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irst, and foremost, WELCOME!

Thank you for opening yourself up not only to our teens but to God's Spirit within you. You may not see it that way but that is what you have done!

The catechist is first and foremost an *evangelizer*, someone who shares their experience of God with another in order to pass on the new life in Christ that is awaiting us all. We invite others to the same joy and peace that comes to us from our personal and communal relationship with Christ.

Evangelization? I just signed up to help!

Really it is not as scary as it sounds. We all struggle at one time or another with our relationship to God and His Church, but we find, time and time again, that it sustains and so we return to the call God gives us. This is what we are talking about. This is what we give to others when we live as if God is alive and loves us. They "*see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.*" (Mt 5:16) Instant evangelizer!

Table Talk (T²) or if you prefer Teen Talk, is founded in this notion of evangelization, based in Jesus' method of interaction and engagement. In order to catechize, we must evangelize. Evangelization is about face-to-face encounter and dialogue. Catechism is more about the lecture, but the invitation to Faith is about the dialog. We interactively lecture and dialogue in order to challenge the teens (and ourselves) to deepen our

relationship with God and move from the childish Faith we have been handed to the child-like adult Faith we live.

To this end we desire a two-person team at each table, one male and one female (not married to each other), to provide support and a diverse point of view to the teens. We also provide lesson plans to aid in sharing the Faith in a consistent and structured manner.

There is no teen text to avoid both the school-like atmosphere and to reduce both cost and loss of materials. The lesson plan and the catechist(s) and table leaders bring the order. So, while every lesson may seem chaotic, each table is a microcosm of the whole. Each table will have its own dynamics as well as its own fears, concerns, misunderstanding, and deep confessions of faith. We will get into the structure and challenges as we go through this document.

One of the first things you need to know is that your commitment here is flexible. We believe sincerely that the Spirit has led you here and the Spirit will take care of all our needs. That means that while what you do here is extremely important, it is not the sole reason for your existence! We support not only the teens but you as well. If you need time or have a need to not be here **that is fine**. If you are unable to inform anyone early **that is fine**. While it is helpful if you can warn us before hand, it well understood that emergencies and other events out of our control, as well as blessed events, happen.

That said, the teens do need consistency, as best as possible. They need to get to know you and trust you. You need to get to know



them. Being able to be there week after week is a bonus for everyone. Still, your commitment is to God, not me, and God will not test you past your strength. (cf. 1 Cor 10:13) Come when you can, be present when you are, and the Spirit takes care of the rest!

To this end we try to build a team that includes “floaters” as well as “permanent” catechists to allow for maximum flexibility for our catechists. If at any time you feel that you cannot commit fully to the program then being a floating catechist is just as vital to the team and provides much needed support. If the time comes when you need time off, then floaters come to your aid.

If you have any special needs or want tea rather than coffee, please let me know that as well. Anything – well almost.

Ground Rules and Hints

It always helps to know some things right up front. These are some things to think about when you prepare your lessons or prepare yourself to interact with the teens in your care. In no particular order:

- ❖ **Remember your safe environment training.** We are entrusted by our Parish, our parents, our Bishop, and by God with these teens. It is part and parcel to bringing them to a mature faith. Also, keep it up to date!
- ❖ **Teens do not need another friend, they need a mentor and guide.** This means appropriate behavior. Be aware of your language and your words. Things that might be funny to

adults can be misunderstood by teens.

- ❖ **Be the first one near the table,** if possible. Be there to greet them but also give them room to socialize.
- ❖ **Smile.** Big warm smiles. Smiles often tell the teens more than a multitude of words.
- ❖ **Get to know their names.** Teens engage better if they know you know who they are. Say hello outside of T², at Mass or else where you might meet them. Introduce yourself to parents as well.
- ❖ **Create a sense of trust by listening and helping others to listen.** Teens need to know that they are respected and valued. Listen and when they are wrong, correct with *“with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame.”* (1 Pt 3:16) Often this starts by making sure all electronic devices are off.
- ❖ **Be yourself.** Do not hide interests or try to seem holier than thou are because the teens see through it. Besides, different teens need different hooks in order to begin a conversation, and some strange interest may be just the ticket in.
- ❖ **Be genuine.** Being a catechist does not stop you from being a sinner. Still, do not wear sinfulness on your sleeve but the salvation you have experienced. Share your joy.
- ❖ **Be prepared.** Whether you are teaching the class or leading the discussion, it will help you look and be more genuine. I have striven to give enough background to allow you to be confident in your answers and



this guide to help you be at ease. If you are not I am always available, as is the clergy and the CCC.

- ❖ **Adult consistency is everything with teens.** From requiring specific behavior to towing the doctrinal line, be able *“to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope”* (1 Pt 3:15a). The lesson plans are designed to follow a fairly consistent format. This helps the teens know what to expect structure wise and to know what is expected of them.
- ❖ **Make sure the rules of civil conversation are clear and enforced.** Be firm and decisive about inappropriate remarks or language. Defuse situations by redirecting the behavior through questions. Try to avoid shaming them or using negative remarks to get positive behaviors.
- ❖ **Distribute yourself around the table.** Do not sit in the same seat each week. Do not sit next to the other adult at the table. This helps to engage those who might otherwise hide on the periphery. If the teens know there is no place to hide they will bring themselves forward.
- ❖ **Allow time for the teens to think.** Silence is sometimes golden. Many times the concepts are hard and take a second to digest. If nothing is forthcoming, try re-framing the question or point.
- ❖ **Do not answer the questions for the teens.** This time is about drawing out the things that might keep them from growing in their Faith and helping them overcome obstacles. Do not monopolize the conversation. Evangelize first, lecture second.

- ❖ **Be open about your personal Faith journey without being specific.** T² is about the teen’s journey not our own. Where appropriate, a minimal amount of detail may be shared, but the resolution and peace which came about should be the focus of your sharing. Be aware that even though we preach discretion, the teens may not have nor should they be expected to have as much as you do.
- ❖ **We teach from the New American Bible.** This translation, currently the NABR (Revised), is the one approved for us to use and matches the text as the teens hear it proclaimed at Mass. Any materials presented to the students need to use this translation. It is available online at the USCCB website.
- ❖ **The Saints are your friends.** Do not be afraid to rely on the saints for prayers, insight, and as a way to engage the teens. The Sanctoral Calendar ensures that there is a saint for almost every day and there is a saint for every teen. They all had to choose a Confirmation name – start there.
- ❖ **The Scriptures are your friend.** Do not forget to rely on prayer and the Scriptures yourself. Ask the teens what the readings for the day were. Ask them what the homily was. Most times one or the other can be applied to the lesson. It also gets us all used to listening when the Word is proclaimed!
- ❖ **Take accurate attendance.** Not only is this required by the diocese, but it shows that you know and care if they are there. Cannot hurt to get a post card from the religious ed office to



send if you have not seen them in a while.

- ❖ **Add the teens to your prayers.** Keeping them in mind during the week will bring them closer to your heart on the weekend. Add in the other catechists as well.
- ❖ **Not every teen “gets it”.** Sometimes we are unable to reach the teens on certain subjects. Do not worry, we only plant the seed, the Spirit brings it to fruition!
- ❖ **Serious discipline problems are not your problem.** You and your teammate are responsible for basic discipline at your table but serious issues should be moved up the chain.
- ❖ **Expect things from the teens.** Do not just let them slide by. They will surprise you!

With those things in mind we can begin to explore the program and your place within it. Some of the hints will begin to make more sense once you get a feel for the program.

Evangelization is the first step to learning the Faith. Jesus shows us that by his ministry from the very beginning, announcing the coming of the Kingdom: “[Jesus] *unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord’.* He said to them, ‘Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Lk 4:17b-19, 21) Glad tidings, good news, *gospel*, written by and shared by *evangelists*. We have been given a message

of Hope and Love, the message of Faith. It is a beautiful and wonderful message – good news! We are blessed to be able to share it! Our best response is to act like it!

The four years of the program are designed to be somewhat independent of each other and somewhat progressive as well. Because all grades are exposed to the same lesson each week, we have elements in each year to provide building blocks not just within each year but for other years as well. Just because the second year has a focus on salvation history using Scripture, does not mean that Scripture is not used every year or that the morality of year three is not brought up throughout the program. Every four years one group will get the overall plan “in order” (if you want to call it that). For that reason we have to make sure that we build on what they know as well as what they do not know in order to teach a particular year’s program. Honestly though, we teach the same thing every year, we just use different words.

Being new, you may not have the advantage that returning catechists enjoy. For that reason when possible you will be teamed with an experienced T² catechist who can help. All four years are available for your perusal as well. As said though, each year tries to give the teens a similar message and that message is simple: “*You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.*” He replied to him, ‘*You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.*’” (Lk 10:27-28) As said it is a beautiful message and we are blessed to share it.



The world puts many pressures on our teens, and Catholic thought is often called “counter-cultural” but we should be more with St. John Paul II and show that we are the true culture, the “Culture of Life” and that the world, with its “Culture of Death” is actually the counter-cultural one. This may seem like a tough sell but it is one the teens can hear, especially when the mixed and insufficient answers the world gives to the problems it creates become obvious to them.



We can discuss theories about the teen brain and how that affects their thinking and actions, and that is probably a guide all in itself, but the most salient point is that they have often not had the experiences that makes doctrine make sense, or if they have they may still not have the emotional maturity to always operate on it. Often consequences and actions are disassociated because the desired consequence is the only one seen. This means that cause and effect arguments may not always work. Often we may have to navigate the path of consequences for them, guiding them by Scripture and doctrine to understand the Truth.

With that in mind, then the order of the years does not matter. The Spirit is really the one in charge here so be aware that you channel the Spirit into these teen’s lives and we know that that conversion can make lasting impressions in their lives.

You may not feel strong in presenting a lesson, but you do not need Toastmasters in order to be genuinely willing to share the Good News with others. If you do not feel strong in one area remember that you have

support not just of a team catechist but of all the catechists in the room. Lesson plans can be adapted to work with your strengths as well. Nothing in the lesson plan (except the Faith) is set in stone. The most important thing to remember is not to just read the lesson but proclaim it!

As a general rule, audiences want you to succeed. They really do. They desire to hear what you have to say. Teens are no different. You do not have to be confident in your presentation skills as much as having to be confident in the message you are sharing. If you get rattled or get uncomfortable remember that everyone in the room is on your side, as are Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Remember: the message is not yours but you are the means of delivering that message. *“So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it.” (Is 55:11)* If you “mess up” or get lost, just smile!

Structure and Lesson Plans

Table Talk is a four year program for once a week parish high school Religious Ed. It is designed around a 25-30 week year with no summer meetings. That does not mean that it cannot be adapted to any schedule. It allows for 2 “reconciliation classes” (Advent and Lent) and leaves room for some ministry activities, at least two that should be performed during reconciliation sessions.



The calendar starts within a week of normal school starting, but usually not too far before Labor Day. It allows for Fall Break, Thanksgiving, Christmas Break, Spring Break, and if not coinciding, Easter Break. The movable feast aspect to these breaks accounts for the wide number of class sessions. The year ends the week before Mother's Day with a Step-Up class for all Eighth Grade Confirmation Candidates. This means that while there are usually 30 open sessions total, 25 is what we often end up with.

Some classes are designed to be "Large Group" activities in which there is little or limited table discussion.

We do our classes on Sunday because of the simple rule that the Church learned millennia ago, you go "where the people are." We were fortunate to have a pastor who went to the Herculean effort of changing Mass times to create the window opening we enjoy now because that is "where the people are." In our parish the 9:00 am liturgy has traditionally been the largest attended Mass time, with the most families. With children already there, it is the easiest time to hold Religious Ed. As we integrate our various cultural groups then a consistent time becomes even more important. Still as the parish grows this time frame may need to change to accommodate "where the people are."

Each lesson is designed to fit within an hour and a half, for us between the 9:00 and 11:45 Masses. The total lesson time is about an hour, giving the teens some time to socialize. Also 9:00 Mass gets out at various times and this half hour buffer allows time for that and for socializing. Class is able to start as early as 10:15 but no later than 10:30 to allow a

full hour for presentation and discussion or activities.

Like *Saturday Night Live* our aim is that there is a different host every week. We ask that each two-person team rotate the responsibility of catechizing the large group throughout the year. This means that for most of the lessons, you are not responsible for lesson prep and presentation but merely leading the table discussion. It works out to mean that, depending upon the number of catechists, each team ends up with leading around three classes during the whole year. Hopefully this takes pressure off individual catechists and gives the teens a variety of styles and personality types. You may be hesitant, especially if you are new, but I assure you, as said before, you bring something unique to the lesson and everyone is there for your support.

For those weeks when you are responsible for the lesson it will require extra time to prepare. Each class has a pre-made lesson plan already in place to guide you and to give you ideas.

All of the lessons start with snacks. Not only does this sugar and caffeine the teens up but gives them the energy and socialization time they need to integrate into our environment. Just like prayer that follows, the snacks give the teens the comfort of consistency as well as something in their bottomless bellies.



While our program is designed to be low cost and low maintenance we still incur the cost on the facilities, heating, air conditioning, tables and chairs,



building, and electronics, as well as working meeting lunches or dinners for you the catechists. The Religious Ed fee only covers part of these costs. We also do not charge for the children of anyone who teaches. For ourselves, in order to defray some of the costs of the program, we ask the teens to bring at least three items per semester, a drink, some cookie like item, and a chip like item. Some teens may not be able to contribute and there should be no shame in that, but by requiring some participation it gives the teens some ownership in the program and we get a steady flow of snacks.

The lesson plan for each class follows a basic format:

1. Socialization and snacks.
2. Welcome, candle lighting, Opening Prayer or Scripture.
3. An optional activity, ice breaker, or attention grabber.
4. Presentation to teens of lesson by catechist.
5. Table discussion.
6. Optional table discussion follow-on activity.
7. Announcements, intentions and Closing Prayer.

For "Large Group" activities:

1. Socialization and snacks.
2. Welcome, candle lighting, Opening Prayer or Scripture.
3. Activity.
4. Optional table discussion.
5. Announcements, intentions and Closing Prayer.

As you can see there are several activities which remain constant: snacks and prayer.

These lessons are structured to allow for continuity and consistency. They depend heavily on a lesson plan. While the structure of the lesson and lesson plan is fairly static, the contents and style of each lesson is dynamic. This plan is important because it is shared by all of the catechists and helps to keep us on the same page.

Each lesson plan starts with a purpose statement. What is the class about? What are its goals? By stating right up front it helps to lead the catechesis, the table catechists, and helps focus the teen's energy toward the goal of the class in their lives.

Because being comfortable with the class material is important for both the lesson catechist and the table leaders, we try to get the lesson out by Tuesday before the Sunday (or day) of the lesson. That involves some up front work which is helped by meeting two weeks before the scheduled class to hash out ideas and answer questions about the subject matter.

While this may not always be practical or possible, it is my goal. Starting that far ahead can give you time to evaluate the existing lesson plan and make changes or adjustments that can help to make you a more effective catechist and give table leaders the tools they need to lead the discussion. It also gives the coordinator some time to review and make tweaks or suggest changes before it goes out the door.

Finally when it comes to the lessons it is important to remember that we only get these teens for about an hour 25-30 times a year. Do not get discouraged if you do not seem to be reaching them. We are only one part of the education of these teens, and we



rely on parents, friends, and other mentors to supply a steady stream of lessons. Still we may be an important part, larger in influence than others in their lives. This is an important ministry we have been given and we should not take its effects lightly. In my experience, even the quiet ones stick with the program for many years, and the ones who do not stay or cannot stay are still touched by the time they spend with you. Allow God's work to come to fruition in God's time.

Running a Class

TIP

The easiest way to calm the roaring crowds is with a simple "good morning." If you have crowds like ours in

a noisy cinderblock auditorium then a bold sign of the cross and lighting of the candle always works!

Once you get their attention, remind them of Christ's presence via the lit candle and pause in the quiet and allow them a moment in rest to prepare for prayer.

At your table, start engaging the teens in conversation about their week especially as you take roll. If you always let them know that you are glad to see them, you will get their attention.

Leading a Table

So, down to the nitty-gritty. What do you need to know in order to lead a table? This is what you will do a majority of the time, lead the discussion on the lesson. This is where a majority of your energy will go.

Well, to start with, every class is different; that is true not only of the material and the presenter but of the teens as well. Each week you will have the usual personalities to deal with but you will also deal with looking at Faith from a different starting point, point of view, or subject. Some of these subjects may be sensitive. Some teens react to one thing others to another. Some subjects may reveal deep problems within a teen's life. In this situation, your best plan of action is to fall back on your Youth Protection training. We will support you as we can if something like this happens, but you are the first line of help for such teens.

All that said, you will eventually settle down into a routine. As the teens get to know you and you get to know them, it will become easier to settle the table and to instigate discussion. You will come to know the quiets and the louds, the shy and the clowns, the deep and the immature. Normal discipline at the tables is pretty easy to achieve if you engage the teens both personally and by making the rules of discussion and respect known up front. Serious problem should be brought to leadership's attention.

Be aware of cultural and other situations at your table. The main point we get across is that Catholicism and Catholic teachings and morality go across cultural, racial, and gender lines. If we reiterate that to the teens then we can broaden their understanding of their Catholic Identity. By making them comfortable with being Catholic first then discussions about differences are bounded by our Communion. Sometimes it is harder to understand how we are alike than it is to understand our differences. Diversity is part of our identity as Catholics but it does not mean that we are not "one Body."



Once you have their attention, your first job is to know the purpose of the lesson, its structure and what the leader is going to focus on. This is accomplished by reading the lesson plan, especially the discussion questions. Familiarize yourself with the background and the questions. Sounds simple enough but it may not always seem like a priority.

Another function of the lesson plan is that Tracy keeps them stored which allows for anyone who wants to see what we are teaching a hard and fast guideline to each lesson. We teach at the pleasure of the Bishop and we teach what the Bishop wants. The lesson plan also serve to remind us of that. We do not teach opinions but Faith.

If your opinion differs on a subject remember that our job is not to burden teens with our own struggles but to help them with theirs. The Faith we teach really is the Truth, even the parts we struggle with.

The lesson plan is structured thusly:

1. **Purpose and goal.** Called "What's the Point?" this section briefly describes the purpose of the lesson and any goals that it seeks to accomplish.
2. **Background Information.** This section is for you. It contains Biblical, Catechism, and any other reference materials to help you as well as a somewhat succinct description of the Scripture and doctrine behind the lesson. It is designed to give you the basic information you need to teach the lesson or lead the table discussion or activity.
3. **Materials.** This is a list of items you may need to complete the lesson plan. If any extra resources or materials are needed, like pens, paper, or text it will be listed here.
4. **Attention Grabber.** This section gives an optional activity that can accompany the lesson in order to illustrate its meaning to the teens.
5. **The Outline.** This quick reference is the basic outline of the lesson, highlighting prayers, texts, or activities which can take place during the lesson.
6. **Prayer.** This is the opening prayer for the lesson. It may be from scripture, a saint, or any source appropriate to the lesson.
7. **The Presentation.** This is the meat of the catechesis and contains any text you might want to use during the topic presentation to the group. Increasingly, it is contained within, accompanied by, or supplement with an electronic overhead presentation.
8. **Activity/Table Talk.** This is the meat of T², where we help to break open the lesson for the teens and guide them in how to apply it in their lives. In some years, due to subject matter, some of the questions are age-targeted, making the discussion age-appropriate. For the most part the question are really just starting points or suggestions in order to help you spur on the discussion, and should be answerable from the background information and the presentation materials. They are not hard and fast and may be replaced or re-worded as necessary. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with these questions in advance so that any answers or clarifications you need



can come before the teens stump you. N.B. it is okay to be stumped by the teens and to admit that. Just call me over and I will try to help, or look to the CCC for help.

9. **Closing.** Here is where the closing prayer is supplied.
10. **Reminder.** Herein lies all of the stuff you need to remember every week, mainly to take roll!
11. **Attachments.** This is a list of any lesson supplements which are for handout to the teens. These should be duplicated by the lead team and are for your reference only as table leads.

Leading a Lesson

Standing up before the group can be a bit daunting, unless, like me, you have no pride.

You will look at the lesson plan slightly different than the table leaders as it is your sandbox to play in. In your case the lesson plan lets everyone else in on your plan for teaching the group.

When you have chosen a lesson, take a moment to look at the existing lesson plan. These are available for download from the theologyguy.net website under the theology menu item (or are available from the parish DRE). There you will find a yearly calendar as well as the program itself. The lesson plans are arranged by year, in a progressive order, though the program is nothing if not flexible. There are a certain number of introductory classes that should be done in order if at all possible but, except for year two, the subject order is up to you.

The Four Year Program

YEAR 1: *Jesus 'n Me.* *Developing a relationship with God*

Year 1 is an introduction to the 'who' of Faith. It focuses on personal piety and faith, challenging the individual to explore their personal relationship with God and to see it every day in the situations in which they find themselves, the World around them, and their relationships.

YEAR 2: *The Economy of Salvation.* *Seeing how God is at work within our lives*

Year 2 seeks to present the 'why' and 'how' of Faith. This focuses on the economy of salvation, moving 'historically', starting with Scripture and interactively moving through time to highlight Tradition, ending with the sacraments and focusing on Church.

YEAR 3: *The Moral Life.* *The personal response to God*

Year 3 looks to help teens understand the mechanics of the life in Christ. This year focuses on personal responsibility and morality, with a heavy emphasis on developing a pattern of thinking which puts God at the forefront of all of our actions. Probably the year the teens enjoy the most.

YEAR 4: *Social Justice.* *The work of the Church*

Year 4 is the larger picture of the mission of the Church. This year challenges the teens to build upon personal morality and put themselves within the larger mission of the Church, of spreading the Gospel and fighting for social justice. It circles around to the need for a personal relationship with God.

Each year highlights a different aspect of our Faith. At the same time, each year reiterates what is learned in other years.



Background and History

This is a mish-mash of rationales and history that led to our present program, if you are interested.

After a mandate on content from the local Bishop and a call from the pastor to initiate a high school level of Religious Ed to continue the instruction which had culminated in Confirmation at the end of eighth grade, we started with a four year, class by class format. Our first attempt followed the standard progressive pre-built subject texts by age, adjusting and enhancing as we went along. Most were designed for a five day a week, one hour high school curriculum. Throughout the year we would watch our numbers dwindle, and every year our numbers became less and less. Our diocese is in a minority-Catholic population area, only about 4% of the general population, which places many pressures on our teens. While our parish is large due to our urban setting, we seemed to be reaching less and less of the teens, or losing the teens to more “exciting” Protestant youth programs.

So, how to solve the problem? How could we keep the teen's attention, make learning a Faith-filled experience and still manage to follow the Bishop's mandate for content? We tried different published programs, and we added student peer leaders, giving the teens a sense of entitlement and a chance to call and minister to their fellow teens. Still the numbers dropped and the pressure on the teen leaders became too great.

Then after an experience with the teens at the National Catholic Youth Convention and the call from John Paul II to come to World Youth Day the light came on. Teens, especially ones in our area, need to feel like they are part of a larger group. Once they began to experience the *catholic* nature of the Church they blossomed, became

energized and excited about their Faith and their Catholic identity.

The question then was how to translate that into our program? We wanted to make sure that the teens continued to have age-appropriate discussions on the subject matters of their faith. Well, why not just put the two together? We would lose a bit of the subject-to-age richness during the years, but within the four years we could continuously re-address basic subjects of the Faith, which would allow for repeated age-appropriate discussion of those topics. Hence Table Talk, or 'T-Squared' as we engineers call it, was born.

The nature of the program, the order of classes presented each year and the execution of each presentation are flexible. After many memorable failures what we have arrived at what seems to be a good format and series that is very popular with the teens. But the main focus is on evangelization, the *sharing of Faith*, in an honest and trusting environment. This is what has led to the true success of this program over the past 18+ years; it is the dedication of the catechists and their sincerity which reaches the teens and makes God's love real. It is they for whom I give “*thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.*” (Eph 5:20)

The format used for this program has a two-fold nature. First, is the *communal*, where the presentation is done in a large-group, allowing for everyone to hear the same presentation of the topic. Second is the *age-appropriate discussion time*, where teens of like-age (the default grouping being by school year – freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors) are separated into groups of 8-10 (to allow for participation). We have found over time though, that the seniors tend to want to lump up, meaning that you still need an appropriate number of adult facilitators but only one 'table' (our seniors also often breakout into the separate youth room lounging on the couches and chairs as a 'perk'). Grade levels may need



more than one table, as the prevalent wisdom is that groups over 10 can lead to teens being left out or that it causes them to refrain from the discussion which may easily be hijacked by one or two individuals. The final question of how to divide them into these table groups is left up to you, though some ice-breakers are good for this purpose. The warning is against letting the teens choose their own tables as it can make for lop-sided or unmanageable groups. If after the main presentation, the tables choose to break to smaller venues (like our seniors do), be mindful of *Safe Environment* rules and precautions, making sure this only happens when multiple adults are present and the side area has sufficient visual monitoring.

Draft