teens hold up the notecard according to their answer. For example, if a teen would rather be ten minutes late than 20 minutes early, he or she would hold up the side of the notecard with the number 1. After each question, ask the teens to defend their answer. The following is a list of questions to get you started, but be sure to add your own:

- Would you rather live in a place that is always hot or always cold?
- Would you rather never play sports again or lose every game you play?
- Would you rather be able to be invisible or able to fly?
- Would you rather be able to talk to animals or speak eight languages?
- Would you rather be without Netflix or without social media?
- Would you rather have your flight delayed ten hours or lose your luggage for a week?

PROCLAIM

“Breath” Teaching (15 min)

The Book of Genesis

Read Genesis 1:25-27 or Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24. Before reading, encourage the teens to listen for what the narrative says or implies about God. After the passage is read, invite the teens to share words they would use to describe God based on the reading.

It can be easy to skip over the Book of Genesis when we read the Bible. Many of us have probably heard or read these narratives before, so we sometimes tune them out when they are read at Mass or assigned as required reading.

But this section of Genesis reveals a great deal about who God is and why He matters. Let us take a look at the line, “God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” In this sentence alone, we learn many things about God.

Genesis 2:7

First off, we know that God is tangible — He can be felt and seen — and works with the Earth to create. We also know that God is the creator; He breathes life into what He made. Furthermore, God is close and personal. From one line, we know that God is not distant, disconnected, or uncaring.



In fact, God is so caring that He not only places humanity in the most prime location, but He also recognizes man's need for communion with another being and thus, creates a companion for him: woman.

God Sees, Knows, and Provides

This is a God who sees, knows, and provides for His creation. He sees that Adam is lonely, He knows what Adam longs for, and He provides for Adam's needs. This is a God who cares for, sustains, and interacts with His creation. This is the same God we can know in our lives.

God sees us. Not in a creepy stalker way, but in a real and honest way. God sees when we have a rough week at school, just as much as He sees when we score the game-winning goal. God is there with us for the good and bad because we are His creation and He loves us.

Often, we forget how close God really is to us and how much our existence depends on Him. We forget how well He knows our hearts and lives. We forget that we must depend on Him. The Catechism tells us that we were created through love and are sustained by the love of God.

CCC 27

Our Priorities

We tend to fill our days with lots of activities. Between school, friends, sports, and homework — not to mention eating and sleeping — our lives are pretty busy. Each year seems to go by faster and it seems like our schedules keep getting busier and busier. In the midst of it all, God can become less of a priority. Our faith, prayer, and relationship with God often take a backseat to everything else we have going on. But that is the opposite of the life God has prepared for us.

God loves us, but He does not love us like we love tacos. He loves us in a profound, life-changing way. He loves us in a way we can only gradually understand, which is why He desires that we spend our lives getting to know Him and falling deeper in love with Him. We cannot fully live unless we acknowledge God's love and entrust ourselves to Him.

CCC 27

We can fill our lives with lots of great things. We can travel, we can fall in love, we can see the wonders of the world, but none of these things can be experienced in their fullness unless we receive and return God's love.

To live our lives rooted in God's love means we receive His love and return it, which can be challenging in the midst of our busy lives.

First, we need to know and embrace the fact that our identity is in Christ alone. Our whole life — our whole identity — is rooted in the fact that we are beloved children of a good Father. When we live our lives rooted in this love, everything changes. If we believe we are "the beloved," we no longer strive to be something else and instead come before God just as we are. We trust His plan for our lives and know that He will provide for us.

This impacts the way we live, love, work, and speak. It changes how we spend our time, money, and talent. It changes our social media posts and texts. It changes the movies and shows we watch. Not because we want God to like us, but because we trust Him and believe His way is the best way.



Right Priorities

God asks two things of us: to love Him above all things and to love our neighbors as ourselves. He asks us to put things in order. Saint Augustine would say, “to order our hearts rightly.”

When we do this — when love of God is first — we open ourselves to fullness of life. God does not desire a relationship with us to boost His popularity or number of followers. He desires a relationship with us for our own good.

An encounter with God, a relationship with Him, changes us because His love is so powerful, so good, and so beautiful that it shapes how we see and know the world. And here is the crazy thing about God: even though He knows He is right, even though He knows that His way is the best way, He lets us choose. He lets us choose how to “order our lives.”

This is the free choice God presents us with. We can choose life in its fullest form by choosing to put God in His rightful place, or we can choose death by putting God aside and living only for ourselves.

And the great paradox is this: the fullest life sometimes means death to self. In choosing life, we have to die to our sins and our will. And this is where many people walk away or decide they do not want to be in a relationship with God. When they see the decision laid before them, they choose themselves over God — very much like Adam and Eve in the Garden.

Read Genesis 3.

Lessons from Adam and Eve

We can learn a lot from Adam and Eve. First, you cannot hide from God in a garden He created. Second, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. They chose to try to be God instead of trusting in His love and providence and being obedient to Him. They forgot who they were as beloved children, and who God is as a good Father.

We often do the same thing! We want our will and our way. We want control over our lives. We do not want to trust God or we do not think He is worth trusting.

These are the things that keep us away from Him, that keep us from loving Him with all of our heart. We are afraid God will ask us to give up something that we do not want or feel ready to give up. We worry that He will call us to something we do not want to do. We think He could not love us because of our sin.

But God, in His goodness, does love us. He only asks us to give up things that are going to be bad for us in the long run. He calls us to greatness — to what He knows we were made for — and loves us more than we could ever imagine.

Adam and Eve’s experience and choices in the Garden also teach us about our hearts. Are we grasping at something God has asked us not to reach for at this time? Are we listening to voices that are leading us astray? Are we standing up for truth when our friends are drifting away from God? Are we hiding from God because we have done something wrong? Are we placing blame for our mistakes on someone else?

Genesis chapter three, Adam and Eve’s departure from the Garden, also teaches us about God. While He has to enforce the natural consequences of Adam and Eve’s actions, He does so with mercy. He makes clothes for them, caringly seeks them out, and continues to watch over them after their exile.



God is calling you by name to seek Him, to come to know Him, and to live your life for Him. The more you give, the more you will receive. Ultimately, we can choose a full, abundant life in relationship with God or we can choose to simply walk away.

CCC 30

BREAK

The Garden (25 min)

Divide the teens into their small groups. Begin in prayer and then invite a teen to read the Scripture passage. Use the following questions to facilitate a discussion about the passage - ***please note that there are several passages from both creation narratives. Pick the first chapter or second chapter of Genesis to work through, rather than trying to get through all questions.***

Genesis 1:1-5

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- What does this passage tell us about God? (*E.g., He desired to create, He made order out of chaos, He creates good.*)

Genesis 1:6-8

- *What stood out to you in this passage?*
- *What does this passage tell us about God? (E.g., He separated as He created, naming His creation gives Him authority, He has the power to bring new material into being and to transform existing material in accordance with His word.)*

Genesis 1:9-13

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- What does this passage tell us about God? (*E.g., He saw His creation was good, He created in order, He created living things after He created what they needed to survive — water, sun, etc.*)

Genesis 1:14-19

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- What does this passage tell us about God? (*E.g., He loves beauty, He created beauty for us.*)

Genesis 1: 20-23

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- What does this passage tell us about God? (*E.g., He is imaginative, He creates all sorts of creatures and life, He is detail oriented, He is intricate — making each creature able to fly or swim.*)

Genesis 1:24-31

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- What does this passage tell us about God? (*E.g., He creates more and more complex things, He dives more and more deeply into the act of creating.*)
- What does this passage tell us about ourselves? (*E.g., we are created in the image of God, dominion, God saw that we are very good.*)
- What impact does that have on you? (*E.g., to know that you were created in the image and likeness of God, He trusts us with everything He created, He thinks we are very good.*)



Genesis 2:1-3

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- What does this passage tell us about God? (*E.g., He rests, He takes time to be present to His creation.*)
- What does this mean for us? (*E.g., we need to be present, we need to rest, we need to observe a "Sabbath."*)

Genesis 2:4-7

- What stood out to you in this passage? (*Take time to talk about both creation narratives.*)
- What does this passage tell us about God? (*E.g., this version emphasizes His closeness, He creates from dust in the ground, He breathes life.*)
- What does this mean for us?

Genesis 2:15-17

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- What does this passage tell us about God? (*E.g., He gave Adam the choice to obey or disobey.*)
- What does this mean for us? (*E.g., we are given the same choice.*)

Genesis 2:18-24

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- What does this passage tell us about God? (*E.g., He is compassionate, He provides for the needs of His creation.*)
- What does this mean for us? (*E.g., we are given to each other to help one another.*)

Conclusion

- Why do you think we have two creation narratives?
- What did we learn about God from the first narrative?
- What did we learn about God from the second narrative?

SEND

Heart of God Video (5 min)

As a preface reflection to worship, play the video "Heart of God," and then transition into prayer.

Praise and Worship (15 min)

Gather the teens in the main meeting space and use the following to transition into the time of prayer:

God's heart is for us. He always seeks us first. God has been inviting you to respond to Him your whole life and continues that invitation today. We are going to enter into a time of worship, which is simply our response to God. When we sing, open our hearts or hands, and allow ourselves to be in God's presence, we offer a response to His love for us. In this time of worship, I encourage you to dive in, even if you feel uncomfortable praising God or singing out loud. Simply think of God's open arms, waiting to embrace you and respond to that gift of love.