
GOYYA

Grades 7-12

Resources Book

A Y²AM Project

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
Youth & Young Adult Ministries
Office of Camping Ministries

Identifying Love with Christ

Lesson plans for Holy Friday Retreat 2017

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SESSION ONE

GOAL:

To learn that death is the enemy and the end of love, and the Cross is the defeat of Love's enemy

OBJECTIVE:

To identify love with Christ Crucified

ESTIMATED DURATION:

50 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. blank paper for each participant
2. pen for each participant
3. The C.S. Lewis quote printed on paper
(enough for each participant)

OPENING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Your cross, O Lord, is life and resurrection to your people, and putting our trust in it, we praise you, our crucified God. Have Mercy on us.

Amen.

ICEBREAKER:

5 minutes

Tell us your name and a time when you felt peace.

ACTIVITY 1: DEBATE

5 minutes

Present GOYAnS the following statements and ask them to take a position on each topic by moving to the right side (agree) or the left side (disagree) of the room.

After splitting up into “agree” and “disagree” groups, give each group one minute to come up with an explanation for their position. Ask one person from each group to then present that position. Ask each side to listen to the other’s position respectfully and attentively.

- *I love* [chose pop-star].
- *I love* [chose a movie].
- *I love* [chose a sport].
- “*Love is patient....*”
- “*Love is kind....*”

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- “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”
 - Matthew 5:44
- “Love... does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in truth.”
 - 1 Corinthians 13:6

Remember:

It's always helpful to start with an activity to help participants relax and allow community to build. Early in the session, focus primarily on getting participants to open their hearts and connect with what's happening in the group. This is an opportunity to encourage participants to share their honest opinions and thoughts, as well as listen to those of others. Take this time to connect with what's important to them, and what they've connected with.

ACTIVITY 2: LEARNING

10 minutes

Ask participants to the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

- What is true love?
- When have you felt loved? unloved?
- Christ says: “*Love one another as I have loved you.*”
How has Christ loved you?
- What makes it hard to love others?
- What are the obstacles to love?

Teaching: *(reflect on this rather than read it directly to participants)*

True love is sacrifice. Christ has loved each of us through hanging and dying on the Cross. Christ sacrifices His life out of His love for us. Love in its purest form is sacrifice. We love because Christ first loved us. It is out of love that God became man and took on our form. Through the Cross, He shows that He literally loves us to death. To cultivate love we must practice sacrifice; sacrificing in a way that we give of ourselves without asking for anything in return. This is exactly what Christ did for us on the Cross. Being filled with God’s love, we are able to share it with others and live eternally.

ACTIVITY 2: UNDERSTANDING DEATH

15 minutes

Pass out paper, pens, and the quote (as described in the “Supplies Needed” box) to the group and have them journal their thoughts:

“No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid.”

“God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't. In this trial He makes us occupy the dock, the witness box, and the bench all at once. He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realize the fact was to knock it down.”

-C.S. Lewis - A Grief Observed

Have GOYAns break out into small groups of 4-5 to discuss the quotes.

When that's done, come back together for a large group discussion. Ask participants the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

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- What is death?
- When have you experienced death?
- What feelings have come about when you have experienced this taste of death?
- How can we overcome death?

Teaching: (reflect on this rather than read it directly to participants)

Death is a separation from or dividing of love. We have small tastes of death everyday of our lives: divorce, addiction, bullying; the list goes on. Death is an enemy that disrupts our life. Bad things happen, but they do not determine our lives. They may hurt us, but Christ has already trampled down death, so we need not be afraid of whatever comes into our life. These small tastes prepare us to encounter the crucified Lord, but His Crucifixion is not the end of the story. Christ is with us in our suffering and suffers with us. He knows the pain we are experiencing because He suffered to death on a Cross. As we know, the Crucifixion is not the end. It is transformed into joy through the Resurrection.

ACTIVITY 3: SCRIPTURE & APPLICATION

10 minutes

Read the story of the Prodigal Son aloud twice
(Luke 15:11-32)

Ask participants the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

- How does this story relate to Christ's Crucifixion?
- What does Christ dying on a Cross have to do with me?
- How is the Cross important to each of us?

Teaching: *(reflect on this rather than read it directly to participants)*

The story of the Prodigal Son can help us understand salvation through the Cross. In our low times we are like the brother who left, spent all he had and lived with the pigs. Christ sits with us in the pigpen, through His suffering and Crucifixion. He destroys the pen through His descent into Hades. He does this so that we do not have to sit in the pen and suffer alone and afraid.

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Dying on the Cross, Christ can understand our suffering and can weep with us. The Cross is the means by which we come to encounter Jesus Christ.

The Cross is Christ's entry point where He makes death a place of full manifestation of love. We have a God that bears pain and suffering. He knows our pain and suffering because He has lived through it. When we suffer Christ is with us. He does not take the suffering away (His suffering was not taken away on the Cross), but He enters into our lives and transforms the death. He transforms death into the very place of His Presence. That Presence give us joy and gives us peace. He know what it feels like to be in pain, to be abandoned, bullied, hated and ultimately alone. We are able to endure our sufferings because Christ is with us. There are bad things that happen in our lives, in and out of our control, but they do not determine our lives anymore. They are going to hurt, but they will not defeat us because Christ is Risen! The Cross always leads to Resurrection and in our lives our sufferings will lead to joy.

Conclusion: wrap-up & commitment

5 minutes

Go around the room and ask each GOYAn to answer the following question. The session leader should go first.

- What is one way to identify the Cross with love, through what you have learned in the session

CLOSING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

O Christ our God who at all times and at every hour are worshiped and glorified both in heaven and on earth, who are long in patience, great in mercy and compassion, who love the righteous and show mercy to sinners, who call all to salvation through the promise of good things to come; receive our prayers at the present time. Direct our lives according to your commandments. Sanctify our souls. Purify our bodies. Set our minds aright. Cleanse our thoughts and deliver us from all sorrow, evil and distress.

Surround us with your holy angels, that guarded and guided by them, we may arrive at the oneness of the faith and the comprehension of your ineffable glory. For you are blessed to the ages of ages.

Amen.

SESSION TWO

GOAL:

To learn how to die to ourselves through admitting the truth of our realities

OBJECTIVE:

To participate in silence, self-reflection and prayer

ESTIMATED DURATION:

50 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. blank paper for each participant
2. pen for each participant

OPENING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Your cross, O Lord, is life and resurrection to your people, and putting our trust in it, we praise you, our crucified God. Have Mercy on us.

Amen.

ACTIVITY 1: SILENCE AT THE CROSS

15 minutes

Have GOYAns sit before the Cross for 10 minutes in silence. Let them know they can pray, or they can silently reflect on Christ on the Cross.

Ask participants to the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

- What came to mind while looking at the Cross?
- Have you experience a time when you felt Crucified?
- Are you holding onto hurt?

Teaching: *(reflect on this rather than read it directly to participants)*

In order to be healed, we must be willing to live in the present. Living in the present we must be willing to die to our old selves, so that we can be born again. This means we have to accept the negative parts of our lives and take responsibility for them. It is about living in a way where we love others even when it's hard; when they don't want or deserve it. Taking up the Cross means taking up the evils and trials of this world. Are you really ready to take this up?

ACTIVITY 2: NAILING OUR PAIN TO THE CROSS

10 minutes

Pass out paper and pens. Have GOYAns write down a time that they experienced a taste of death: some type of pain, failure, misfortune or something negative that was done to them. Have them leave these notes by the foot of the Cross, to be given up to God.

Ask GOYAns the following question and help facilitate a discussion:

- Are you able to admit the pain in your life? Is it easy or difficult?
- Are you able to share this pain with Jesus before the Cross?
- Are you able to share your pain with others in order to heal?
- Do you want to be healed?

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Teaching: *(reflect on this rather than read it directly to participants)*

We can do nothing alone, but with God all things are possible. God will transform our suffering as Christ's suffering was transformed on the Cross. For this to happen you are going to have to taste death (face the hurt that was caused), but you will not die because Christ has already done that through dying on the Cross. The change that occurs is living in the present in righteousness and faith. By writing down our pain we are facing reality. We are confessing the pain and leaving it with God to transform through His Presence. When we face reality, we live in the present. It is only in the present that we meet God. We die to earthly things, so that we can say yes to God. It is to the extent that we die to ourselves and to our passions that we are saved and are able to live in the present.

ACTIVITY 3: PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

20 minutes

We have an opportunity now to talk about our personal crosses, and the ways we have tasted death in our lives. We also have an opportunity to heal through sharing our pain with one another. We participate in one another's suffering by praying for one another.

Ask for each person to share what they wrote and left at the cross. If they do not want to do that, they do not need to. After sharing, ask other GOYAns to offer a prayer for them and their suffering. Go around the circle, so that everyone has an opportunity to share.

Teaching: *(reflect on this rather than read it directly to participants)*

God created us to be in communion with Him and each other. We have family and friends to help us see the parts of us we cannot see clearly and help us grow. They also help us by praying for us. This unique opportunity allows us to face our pain together.

Part of healing is being able to share your suffering, pain, disappointment or whatever else before the Cross, to Christ and with others. Through co-suffering with each other, death can be transformed into joy. We can do this by listening, weeping, and praying for one another. By doing those things, we can show each other that although we are in pain, we are not overcome by that pain.

Conclusion: wrap-up & commitment

5 minutes

Go around the room and ask each participant to answer the following questions. The session leader should go first.

- What is one way to die to ourselves in hope of transformation through what you learned in the session?

CLOSING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

O Christ our God who at all times and at every hour are worshiped and glorified both in heaven and on earth, who are long in patience, great in mercy and compassion, who love the righteous and show mercy to sinners, who call all to salvation through the promise of good things to come; receive our prayers at the present time. Direct our lives according to your commandments. Sanctify our souls. Purify our bodies. Set our minds aright. Cleanse our thoughts and deliver us from all sorrow, evil and distress. Surround us with your holy angels, that guarded and guided by them, we may arrive at the oneness of the faith and the comprehension of your ineffable glory. For you are blessed to the ages of ages.

Amen.

RETREAT SCHEDULE

HOLY FRIDAY

9:00am	Royal Hours
10:30am	Snack and Intro
11:00am	Session 1
11:50pm	Break
12:00pm	Session 2
1:00pm	Lenten Lunch
1:45pm	Activity
3:00pm	Vespers Service