



Journal Pages

These twelve journal pages provide content for students in grades 6–12 to engage with during the twelve weeks of summer. Each entry includes an Introduction, Good Words from the Bible, Questions, a Prayer, and an activity. The pages are designed to be cut out and glued into a composition notebook. Each entry has two pages—one to be glued on the left-hand page and one to be glued on the right-hand page. Cut out, glue, and create a notebook for each of your students to use throughout the summer season.

You Are Here

Introduction

If you search online for how to make the most of the life God gave you, you'll get about a million tips on being present in the moment. You might wonder, where else could I be? Being present means focusing on the moment you are in—not on what's next or what's past. Notice and appreciate God's creation. Pay attention to the pattern on someone's shirt, the clouds in the sky, or the way a bite of cake lingers on your taste buds. In difficult moments, identify your emotions. How do you feel physically? When you think through things going on in your life, which ones make you feel better or worse? Be present by being mindful of what you're experiencing here and now, telling God about it as you go, and allowing yourself the space to feel whatever you feel.

Good Words

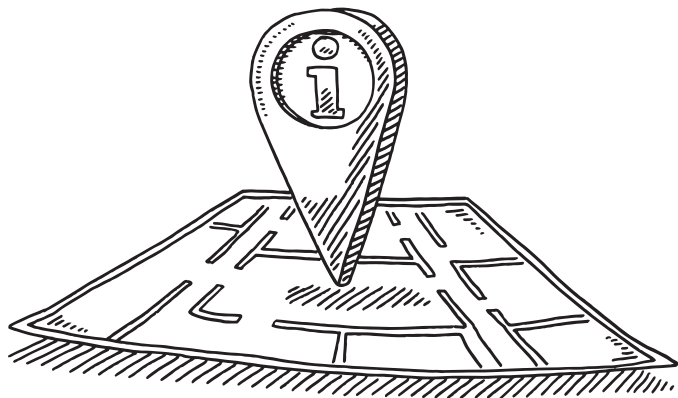
Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. —Psalm 90:12 NIV

Questions

- What are three random things you notice around you in this moment?
- What small changes can you make to follow the psalmist's advice to number your days and make each one count?

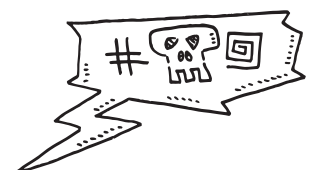
Prayer

God, I am wonderfully made and filled with every kind of emotion. Guide me through the ups and downs of life and help me to appreciate all of my moments, when life is easy and when life is hard. Amen.



What emotions are you feeling right now? Circle the emotions you're feeling at this moment:

HAPPY	BORED	POSITIVE
ANXIOUS	EXCITED	STRESSED
PEACEFUL	CONFIDENT	ANGRY
ANNOYED	FRAGILE	FREE
SHAMEFUL	LUCKY	BITTER
DESPERATE	LONELY	TRUSTING
CONTENT	THANKFUL	GUILTY
PANICKY	HATEFUL	FRAZZLED
JOYFUL	HEARTBROKEN	CAPABLE
ENVOIOUS	MISERABLE	MOURNFUL
WITHDRAWN	AWESTRUCK	THRILLED
SATISFIED	SAFE	VULNERABLE
DOUBTFUL	DESPAIRING	TROUBLED
WORRIED	ACCEPTING	MOTIVATED
WELCOMING	CALM	HOPELESS
RELIEVED	GLOOMY	INVIGORATED



Where Are You Going?

Introduction

God created you with infinite possibilities! Sometimes it's hard to decide which shirt to wear, so determining which dreams and goals to pursue can feel overwhelming. The good news is that you can decide, then change your mind and begin again whenever you like.

Here's some more good news: If you sometimes crash and burn, that can be the best launching pad to do something amazing. A lot of remarkable, ingenious, accomplished people in the world had to overcome failure, discrimination, adversity, or being labeled a loser. The Bible is full of examples of people who really messed up—Abraham laughed at God, Moses was a murderer, David was an adulterer, Peter denied Jesus—but each of them still filled an important role in God's unfolding story.

Good Words

The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why. —Mark Twain

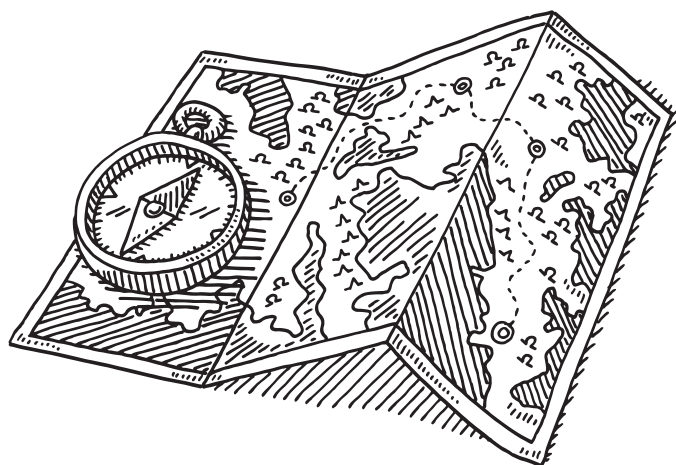
Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. —Ephesians 3:20-21

Question

- If you could overcome all obstacles, what's one thing unrelated to a career you would like to accomplish in your life?

Prayer

God, you wrote my name in the book of life but left my pages unwritten. Guide my path and inspire my dreams. Amen.



Where would you like to go? Dream big...with no buts!

What kinds of work would you like to try?

What goals would you like to reach?



Reading the Signs

Introduction

You are wonderfully made by the Creator with all sorts of built-ins to help you survive and thrive. For instance, your flight-or-fight instinct gives you a burst of energy to get running when you encounter a cheetah. Or it helps you stand up for yourself when a bully is in your face. Your stomach tells your brain when your body needs food. Your eyes close in bright light to protect your retinas. Your belly is built to barf when you eat something with E. coli germs. As a toddler, you instinctively knew your parents were safe and strangers might not be. You're amazing!

But of course, sometimes our signals get crossed. You crab at your friends and family when you feel angry, even if you're really mad at yourself. Processed foods don't cue your body it's full, so you want more sugar and chips. Your cheetah response doesn't want to turn off, and anxiety becomes a constant companion, even if the cheetah isn't. Stranger danger might keep you from making new friends and having new experiences, even when it is safe.

Learning to identify feelings and what they are stemming from, and navigating how they affect you in body and mind, is an important life skill for living fully the one life God gave you.

Good Words

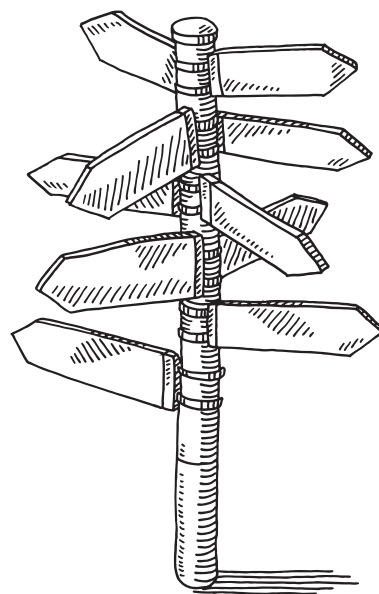
For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works.
—Psalm 139:13-14a

Questions

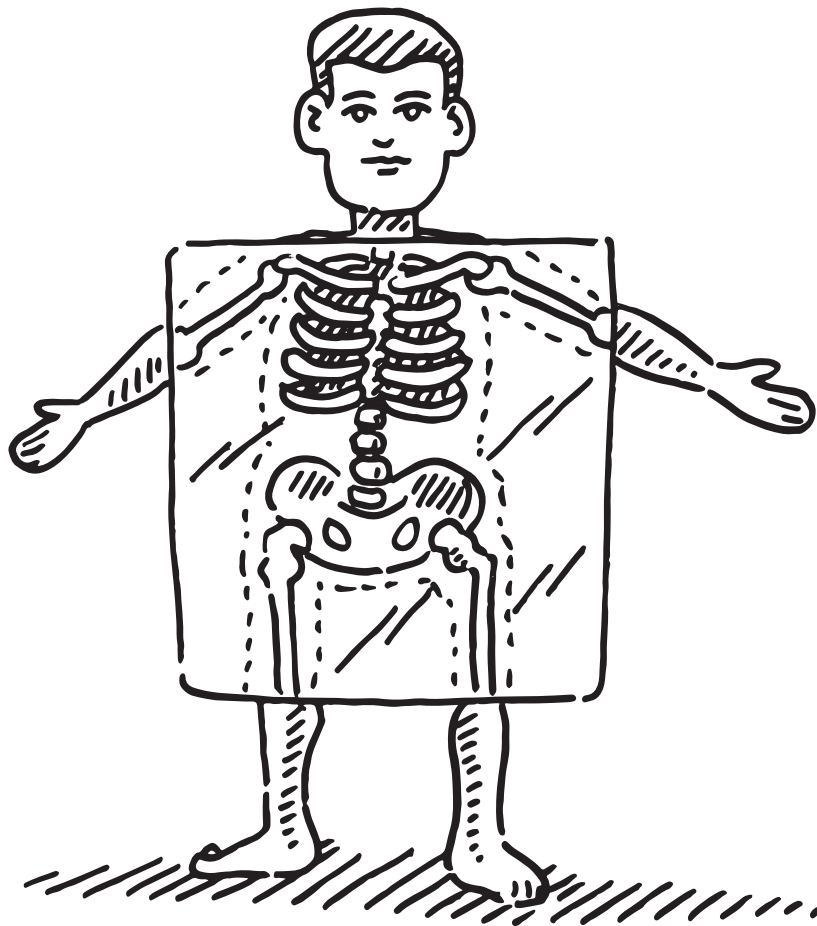
- The psalmist wrote, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Which of your parts and processes do you think are the most wonderful?
- Where do your body's signals tend to get crossed? What happens?
- Most people take out their angst on the people they love most because they are 1) safe and 2) nearby. Who tends to bear the brunt of your bad moods? How can you help yourself regroup and be nice to those who love you best?

Prayer

Creator God, I am wonderfully made. Help me to remember that when I feel perfectly awful, crabby, anxious, or confused. Amen.



Where do you carry stress? What happens when you are afraid, happy, sad, angry, or relaxed? Draw lines to indicated where you feel different emotions, and jot down the name of the emotion and any physical side effects. (For example, write "fear" and draw a line to where your intestines would be with the word "diarrhea" above the line or a line to where the heart would be with "beating fast" on the line.)



Open Mind, Open Heart, Open Road

Introduction

No matter how many brothers or sisters you have, as a child of God, your family is huge. You are one of about 7,846,000,000 people on earth in 195 different countries speaking over 6,000 languages. Every human being ever created has a unique experience and voice. Recognizing that your experience of life is only *one* of an *infinite* number of possible experiences is important, so that you can be open to hearing about how others live and view the world. Make space for all voices to be heard and acknowledge everyone's experiences, even if they're different from your own. Trust the stories people share, even if your brain has trouble computing experiences that you haven't had yourself.

Whether you get the chance to travel across the world or just to the other side of town, nothing will equip you better for new experiences than being eager to learn about others.

Good Words

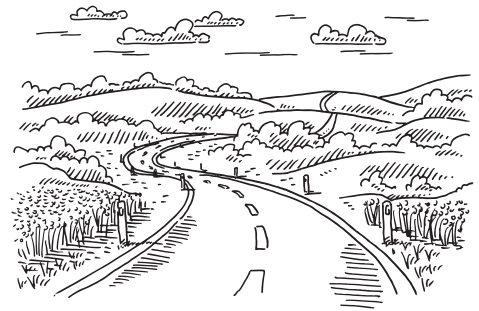
My brothers [and sisters], show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves? —James 2:1-4a (ESV)

Questions

- What's it like to be you? What experiences can you best speak to?
- What are some experiences (good or bad) that you would like to learn about from others?
- How can you be deliberate in being open to hearing about the experiences of others?
- How do you, your family, your friends, your church acknowledge and support different experiences?

Prayer

God, you gave us two eyes, two ears, two hands, and one mouth. Help me to take the hint and to be open to seeing, hearing, and holding the experiences of others with all their joys and pains. Amen.



Ask someone if they have had experiences with discrimination (never assume!) and if that person would be willing to let you do an informal interview about those experiences. (Discrimination can be based on gender, sexual orientation, skin color, socioeconomics, perceived disabilities, and so on.) Write your interview questions here:



Where Did You Come From?

Introduction

We all come from somewhere—that's probably obvious. But of course, not everyone has the ability to know their roots. Adoptions, forced immigration through the slave trade, being alienated from family members, family secrets . . . even with DNA tests, some stories will never be told.

But stories that are known, even if they aren't all sunshine and roses, should be told! Knowing the stories of the people who came before, even if they're not blood relatives, can help you work through your own challenges.

It's the same with ancestors of the faith. The Gospel of Matthew starts out with Jesus' genealogy. The names on his family tree include foreigners, a woman accused of prostitution, a king who stole someone else's wife and had the husband killed to cover it up, a stepfather, and so on. The people on his family list were deported, held in slavery, were climate refugees, and more. Just like Jesus, the imperfect people who came before us helped shape who we are.

Good Words

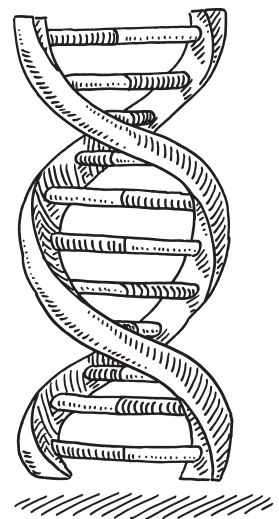
So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations. —Matthew 1:17

Questions

- How do you think where you came from affects where you are going?
- What stories might be told about you?
- Stories of ancestors in the faith help us understand that some challenges are universal. Which Bible stories can you relate to?
- What are your thoughts on Jesus' family tree?

Prayer

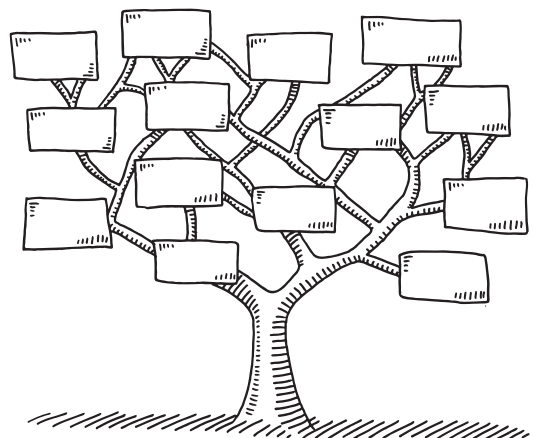
God, I am one who came from many people who have overcome great obstacles, experienced joys, and survived hardships to pass their genes on to me. Thank you for ancestors in faith and family. Amen.



Some things I know about those who came before me:

How I came to be where I am:

What I want my descendants to know about my story:



Roadblocks

Introduction

You've figured out by now that life can be challenging sometimes. Other times, it can be just plain hard. You can't always change the situation you're in, but you can control your response. You might feel like you want to give up or go into hiding until the hard times pass, but we build our resilience by hanging on and doing the best we can no matter what. Often, the voice saying "No, you can't" is the one in your head. It may take some practice to see yourself as God no doubt sees you: a beloved child of God who can keep going no matter what.

Good Words

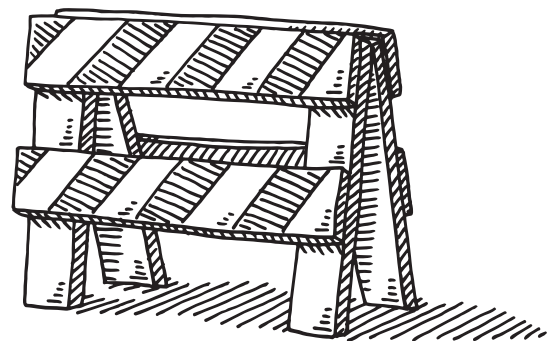
We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. —Romans 5:3-5

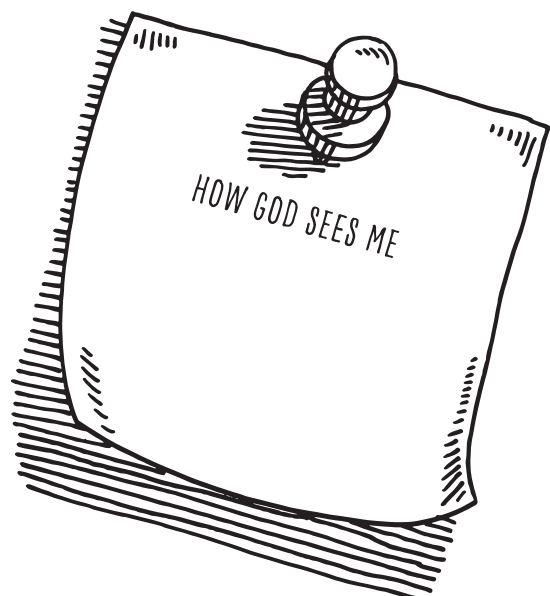
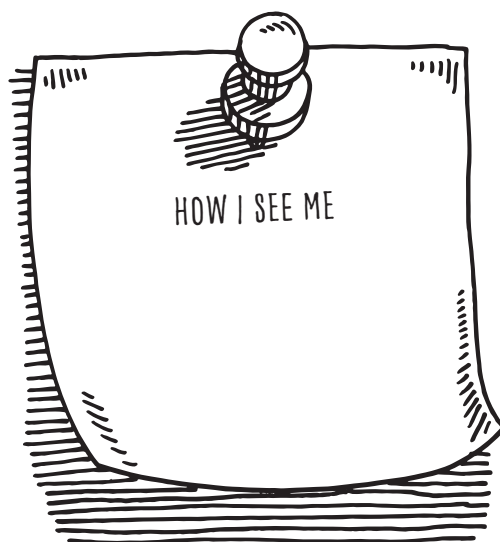
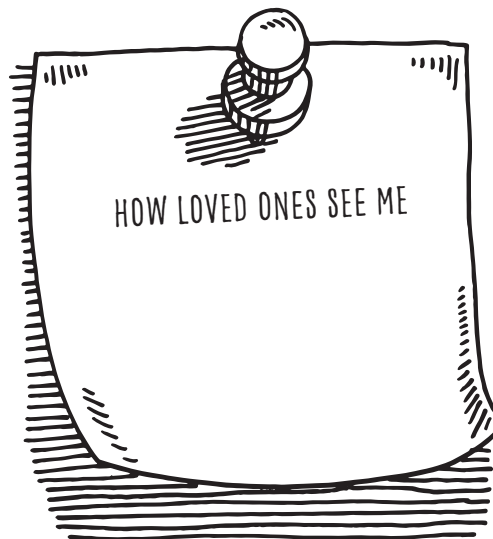
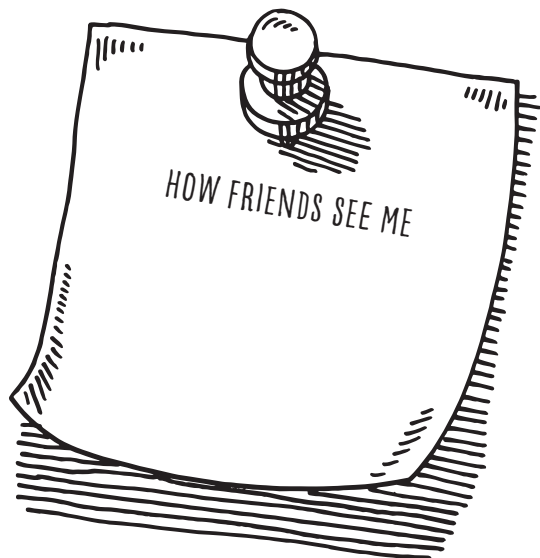
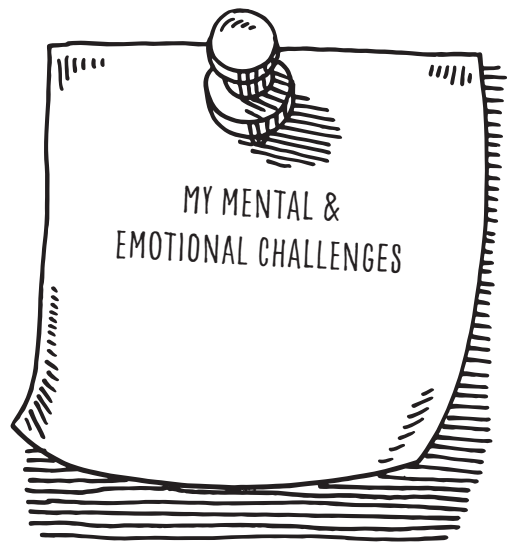
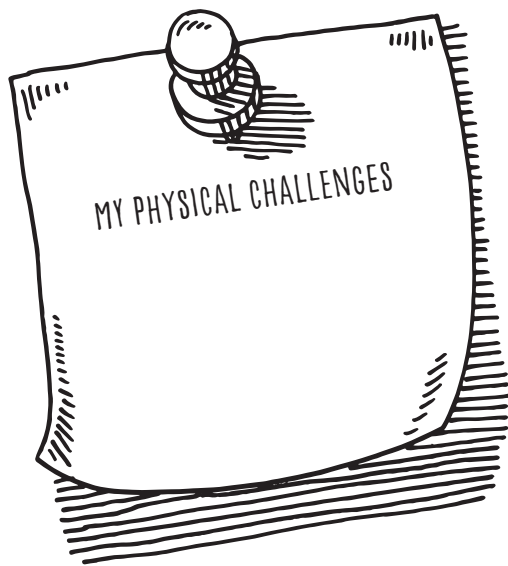
Questions

- Where do your "No, you can'ts" come from? Yourself? Others? Society?
- How do you push back with "Yes, I can!"?
- The hard things you've gone through shape you and become part of who you are, though they don't have to define you. When have your sufferings made you stronger?

Prayer

Jesus, you knew about going through hard things and how difficult life on earth can be. Help me to remember that my strength is in you. Amen.





Load Up on Gratitude

Introduction

You can have too much caffeine. Too much stress will get to you. You can definitely have too much homework. But you can never have too much gratitude. It may not come naturally, but it is a good faith practice.

Studies suggest that developing habits around gratitude (such as keeping a journal or list of people, experiences, or things that you are thankful for) can foster an inner happiness and sense of peace. It can also push back against a sense of entitlement or feeling that things are owed to you. Most of all, it can help you notice and give thanks to God for big and little gifts every day.

Good Words

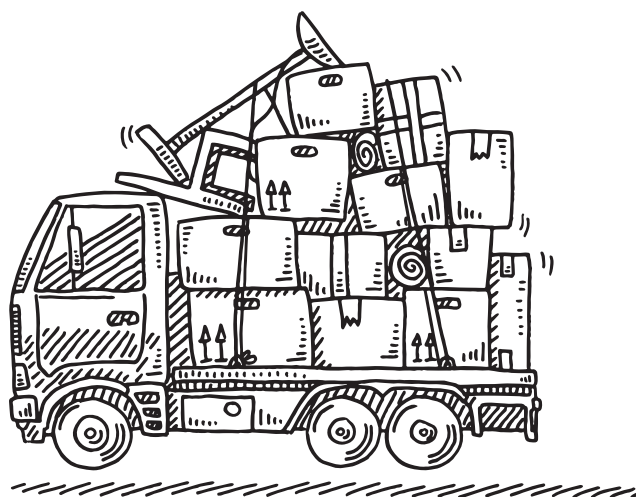
This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. —Psalm 118:24

Questions

- What makes your heart sing? What brings you joy? What makes you immediately smile?
- What people support you?
- It's not always easy to be thankful for school or discipline, but imagine life without them. What other things are important to be thankful for in your life, even if they're not your favorite?
- Notice three things around you right now for which you are grateful. What are they?

Prayer

God, I only get one life. Help me not to focus so much on the negative so that I can see and appreciate the positive before it passes by. Amen.



Create a tactile, multimedia collage of gratitude. Ideas could include printing some snapshots of friends and family who help, love, and support you, gluing in a leaf or sand or a snippet of hair from your beloved pet, stapling an admission bracelet or a supportive note from a teacher, or whatever reflects what you feel thankful to have in your life.

How Do You Refuel?

Introduction

If you're reading this, chances are you're involved with church activities. You likely are in school and have homework during the school year. Maybe there are music, sports, or clubs that require practice or lessons. You might have a job or do a significant amount of work at home with chores or caring for family members.

Young people are often really busy, and the stress of always having someplace to be or something to do can take a toll. How do you recharge?

If you haven't tried it before, experience the joy of doing nothing. Take a sabbath from electronics, even your phone, smartwatch, video games, tablet, and computer. Cross a few optional things off your schedule and block out time for an appointment with DAN (Do Absolutely Nothing). Set yourself up to have nothing to do and nowhere to be, and take time to just breathe.

God created the Sabbath day of rest because we all need it. Even Jesus made a point of getting away from it all sometimes. Make sure you do too.

Good Words

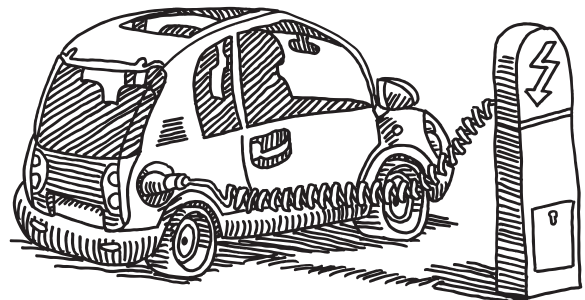
For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. —Exodus 20:11

Questions

- How often do you feel stressed out by activities and expectations?
- When could you use some DAN time?
- How do you practice Sabbath-keeping?

Prayer

Lord, somewhere along the way being busy and overscheduled became a good thing. Help me just be. Amen.



Introvert or Extrovert? Mini Quiz

When you're feeling drained, how do you like to recharge?

- A. Alone. Unless my cat counts.
- B. With one or a couple friends.
- C. In a really social place with lots of activity.

How do you like to do school projects?

- A. Alone. Please don't make me work with other people.
- B. With a small group of equally motivated friends.
- C. By getting tossed in with a big group of new people.

Your pastor says she's sending you to camp.

- A. No. No, no, no. Too many people. Too many group activities.
- B. Okay, but can I pick my friend as my roommate?
- C. When do we leave? Can't wait to meet my hundred new best friends and show off my skills at the talent show!

Which kind of work setting appeals to you?

- A. Scientist, writer, or distance runner.
- B. Politician, nurse, teacher, or business executive.
- C. Motivational speaker, salesperson, or event planner.

Who do you look to for advice?

- A. My gut.
- B. A trusted elder, parent, or close friend.
- C. My friend group or popular opinion.

Which category sounds more relaxing?

- A. Reading, chilling on my phone, or going for a jog with my dog.
- B. Starting a fun group chat with friends, gaming with acquaintances, or going for a hike with a friend.
- C. Organizing an all-day outing with friends, deciding to throw a last-minute party, or jumping in a pick-up game in the park with strangers.

When I go to church, I like to . . .

- A. Come in late. Sit in back. Leave quickly.
- B. Sit in my usual spot. Say hello to people I know. Grab a donut and head out.
- C. Sit near the front so I can look back and see everyone's faces. High-five people when I'm heading up for communion. Teach everyone at fellowship time the song I learned at camp—with motions!

Tally up your answers and see into which category your personality leans.

"A" ANSWERS	"B" ANSWERS	"C" ANSWERS
You would probably categorize yourself as being an introvert. You can be social, but you prefer it in small groups and definitely enjoy time alone.	Like many people, you have both introvert and extrovert qualities. It might depend on your mood, stressors, or other factors. You may enjoy social interactions best in small groups or want some downtime after.	Looks like you would consider yourself more of an extrovert. You are energized by larger groups and engaging with others. You might feel like you're missing out when you're alone.

What Gets Your Gears Going?

Introduction

Have you ever looked at a parking lot and wondered how people can have so many different tastes in vehicles? Whether we approve or not, God creates us all as unique individuals. Even identical twins have different opinions and don't necessarily drive the same car!

Part of being a preteen or teenager means you have time to explore your interests. Try new things. Figure out what you are passionate about. Explore skills that come naturally to you. Discover how you can use them to do good things in God's world. The Bible refers to these as "gifts of the Spirit." You won't always be perfect at using your gifts right away. Lots of gifts require hard work before they turn into skills. But God has given you a unique role in the Body of Christ, and you can embrace that role. As Paul wrote to the Corinthian church community, you can't have a body full of eyes; all the parts are needed and vital.

Good Words

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. . . . Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. —1 Corinthians 12:12, 14-20

Questions

- Your gifts and interests might change as you get older. Who do you know who has changed careers or interests? (Ask your pastor if she or he is in a first, second, or third career!)
- There are jobs and there are vocations—work that fits your sense of calling and gifts of the Spirit. What things are you passionate about that you'd like to turn into a vocation?
- Would you rather have a job you loved and not make a huge salary or a job you hate and make a ton of money? Why?

Prayer

Help me, God, to figure out what gifts you have given me and how I might use them in your world for the good of all creation. Amen.

Draw or doodle your top five strengths.

Ask others what they see as your top strengths.

Three things you're passionate about:

How your gifts of the Spirit might relate to your passions:

Circle spiritual gifts you might have:

LEADERSHIP	GENEROSITY	TEACHING
LISTENING	HOSPITALITY	SERVING
MAKING DECISIONS	BOOK SMARTS	SHOWING MERCY
ENCOURAGING OTHERS	STREET SMARTS	WISDOM
REACHING OUT	ORGANIZING SKILLS	GUIDING OTHERS/SHEPHERDING
FAITH	SPEAKING HARD TRUTHS	

How do you want to use your gifts to change the world?



Check the Engine

Introduction

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus begins his ministry of teaching, healing, and caring for God's people. And immediately, he is busy. People are coming at him left and right to be healed and fed and to learn about his new teachings. And every so often there's a sentence like "In the morning, while it was still very dark, [Jesus] got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. —Mark 1:35

Healthy habits are important, like prayer, mindfulness, and meditation. And also, exercise. good food, and sleep (lots and lots of sleep). Practice kindness to that nice person in the mirror and pick a healthy habit to focus on this week.

Good Words

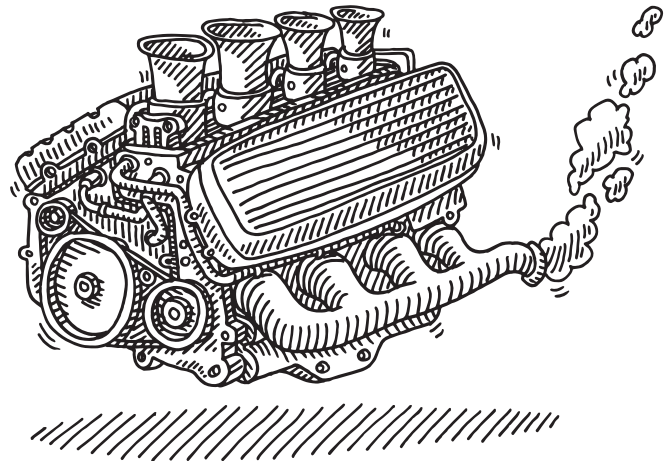
After saying farewell to them, [Jesus] went up on the mountain to pray. —Mark 6:46

Questions

- What healthy habits are you doing really well?
- What healthy habits could you do better?
- Jesus seemed to eat, rest, and pray well. What other healthy habits do you think Jesus had? Did he jog?

Prayer

Jesus, you seemed to know what you needed to keep yourself steady. Help me to check in with myself and to develop healthy habits out of love for myself. Amen.



Spend the next few days assessing how you're doing on healthy habits. Don't strive for perfection, but pick an area or two where you might want to make some changes.

EXERCISE THAT GETS YOUR HEART RATE UP

M ☐ T ☐ W ☐ T ☐ F ☐ S ☐ S ☐

NATURE BATHING

M ☐ T ☐ W ☐ T ☐ F ☐ S ☐ S ☐

FRUIT & VEGETABLES

M ☐ T ☐ W ☐ T ☐ F ☐ S ☐ S ☐

HOURS OF SLEEP

M ☐ T ☐ W ☐ T ☐ F ☐ S ☐ S ☐

BRUSH AND FLOSS TEETH

M ☐ T ☐ W ☐ T ☐ F ☐ S ☐ S ☐



Choose Traveling Companions Wisely

Introduction

One of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is that people need each other. When we are too isolated, it affects our mental health. And while gaming, video calls, and messaging can help, those things can't replace direct human interaction. But you already know that.

It's also noted that to have a happy childhood, you don't need to be the most popular kid in school. You just need one true friend to be your anchor, partner, and shield through whatever life throws at you during your elementary and teenage years.

Finding a true friend is not always easy. But it's important to keep trying if you haven't been lucky enough to cross paths and click with someone yet. It might mean joining a new activity or bravely striking up a conversation with someone you don't know. Find a friend who lifts you up and helps you feel good about yourself. And then do the work of being a good friend in return.

Good Words

A true friend sticks closer than one's nearest kin. —Proverbs 18:24b

Questions

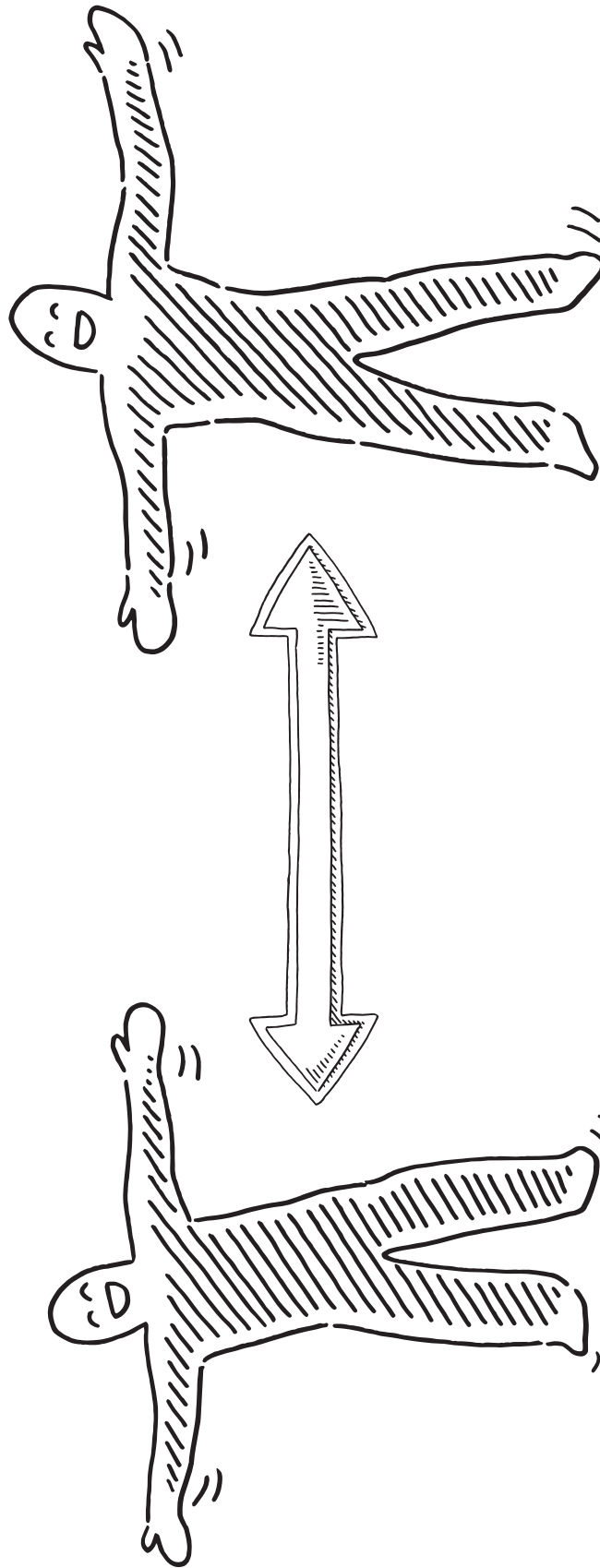
- Which friends, if any, have been like family to you?
- Though it can feel threatening when friendships shift, that is part of growing up. When have you had to let go of a friendship?
- How do you think you know when you've made a friend you want to hang on to for life?

Prayer

Creator, you made us to live in community. Help me to find and keep one true friend. Amen.



WHAT ARE QUALITIES YOU
LOOK FOR IN A FRIEND?



WHAT ARE QUALITIES YOU
HAVE TO OFFER A FRIEND?

Taking the Road Less Traveled

Introduction

When kids are baptized, loved ones and sponsors (and the person being baptized, if they're old enough to talk about such things) make a promise to do their best to help that person to live among God's faithful people, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth. The words differ a little across different types of churches, but that's the gist of it.

Baptismal promises are no small things. Actually, sometimes living out our baptismal promises can be really challenging. Increasingly, they are countercultural—going against the grain of what culture tells us to do.

Discipleship—living out your faith—will take a bit of bravery. You've probably heard people note that bravery isn't the absence of fear, but the ability to forge ahead courageously despite it. Bravery might be standing up to a bully or pulling your neighbor out of a burning building, but it can also be a teenager with social anxiety going to a game with friends, telling your squad you can't hang out because you want to volunteer at the food pantry, inviting someone sitting alone in the lunchroom to grab a spot at your table, or helping to show the world a different face of Christianity than the media likes to portray.

Good Words

With God we shall do valiantly. —Psalm 60:12a

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat. —"Citizenship in a Republic" (Speech at the Sorbonne, Paris, April 23, 1910)

Questions

- When have you found it hard to live out your faith?
- What situations around your life could use a little bravery?

Prayer

God, believing in you is usually not too hard. Living out that faith gets more complicated. Help me to live out my faith in my life. Amen.

Discipleship Challenges

Pick three or four slightly countercultural ideas to live out your faith.

STARTER LIST:

INVITE SOMEONE NEW TO SIT WITH YOU AT LUNCH.

TALK TO A PERSON WHO LOOKS NOTHING LIKE YOU.

READ SOMETHING IN THE BIBLE EVERY DAY THIS WEEK.

ASK SOMEONE TO COME TO CHURCH WITH YOU.

MY IDEAS FOR LIVING OUT DISCIPLESHIP:

