MOUNTAIN MADNESS 2025



SMALL GROUP GUIDE





THEME EXPLANATION

Theme:

In His Footsteps

Main Scripture Verse:

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24

Theme Development:

Christ has called each of us by name. He is constantly inviting us into a life with Him. What does it take to answer that call? How do we live a Christian life in the real world? Christ gives us very specific rules for discipleship – we must desire to come after Him, deny ourselves and then take up our cross. Christ has given us a model of how we live, but we do not walk the road alone. He walks with us step by step.

Small Group Times & Supplies

Small group time is a beautiful time to enter into conversations more deeply with the youth. We have provided everything you need to run a good small group – but to make it fantastic, the only thing it needs is YOU! As you invest time into these young people, they will grow in trust and confidence to open up and have fruitful discussions that will bring the events of the weekend to it's fullness. We also have a few pro tips on the next page.

Friday Night | 9:00PM

Small Group Time #1 "Bent, Not Broken"

Supplies Provided: Paperclips (one/person)

Saturday Morning | 11:15AM

Small Group Time #2 "Prayer and Humble Service"

Supplies Provided:

Large Group Service Ideas Page (one/cahperone) Random Acts of Kindness Cards (one/person)

Saturday Evening | 9:30PM

Small Group Time #3 "At the Crossroads"

Supplies Provided: Small Wooden Pocket Crosses (one/person)

Follow-Up Session | After Retreat

Small Group Follow-Up "Emmaus"

*For use on the drive home, or at a youth group session after the weekend!

Icebreaker Questions:

Use the Icebreaker "Would You Rather" game at the beginning of each small group as needed to get discussions started! Some are more serious in nature, but most are designed just to get to know one another – so have fun with them!

TIPS TO LEAD A SMALL GROUP

- **1.** Start your group with a prayer.
- 2. Don't feel bound to the questions provided. The goal of a small group is to help them process what they are going through and to help form community. The questions are only to help spur on conversation to this end. You don't need to get to them all.
- 3. Have everyone sit on the same eye level.
- 4. Don't dominate the group by talking the whole time. They just heard a long talk. Small group is not Talk #2.
- **5.** Don't fear silence.
- 6. Don't fear your own discomfort. Try your best to be natural. Prioritize getting to know the young people in your group and how God is working in their lives.
- 7. Small groups are for personal sharing ("I...") not just theological reflection or preaching ("you...") ...though some theological reflection and preaching is fine. Try to keep it personal without laying down hard and fast rules about it.
- 8. Make sure they feel safe to be themselves. Make it clear that no negative humor is allowed. What is said in the group stays in the group it isn't to become gossip.
- 9. While this isn't time for you to preach you do need to steer the discussion in the following ways:

a. Try to keep it personal, and set the stage yourself through personal sharing (though not necessarily first).

- b. Keep them generally on topic.
- c. Keep one teen from dominating too much.
- d. Encourage those who need it to share (without pushing).
- e. Gently teach if a teen is in error about a Church teaching.
- 10. Recognize the difference between questioning and pouring out disbelief. The latter usually can't be solved through endless answers. It usually has a faith/trust issue at its core. Don't get caught up in providing endless answers if this is the case. Tell the person you can talk more with teen one on one after the group.
- **11.** If you don't know the answer to a question, don't make it up. Tell them you'll find out and reconnect later!

Remember, your small group time is a great time to build intentional relationships with your teens. You don't have to know everything – Just do your best to love them as Jesus does!

BENT, NOT BROKEN

Time:

25 minutes. (Friday night during reconciliation).

Objective:

To help teens process the messages from Friday evening and apply it to their own lives.

Key Point:

God's forgiveness completely restores us and our relationships.

Overview of Session:

- Activity (10 minutes) This will help prepare them for confession and process our need for reconciliation with Christ. God has made us all with a specific purpose and plan - but often we decide to do something different. We bend ourselves out of shape...and it's very hard to get it back in line all by ourselves. Christ is the one who helps us to get back, helps us to heal, and to lay down the sin we are carrying around so that we can better follow after Him.
- 2. Scripture Time (10-15 minutes) Read the Parable of the Prodigal Son and discuss how our God is always wanting us to return to Him.

3. Close in prayer (3 minutes)

Activity: (10 minutes)

Give each person a paperclip. Notice the shape it has. What does that unique shape allow it to do? (clip papers together). Now, take your clip and bend it into another shape. Look at the shape it's in now – can it still do the job it was made to do? Why or why not?

Now try to bend the paperclip back so it can do what it was made to do again. How many people are able to get it back into its original shape?

Discussion Questions:

- What is a paper clip made to do?
- Can a paperclip work correctly when it is bent out of shape?
- How easy was it to get the paperclip back to its original shape and purpose?
 Note: you have to push back even farther than where it started to get it to line up how it was...
- How does the paperclip represent us?
- What message seemed to impact you most tonight?
- How have you heard Christ calling you? How do you think he's asking you to come and see?
- What do you hope to get out of the rest of this weekend?
- What other things (distractions, stress, etc.) do you need to leave behind in order to follow Christ?

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



Scripture Time: (15 minutes)

Introduction: Think of a time when you have felt truly forgiven.

- Share an example of a time you have been forgiven by someone. You don't have to use names or give all the details, just share about who forgave you and why. What was good about it?
- Have you ever wanted to be forgiven, but the other person stayed mad? How does that feel?
- What makes it hard to forgive others?
- Think of a time when you have disobeyed God and wanted forgiveness. What did you do? How did you feel? Keep that in your mind as we open up the Scripture story of the Prodigal Son.

Scripture Reading: (Luke 15:11-32) The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Then he said, "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers." So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.""

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Reflection Questions:

- When the son decided to return home, what took place between his father and him?
- If we don't admit when we're wrong or when we mess up, what happens in our relationships with the people we've hurt? How does it affect our relationship with God?
- What happens when we go to God and admit that we have messed up?
- What does this parable teach us about God?

Bent, Not Broken - Wrap Up: (3-5 minutes)

Maybe some of you need Him tonight. Maybe you've never admitted that you need Him or perhaps you've walked away and disobeyed and you want to return. The Heavenly Father is running out to meet you. Close your eyes and imagine God with arms wide open. He's looking at you and smiling. All you have to do is run to Him. He is a good Father who loves his children. Let's really take the opportunity we have this weekend to experience all that our Father has in store for us!

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father, who loved us so much to send Your only Son to save us and bring us back to you, we ask that you open up our hearts and minds as we dive into this weekend. Help us to find the courage to come and see what you have in store for us this weekend. Help us to leave behind those things which stand in the way of our relationship with You. We know that you love us as a Father, please allow us to feel that love today.

Our Father....

Transition:

Small Groups and Reconciliation time end the evening. All are dismissed back to lodges.

PRAYER AND HUMBLE SERVICE

Time:

25 minutes.

Objective:

To help the teens process the message from Saturday morning and apply it to their own lives. To help the youth learn the importance of prayer in their daily lives and be challenged to live out service toward others.

Key Points:

Relationship with Christ (prayer) leads us to action and service of others.

Overview of Session:

- 1. Discussion about Prayer (5-10 minutes)
- 2. Scripture Time (5-10 minutes)
- 3. Discuss Humble Service & Activity (10-15 minutes)
- 4. Close in prayer (2 minutes)

Discussion Questions:

(5-10 minutes)

- What message stuck out to you from the large group session this morning?
- Do you pray in your day to day life? What does that look like?
- How do you think your life could change if you made prayer a priority every day?
- Do you find it difficult or easy to find time to pray? Why or why not?
- Do you feel called to decide on a time in your day you can commit to praying every day?
- What are other moments in your day that you can be more mindful of turning your focus to Christ?

Scripture Time (5-10 minutes)

Introduction: One form of prayer is praying with Scripture. Imagine you are present at the Last Supper. As you listen to the following reading, put yourself into the story and use your imagination to experience what the disciples would have heard and felt!

Scripture Reading: (John 13:1-17)

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him,

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"Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean."

So when he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it.

Discussion Questions & Activity: (10-15 minutes)

- What does it mean to you that Jesus humbled himself to wash the feet of his disciples?
- What are some ways that you can serve the people in your life?
- Have you ever been surprised by another's caring actions or words? What was that like for you?
- Have you ever done something nice for someone when they didn't expect it? Share what that experience was like? How did the other person respond?
- What could our world be like if we spread Christ's love more often?

Activity: Random Acts of Kindness

Take a few minutes to brainstorm as a group different ideas about how we can spread God's love by humbly serving others in the many areas of life. Using the provided sheet, make a physical list for each of the following places to serve Christ through others:

- In your home (doing chores without complaining, helping a sibling, make dinner...)
- At school (include someone left out, smile at people in the halls, stand up for someone being bullied...)
- In the world (serve at a soup kitchen, help the homeless, allow someone to go in front of you in a line...)

Look at these lists. Do you think they are things you could actually accomplish? How many of these things can you commit to doing this week alone? By finding simple ways to serve others, we are serving Christ and spreading His love!

Now we have a mission for you for this weekend! (Pass out the "Random Acts of Kindness" cards.) Each card has a simple, specific mission for each person. This is something you can do over the weekend – one way that you can choose to follow in Christ's footsteps starting this weekend. Encourage them to keep the cards' mission to themselves, consider it as a personal mission. It isn't about doing something to get attention or glory, but to be humble and Christ-like.



Prayer & Humble Service - Wrap Up: (3-5 minutes)

If we want to truly follow In His footsteps, we need to have a real prayer life. Prayer gives us the strength to do what God calls us to and serve others. Take a moment to close your eyes and envision a world where people serve one another without the expectation of anything in return. Think about a world where there is no need, because people are helping each other. It sounds like a mission that is larger than life – but by starting small we can make a big difference! We are called to be Christ's hands and feet in the world. What we say and do truly make a difference.

THE STARFISH STORY:

A young man is walking along the ocean and sees a beach on which thousands and thousands of starfish have washed ashore. Further along he sees an old man, walking slowly and stooping often, picking up one starfish after another and tossing each one gently into the ocean. "Why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?," he asks.

"Because the sun is up and the tide is going out and if I don't throw them further in they will die."

"But, old man, don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it! You can't possibly save them all, you can't even save one-tenth of them. In fact, even if you work all day, your efforts won't make any difference at all."

The old man listened calmly and then bent down to pick up another starfish and threw it into the sea.

"It made a difference to that one."

Let's pray:

Lord, thank you for showing us the model of humble service. Help us to have the courage to do what is right and needed in our world. Let us hear your gentle calling in our lives to serve others and give us the strength to follow that call. Continue working in our lives and on this weekend so we can see more clearly the ways we are called to walk in Your footsteps.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Transition:

After this small group, you can head to lunch according to your schedule (see schedule on name tags).

AT THE CROSSROADS

Time:

25 minutes. (after Adoration)

Objective:

To help teens process the messages from Saturday evening and the time of adoration, and to recognize our need for Christ by being thankful.

Key Points:

Christ has come to meet with us this evening – in a very powerful way! The Cross is the primary symbol of our Christian faith. Everything about the cross brings life and hope – even through death. The cross is a constant reminder of how much Christ loves us. Christ is always loving us, right where we are. His death on the cross showed us this love, and he continues to show us that love in the Sacrament of the Eucharist – which we adore. The word "Eucharist" comes from the Greek word for "Thanksgiving." When we keep the cross at the forefront of our minds, we can always be thankful for His sacrifice of love.

Overview of Session:

- 1. Discussion (10 minutes)
- 2. Scripture Time (10 minutes) Read the story of the Cleansing of the Ten Lepers and discuss the importance of thanksgiving.
- 3. Cross Activity (3-5 minutes)
- 4. Close in prayer

Discussion Questions: (10 minutes)

- That was a powerful night! Do you have any questions or anything you'd like to share about how this experience was for you?
- What message do you feel God giving you personally this evening?
- How have you felt God's love tonight, or throughout this weekend?
- When you look at the cross/crucifix, what are the emotions or thoughts that come to mind?
- Do you spend much time thinking about the greatness of His sacrifice on the cross? Why or why not?

Scripture Time: (5-10 minutes)

Introduction: Contemplate those things in your life that you are truly thankful for...

- What are things we often feel that we 'need'? (phone, video games, food, friends...)
- How does Jesus fulfill all of our real needs?
- Are you thankful for the things he gives to you?

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Scripture Reading: (Luke 17:11-19)

As he continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten lepers met [him]. They stood at a distance from him and raised their voice, saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" And when he saw them, he said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."

Reflection Questions:

- Are you more like the one leper that returned, or the other nine? Explain.
- How do you show Christ you are thankful?
- Is there something more you can do in your life to express your gratitude?

Activity: (3-5 minutes)

Pass out the little crosses to each teen. Invite them to keep the cross in their pocket or somewhere they will see it each day. One way we can keep the cross as the center of our hearts is to remain thankful.

When we thank Jesus we recognize our need for Him, as the creator, healer, giver, and lover of our hearts. These crosses can serve as a reminder of the sacrifice of the cross – and to remind us that no matter what struggles we have, we are not alone. Every time you take the cross out of your pocket you can say a simple prayer. Simply saying, "Thank you, Jesus, for dying on the cross for me" is a great place to start.

Perhaps invite the teens to share out loud the things they are thankful for!

Let's pray:

(invite them all to hold their crosses in their hands as we pray...)

Lord Jesus, we come to you in thanksgiving for all the many blessings in our lives. Thank you for dying on the cross to save us and draw us closer to you. Help us to take up our cross, and follow in your footsteps – and to never take for granted the love you have shown. At the cross we find peace, hope, healing and love. Let us never stray from your cross. We love you, Lord Jesus, and we offer our lives to you.

Thank you for giving us your Mother, Mary, as a model of purity and love. We ask you, Mary, to hear our prayers and take them swiftly to your Son, Jesus – as we pray,

Hail Mary....

Transition:

Small groups will be dismissed back to lodges.

EMMAUS

Time:

25 minutes. (Use during Sunday lunch, on the drive home, or during your next youth group meeting)

Objective:

To help teens reflect on all they learned and experienced on the retreat, and to be encouraged to take the light of Christ into their lives following the weekend.

Key Points:

The weekend was packed full of messages and activities, but if those things just stay up at the retreat site we are no better off than when we began. We need to take the light that we have been given, and unashamedly run back to the world where we live!

Overview of Session:

1. Discussion about the Retreat Weekend

- 2. Scripture Time
- 3. Prayer

Discussion Questions:

Take a moment to recall as a group all the different things that happened over the weekend.

- What were some of the messages, activities, talks, and fun things that you'll remember?
- What did you hear or experience that was new to you?
- What part of the weekend made an impact on your relationship with Christ? Explain.
- How do you think you are being called to walk "in his footsteps"?

Scripture Time:

Introduction: Take some time and think of the one moment you felt closest to Christ this weekend. Think to yourself what that felt like. Were you confused, excited, amazed, or wanting more? In the Gospel of Luke we see a story of two travelers on their way to Emmaus. They are leaving Jerusalem disappointed after all they had seen and heard about Jesus, as they had hoped he was the Savior, but it appears to them that story was over. It was Sunday, and they were walking away. Let us read the story of Emmaus and see what happened to these two travelers as they encounter Christ.

Scripture Reading: (Luke 24:13-35) Road to Emmaus

Now, that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflection Questions:

• Before the travelers recognized Jesus, what do you think they were feeling and thinking as they were sharing the things that had occurred in Jerusalem?

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- Do you relate more with the travelers before Christ revealed himself, or after? Explain.
- How has Christ revealed himself to you?
- The travelers said, "Were not our hearts burning within us?" have you felt anything like this in the presence of God? (*If not, that's OK God is bigger than feelings and emotions!*)
- The travelers ran back to Jerusalem after encountering Christ to tell others about what they had seen, heard and felt. Do you think you are called to do the same? Why or why not?
- How can you make sure you're allowing time and space for Christ to speak to you beyond this retreat? In your daily life? (*prayer, mass, sacraments...*)
- How do you think the risen Jesus wants to transform you today and in the future?
- You have been given a light inside you to be kept burning and not hidden How can you be a light of Christ to those who live in darkness around you?
- Share with the group one specific way that you will commit to being Christ's disciple.

Wrap Up:

When Jesus died, so many people watching must have thought that their hopes had died as well. Darkness came over all the land that day. Remember the darkness that covered the world that day. Think about the darkness that covers the world today in your neighborhood, school, church and among your friends, family, and classmates that is in need of the light of Jesus. (violence, depression, death of loved one, bullying, etc.) There is a real need for the light of Christ in the world – and He is very much alive! Just like Jesus, our journey does not end with the cross. The cross is where we start. The cross leads us to mercy, hope, peace and love. As we continue to follow in his footsteps, he will guide our steps and call us all the more closer to Him.

Let's pray:

Lord, we desire to follow after you with all our heart. Open our ears so we may hear your soft voice. Open our eyes so we can see you, especially in the faces of those around us in the world. And open our hearts to receive you and love like you. Let our lights never go dim, but continue to shine with the joy and peace you continually give. Christ our Light, be our guide as we go back into the world, our schools, and our families.







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