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**CROSS Missions** More than just a short term mission experience.

**1 Peter 4: 7-11**

7-11Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God’s words; if help, let it be God’s hearty help. That way, God’s bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and *he’ll* get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh, yes!

**CROSS 2018 Summer City Serve Curriculum\Devotions:**

**“We Belong to One Another”**

**Theme Verse: Roman 15:7**

7Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ accepted us to the glory of God.

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**Sunday Night Devotion**

**“We Belong to One Another”**

*Find a room in the building or a space outside that will serve of your youth group’s meeting place for devotions this week. Please speak with the other leaders and agree on your meeting places so that the youth will consistently know where they should go during your home group time.*

**Open in prayer**

*At this time, invite a youth to open the group in prayer or consider leading the group in an opening prayer. If your group is full of energy, this might be a good time to help them center by quietly taking a few deep breaths and focus on a moment where they were truly grateful today.*

**Engage**

*Invite the youth to share in this discussion by guiding them through the questions and ideas below. Please use your own words and look the youth in the eye instead of reading the material. This will further engage the youth in an authentic conversation.*

* Why are you here? Take a moment to think about this question and then raise your hand. Did you come here because your parents/family made you? Are you here because your best friends are here? Are you interested in serving people in this city? Do you want to grow closer to God? Why are you here? *Please give the youth a chance to answer this question out loud if they would like to.*

*After the youth have shared their responses please share this information with them in your own words.*

However you ended up on the journey, you are here. We believe that you were called to this very moment in time. For whatever reason you were led here, you are here now and this is exactly where you are meant to be. In a moment, I want to invite you to commit to being present for this journey. You are living in a journey of faith. You are being led by the Holy Spirit who is your guide and your friend. For this week of mission, please choose to be present to this experience. Choose to be present to everyone in this group, present to the people we meet as we serve, present to your body, your mind, your spirt and most of all, present to what God is doing in your life and the lives of those around you.

We are going to have the chance to do good things for people and for this city, but this trip is not only about doing good things. This experience is about being present to the goodness that God is making available for all of us. This means that we must let go of our expectations. If we expect to encounter God in a certain way then we might miss how God is actually showing up in a situation. If we expect a workday to turn out a certain way, then we are just disappointed if it doesn’t happen that way. This week, I want to ask each of you to make a promise to be open to the moment and seek God in the moment. I want you to commit to only expecting the unexpected so that you will open your heart up to the delight and abundance that God is going to provide.

We are on a journey together. Jesus sent his Disciples out into the world in pairs. We are going out in groups. We do not go alone and God is going with us. Let us choose to be present to the fullness that is available in this experience.

**Scripture: Roman 15:1-13**

*Please read this scripture passage out loud to the group. Before you begin, ask the group to be very quiet and turn on their imaginations. There was a monk named Ignatius who believed that we could encounter the Holy Spirit through our imaginations. One thing he liked to do was read scripture and imagine himself in that scripture. He would imagine the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches of the scriptures he would read. He found that every time he did this, he grew a little closer to God and had a more full understanding of how the scripture related to his own journey of faith.*

*So when I begin to read, please close your eyes and imagine yourself in the passage that I read. When I am finished reading, I will invite you to share anything that stood out to you in this practice.*

*Context: The book of Romans is written by Paul to the church of Rome around 60 A.D. The Church in Rome was well established with many members by now and Paul considered them to be faithful, strong Christians, not new converts to the faith. The Church of Rome was made up of Christians who were once Jewish and Gentiles (non Jews). Paul wrote to encourage the congregation to help him with his mission work of spreading the Gospel.*

**15**We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. **2**We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. **3**For even Christ didn’t live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, “The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me.”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28268a)] **4**Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God’s promises to be fulfilled.

**5**May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. **6**Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*7Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.* **8**Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28273b)] to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. **9**He also came so that the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote:

“For this, I will praise you among the Gentiles;
    I will sing praises to your name.”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28274c)]

**10**And in another place it is written,

“Rejoice with his people,
    you Gentiles.”[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28275d)]

**11**And yet again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles.
    Praise him, all you people of the earth.”[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28276e)]

**12**And in another place Isaiah said,

“The heir to David’s throne[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28277f)] will come,
    and he will rule over the Gentiles.
They will place their hope on him.”[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28277g)]

**13**I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Please pause for a moment so that the youth can gather their thoughts and then invite them to share their experience from this passage. Then lead them in a brief discussion of the passage with the questions below.*

* What is Paul encouraging the believers to do? Why are we called to do this?
* Who are the Gentiles? Who would be the Gentiles in our world today?
* What would it look like for you to “accept one another as Christ accepts us” this week at CROSS? What would it look like at ministry sites? In your own youth group?
* What do you think this passage says to us about belonging?
* What are some of your worries going into this week? What are some of your expectations?
* What do you need to let go of to really be present to this experience?

**Closing Discussion**

*Please share this passage in your own words.*

You were called into this moment, into this week, into this journey, just like these Disciples sharing space with Christ. You will not get this week back so why not give it all you have got? The most transformational moments in life happen often in relationship, in community, with people who are gathered in the name of Christ. Think about that as we go through each day. What and who is God placing along the path and how can you know God better through these relationships? We belong to God and we belong to one another!

**Guardian Angels**

*At this time, pass around a bag/hat that is holding all the names of the participants in your group written on pieces of paper. Ask each person to draw one name. They should look at the name, but they should not share with anyone who they have drawn. When the hat has gone all the way around the room, ask everyone to put those names back in the hat to be used tomorrow. Please let them know that the goal of this exercise is to take care of the person whose name you have drawn. Throughout the day tomorrow, you should find ways to make this person’s day better, get to know them, throw away their trash, fill up their water bottles, write them an encouraging note, etc. The goal is not to tell anyone who you have and be discreet enough for that person not to realize that you are their guardian angel. The hope is that by the end of the day no one will know who their angel is because everyone is being so kind to one another. For devotions tomorrow night, we will go around the room and share who we had and how we cared for them throughout the day.*

**Close in Prayer**

*Invite the group to hold hands and stand in a circle. Please invite everyone to just talk to God. They can share something they are grateful for, something they hope will happen this week or specific prayers, but everyone should say something even if it is simply, “Thank you.”*

**Monday Night Devotion**

**“We Belong to God”**

*Return to your meeting place for devotion with your home group.*

**Open in prayer**

*At this time, invite a youth to open the group in prayer or consider leading the group in an opening prayer. If your group is full of energy, this might be a good time to help them center by quietly taking a few deep breaths and focus on a moment where they were truly grateful today.*

**Engage**

*Invite the youth to share in this discussion by guiding them through the questions and ideas below. Please use your own words and look the youth in the eye instead of reading the material. This will further engage the youth in an authentic conversation.*

* Was there anything that stood out to you today? What was it?
* What challenged you today?
* Was there a moment you realized you had a worry or expectation? Were you able to choose not to worry and live in the present moment?
* How did you accept someone as Christ accepts us today? Did you feel a sense of belonging? (from someone in your group, someone at a ministry site etc.)?

*After the youth have shared their responses please share this information with them in your own words.*

Last night we heard Paul encourage believers to accept one another as Christ accepts us; creating harmony among us; joining in one voice to glorify God. It can be difficult to accept others who may be different from us, believe or act differently, or just be plain difficult to be around. Whether that’s someone we meet at a ministry site this week, or someone in your own youth group who you don’t know very well. We are called to be patient and compassionate with one another. It’s important to remember that in order to accept others or love others, we must first embrace God’s love and acceptance of us, knowing that we belong to God as God’s children. What do you think? Do you feel like you belong to God, that you are one of God’s children? How does it feel to belong to the Creator of the Universe?

*Please give the youth time to share their responses.*

**Scripture: Luke 15:11-32**

***Context:***

The scripture is a well-known parable. Jesus spoke in parables to help the people understand. Listen and hear for the characters in the story who may have experienced belonging and those who may have felt excluded. Keep in mind we are God’s sons and daughters while you hear Jesus’ words.

*Please read this scripture passage out loud to the group. Before you begin, ask the group to remember what stood out to them about this passage and prepare to share it with the group. The Holy Spirit allows certain things to stand out to certain people for a reason so it is important to hold on to these things and ponder them in your heart.*

**11**Then Jesus[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+15%3A11-32&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25592a)] said, “There was a man who had two sons. **12**The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. **13**A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. **14**When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. **15**So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. **16**He would gladly have filled himself with[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+15%3A11-32&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25597b)] the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. **17**But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! **18**I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; **19**I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ **20**So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. **21**Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+15%3A11-32&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25602c)] **22**But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23**And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; **24**for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

**25**“Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. **26**He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. **27**He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ **28**Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. **29**But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. **30**But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ **31**Then the father[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+15%3A11-32&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25612d)] said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. **32**But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

*Please ask the youth these questions and give them time to answer them.*

* Where in the story did you see belonging and acceptance?
* Who in the story did not accept one another? (foreigners did not help the younger son)
* Do you think the father loves one of his sons more than the other?
* What picture does Jesus paint of God as a father?
* Who in the story experienced God’s love?

*Read the following scripture:*

**Roman 14:8** For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.

**Closing Discussion**

As we heard in the parable of the prodigal son and in also in Romans 14:8 – we belong to God and are accepted into God’s family, no matter where we come from, what we have been through, or what we will do in the future. God’s love for us is compassionate, forgiving, and patient. It’s important to remember that in order to accept others or love others, we must first embrace God’s love and acceptance of us, knowing that we belong to God as God’s children. Tomorrow as we go out as serve at ministry sites and connect with our church family, think about God’s gracious love for you and how you may extend this love to others.

**Guardian Angels**

*At this time, invite the youth to go around in a circle and share who they were watching over and how they showed them Christ’s love today. When everyone has revealed their Angel, then send the hat back around to draw again for another day. If someone draws the same person’s name that is ok. The Spirit does amazing things with this practice and sometimes you need a chance to look after someone more than once. You will end up with exactly who you were meant to have. Although, if you pull your own name, please put it back in and draw a new name.*

**Close in Prayer**

*Invite the group to hold hands and stand in a circle. Please invite everyone to just talk to God. They can share something they are grateful for, something they hope will happen this week or specific prayers but everyone should say something even if it is simply, “Thank you.”*

***Read Psalm 100 before you depart***

**100**Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
**2**    Serve the Lord with gladness!
    Come into his presence with singing!

**3**Know that the Lord, he is God!
    It is he who made us, and we are his;[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+100&version=ESV#fen-ESV-15512a)]
    we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

**4**Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
    and his courts with praise!
    Give thanks to him; bless his name!

**5**For the Lord is good;
    his steadfast love endures forever,
    and his faithfulness to all generations.

**Tuesday Night Devotion**

**“We Belong to a Church”**

*Return to your meeting place for devotion with your home group.*

**Open in prayer**

*At this time, invite a youth to open the group in prayer or consider leading the group in an opening prayer. If your group is full of energy, this might be a good time to help them center by quietly taking a few deep breaths and focus on a moment where they were truly grateful today.*

**Engage**

*Invite the youth to share in this discussion by guiding them through the questions and ideas below. Please use your own words and look the youth in the eye instead of reading the material. This will further engage the youth in an authentic conversation.*

* Was there anything that stood out to you today? What was it?
* What challenged you today?
* Did you have an experience today where you felt accepted? Or did you have an experience where you accepted someone else for who they were?
* Was there a moment today where you felt like you belonged to God? When? Think hard. Share your experience.

*After the youth have shared their responses please share this information with them in your own words.*

Last night, we looked at scripture where we began to understand the truth of how we all belong to God. The good news of this life is that we are not alone. We are not helpless beings wandering aimlessly day to day with no one to guide us or no one to help us along the journey of life. Because we know we are children of God, we know that God loves us and cares for us, even during our hardest seasons of life. Not only does God care for us like a beloved parent, grandparent, or caretaker, God has given us the gift of the **church** so that we have brothers and sisters in Christ who are our spiritual family. Have you heard of the word “Kin” before? It means one’s family or close relations. It has to do with those who are related and share a common bloodline or a common ancestor. Our common ancestor is Jesus, himself! This week we will be talking a lot about “Radical Kinship” which means that we are a family of God, belonging to one another as children of God. Tonight we will read a scripture about Kinship and how we are called to be a family.

*Please give the youth time to share their responses.*

**Scripture: Ephesians 2:19-22**

*Please read this scripture passage out loud to the group. Before you begin, ask the group to remember what stood out to them about this passage and prepare to share it with the group. The Holy Spirit allows certain things to stand out to certain people for a reason so it is important to hold on to these things and ponder them in your heart.*

***Context****:*

This is a letter written by Paul to another church in Ephesus (modern-day western Turkey, east of Rome and east of the Mediterranean Sea) around the time of 60 AD. Listen for how Paul speaks to church about their identity.

# Ephesians 2:19-22 New Life Version (NLV)

# 19From now on you are not strangers and people who are not citizens. You are citizens together with those who belong to God. You belong in God’s family. 20This family is built on the teachings of the missionaries and the early preachers. Jesus Christ Himself is the cornerstone, which is the most important part of the building. 21Christ keeps this building together and it is growing into a holy building for the Lord. 22You are also being put together as a part of this building because God lives in you by His Spirit.

# *Now read the scripture once more from the Message translation.*

# Ephesians 2:19-22 The Message (MSG)

19-22That’s plain enough, isn’t it? You’re no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You’re no longer strangers or outsiders. You *belong* here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He’s using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he’s using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

*Please ask the youth these questions and give them time to answer them.*

* What did you hear? What does this passage talk about?
* Have you ever felt like a stranger or a new member of a group? When? Where? Share your experience.
* Have you ever felt accepted into a group or a community when you initially felt like an outsider? What happened? How were you accepted into the group?
* In this scripture, Paul talks about how God is building a family and a home where Christ is the Cornerstone. What’s a cornerstone? Why is that important for us?
* How is God’s church like a home?
* How can your specific youth group become more like a home (place of welcome) to strangers?
* How can your heart become more of a place of welcome (to God, to others, to your family, or to this youth group)?

**Closing Discussion**

It’s pretty simple. God is building a family. God is also building a home. God is building a place of belonging and God had YOU in mind when God wanted to build the church. God started building the church with the prophets and apostles (think back to all of our leaders in old testament, and the new testament). God made Christ the Cornerstone (the foundation and most important part), and is now utilizing every single one of us to build God’s church. What’s exciting is that God is not just trying to build more physical structures with tall steeples and stained glass all over America (or even the world, for that matter!). The church is not a building. The church is you! The church is a family. The church is every one of us. We read tonight in Paul’s letter to the church that “we are a dwelling place for God.” This is amazing news! Because God dwells in us, we are freely able to go out tomorrow in Charlotte and love others as God loves them. We belong to God, we belong to one another and we belong to the church!

**Guardian Angels**

*At this time, invite the youth to go around in a circle and share who they were watching over and how they showed them Christ’s love today. When everyone has revealed their Angel, then send the hat back around to draw again for another day. If someone draws the same person’s name that is ok. The Spirit does amazing things with this practice and sometimes you need a chance to look after someone more than once.*

**Close in Prayer**

*Invite the group to hold hands and stand in a circle. Please invite everyone to just talk to God. They can share something they are grateful for, something they hope will happen this week or specific prayers but everyone should say something even if it is simply, “Thank you.”*

**Wednesday Night Devotion**

**“We Belong to Community”**

*Return to your meeting place for devotion with your home group.*

**Open in prayer**

*At this time, invite a youth to open the group in prayer or consider leading the group in an opening prayer. If your group is full of energy, this might be a good time to help them center by quietly taking a few deep breaths and focus on a moment where they were truly grateful today.*

**Engage**

*Invite the youth to share in this discussion by guiding them through the questions and ideas below. Please use your own words and look the youth in the eye instead of reading the material. This will further engage the youth in an authentic conversation.*

* Was there anything that stood out to you today? What was it?
* Did you feel like you belonged to your church today? If so, how? Please share.
* Did you feel like you belonged to God at any point today?

*After the youth have shared their responses please share this information with them in your own words.*

Last night, we talked about how we belong to the church. We also belong to a community, (that could be our neighborhood, city, school, church, etc.). Do you realize that God lives in community? There is a word we often use for this: The Trinity. However even on earth Jesus lived in community with people. His own family, his disciples, his followers, and all the people he helped and sought out. All of these people were different and he loved them the same, accepted them the same. What does it mean to you to belong to a community? What do you think about God living in community?

*Please give the youth time to share their responses.*

**Scripture: John 14:15-20 (Message)**

*Please read this scripture passage out loud to the group. Before you begin, ask the group to remember what stood out to them about this passage and prepare to share it with the group. The Holy Spirit allows certain things to stand out to certain people for a reason so it is important to hold on to these things and ponder them in your heart.*

***Context:***

*The scripture you are about to hear occurs during the final supper that Jesus has with his disciples (his 12 followers) just before he is arrested, tried, and killed. Before the meal occurs, Jesus literally gets down on his hands and knees and washes his disciples’ dirty feet with his hands. Jesus belonged to an intimate community of friends and followers and showed love to them in incredible ways. During this meal, Jesus also tells his followers that he will die soon but that he will come back in a new way and in a new form.*

### John 14: 15-20, 25-27 The Spirit of Truth (Message)

15-17“If you love me, show it by doing what I’ve told you. I will talk to the Father, and he’ll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you. This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. The godless world can’t take him in because it doesn’t have eyes to see him, doesn’t know what to look for. But you know him already because he has been staying with you, and will even be *in* you!

18-20“I will not leave you orphaned. I’m coming back. In just a little while the world will no longer see me, but you’re going to see me because I am alive and you’re about to come alive. At that moment you will know absolutely that I’m in my Father, and you’re in me, and I’m in you.

25-27“I’m telling you these things while I’m still living with you. The Friend, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send at my request, will make everything plain to you. He will remind you of all the things I have told you. I’m leaving you well and whole. That’s my parting gift to you. Peace. I don’t leave you the way you’re used to being left—feeling abandoned, bereft. So don’t be upset. Don’t be distraught.

*Please ask the youth these questions and give them time to answer them.*

* Jesus says in this passage that he will provide a “Friend” to his disciples after he dies. What friend is he talking about?
* What or who is the Holy Spirit? Please describe the Holy Spirit in your own words.
* Jesus says he will not leave his followers orphaned or abandoned. Have you ever felt abandoned or “orphaned” by God? Think about a hard time in your life where you felt completely alone. Please share your story.
* How do we know that the Holy Spirit is with us, even during difficult times?
* Jesus says in this passage that “I’m in the father, and you’re in me, and I’m in you.” It How is this possible? How can we “be in God” and “God be in us?”
* Have you ever heard of the term “Trinity” while you were at church (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)? What does this mean? How does God’s own self live in community?

**Closing Discussion**

We read tonight that Jesus would eventually die and leave this world, but that he would provide a “Friend” to us, (the Holy Spirit), so that we would never be alone or abandoned. We also learned that Jesus is “in the Father,” that we are in Jesus, and that Jesus is in us. This may sound confusing at first, however Jesus clearly wanted his followers to know that we will never be without God’s presence, wherever we go or whatever we do. Jesus even mentioned in this scripture that he “is in the Father,” which means that Jesus was never alone either (the trinity)! Because we were made in God’s image, we know that we will never be alone and that we were made to belong in community. As you go out tomorrow on your last day of ministry sites, remember that the Holy Spirit (God’s presence) is with you, guiding you, and living in community within you. We belong to God, we belong to one another, we belong to a church, and we belong in community!

**Guardian Angels**

*At this time, invite the youth to go around in a circle and share who they were watching over and how they showed them Christ’s love today. When everyone has revealed their Angel, then send the hat back around to draw again for another day.*

**Close in Prayer**

*Invite the group to hold hands and stand in a circle. Please invite everyone to just talk to God. They can share something they are grateful for, something they hope will happen this week or specific prayers but everyone should say something even if it is simply, “Thank you.”*

**Thursday Night Devotion**

**“So They May Be One”**

*Return to your meeting place for devotion with your home group.*

**Open in prayer**

*At this time, invite a youth to open the group in prayer or consider leading the group in an opening prayer. If your group is full of energy, this might be a good time to help them center by quietly taking a few deep breaths and focus on a moment where they were truly grateful today.*

**Engage**

*Invite the youth to share in this discussion by guiding them through the questions and ideas below. Please use your own words and look the youth in the eye instead of reading the material. This will further engage the youth in an authentic conversation.*

* Did you feel like you belonged to a community today? When? How? Please share your story.
* Was there a time today where you didn’t accept someone or didn’t accept a community? If so, how will you love others differently tomorrow? Please share your story.
* Did you experience the Holy Spirit at any point today? Please share.
* Was there a moment today where you felt like you were truly connected to God? If so, please share.

*After the youth have shared their responses please share this information with them in your own words.*

Last night, we talked about how God lives in community in God’s own self and God’s spirit lives within us (we learned about the Trinity and how the Holy Spirit is always with us). Tonight we will read additional scriptures from the last supper where Jesus prays for his disciples and ultimately encourages them through a prayer of unity so they will know that they will never be alone.

*Please give the youth time to share their responses.*

**Scripture: John 17:13-23**

**Context:**

The passage we are about to read picks up right where we left off last night (the final supper before Jesus is arrested, tried, and killed). The conversations probably happened late in the evening after a meal has occurred. Jesus has already told Judas that he knows he will betray him. Jesus has also told his disciples that he will die and will be resurrected three days later. Imagine the tension and emotions of the disciples. This passage of scripture is a prayer Jesus speaks to God for his disciples to give them peace and encouragement.

*Please read this scripture passage out loud to the group. Before you begin, ask the group to remember what stood out to them about this passage and prepare to share it with the group. The Holy Spirit allows certain things to stand out to certain people for a reason so it is important to hold on to these things and ponder them in your heart.*

**13**“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. **14**I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. **15**My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **16**They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **17**Sanctify them by[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26777d)] the truth; your word is truth. **18**As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. **19**For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

**20**“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **21**that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22**I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— **23**I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

*Please ask the youth these questions and give them time to answer them.*

* What did you hear in Christ’s prayer for his followers?
* Can you imagine Jesus Christ praying for YOU? What do you think that must have felt like? Do you think God still prays for you today?
* In this passage Jesus prays for his disciples to become “one” with those who do not know Jesus or Jesus’s message of love. How can we be “one” with others in our communities who do not know God?
* How will you personally practice being “one” with others when you go back home (school, family, community, people experiencing poverty\difficult situations)?
* How will our youth group practice a sense of belonging for one another?
* How will our youth group practice a sense of belonging in our community?

**Closing Discussion**

This week you’ve had the opportunity to learn about how we belong to one another as a family and as kin. We learned that we are never alone because God’s Holy Spirit is always with us. We know that we belong to God as God’s children and have kinship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We belong in community and God prays for us to become “one” with those who do not yet know the message of God’s love in the world. Just because your CROSS week is over, it does not mean this is not the end of your spiritual journey. This is just the beginning of a new chapter. When you go home, continue the momentum by spending time with God, with your church, in community, and pray and think of new and creative ways to become “one” in your hometown or area of influence. Remember: we belong to one another, so “Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.” Romans 15:7

**Guardian Angels**

*At this time, invite the youth to go around in a circle and share who they were watching over and how they showed them Christ’s love today. When everyone has revealed their Angel, then send the hat back around to draw again for another day.*

**Close in Prayer**

*Invite the group to hold hands and stand in a circle. Please invite everyone to just talk to God. They can share something they are grateful for, something they hope will happen this week or specific prayers but everyone should say something even if it is simply, “Thank you.”*

*Written in partnership with Claire Tomkinson of Waked Up Studio*



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