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# JOY

Grades 3-6

## Resources Book

A Y<sup>2</sup>AM Project

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

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## Identifying Love with Christ

Lesson plans for Holy Friday Retreat 2017

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# SESSION ONE

## GOAL:

To learn that God loves each of us

## OBJECTIVE:

To identify love with Christ Crucified

## ESTIMATED DURATION:

45 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.*

## ICEBREAKER:

*5 minutes*

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

## ACTIVITY 1: DEBATE

*10 minutes*

Present JOY 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 music genre].
- *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?

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- Christ says: “*Love one another as I have loved you.*”  
How has Christ loved you?
- What makes it hard to love others?

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

We show love by taking care of people, by being kind to them, and by helping them. We have to be with them to show them love and we have to be willing to go where they are and to spend time with them. (For example, if someone is crying across the playground, how could you show love? You would walk over to them, and then sit with them, and talk with them.) Our example of love is Jesus. God is love. God came down to be with us, because He loves us. He knows that our life can be hard, so He comes to us and is with us as we go through everything in life: the good things and the bad things. He is with us, because He loves us.

**Remember:**

*Many of the participants may have never reflected upon the different kinds of love in their lives. This activity and discussion can build on the previous discussion and help participants become more specific in how they defines love and expressions of love, thinking about different*

*loving relationships in their life, and the type of love that characterizes those relationships.*

## ACTIVITY 3: SCRIPTURE & APPLICATION

*15 minutes*

### Read the story of the Three Holy Youths (Daniel 3)

King Nebuchadnezzar built an enormous golden statue in Babylon. At the dedication of the new statue, the herald announced the new law. He cried out in a loud voice, “When you hear the sound of the trumpet, the pipe, the harp, the four-stringed instrument, the psaltery, the symphony, and every kind of music, you shall fall down and worship the golden image King Nebuchadnezzar set up, but whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the burning fiery furnace.”

So whenever people heard the sound of the trumpet, the pipe, the harp, the four-stringed instrument, the psaltery, the symphony, and every kind of music, they fell down and worshipped the golden image King Nebuchadnezzar set up.

Then some of the men went to the king and said that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not worshipping the golden image with everyone else. So Nebuchadnezzar asked them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image I set up? Now then, if you are ready, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, the pipe, the harp, the four-stringed instrument, the psaltery, the symphony, and every kind of music, that you shall fall down and worship the golden image I made. But if you do not worship it at that time, you shall be cast into the burning fiery furnace. Then what god is there who will deliver you from my hands?”

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Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered, “We have no need to answer you about this. For there is a God in the heavens, whom we serve, and He is able to save us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us from your hands, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image you set up.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar was very angry, and he commanded them to heat the furnace seven times more, until it burned at its very hottest. And the king’s men tied them up, and threw them into the burning fiery furnace -- but the flames did not hurt them. The fire burned up the ropes that were tied around them, and they danced in the middle of the flames, praising the Lord. The Angel of the Lord joined them in the furnace and made it feel like a lovely breeze was blowing. The fire did not bother them at all.

Now Nebuchadnezzar heard their singing, and asked, “Didn’t we cast three men into the fire? Behold, I see four men untied and walking in the midst of the fire, yet they are not destroyed; and the vision of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

Then the king approached the door of the burning fiery furnace, and called out to them by name, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come here!” So they came out of the fire and everyone saw that they had not been harmed at all. Even their clothes were not singed, and they didn’t even smell like smoke!

So King Nebuchadnezzar said, “Blessed is the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent His Angel and saved His servants who trusted in Him!”

Ask JOY the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

- What happened in the story?
- What choice did the three youths have to make?
- What would it be like to be in a furnace?
- Who was with the three youths in the furnace?

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- How did His presence in the furnace change their experience of suffering?

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

Jesus came down to be with us on earth, like He came down to the youths in the furnace. He suffered alongside us in His daily life and also on the Cross. He always comes to us in our suffering. When we are hurt or sad or lonely, we can start to pray and Jesus will come and be with us.

The Three Youths stayed in the furnace, but because God was with them, the furnace could not hurt them. Our suffering is like that. Jesus knows that we suffer, so He came to suffer with us. Christ can understand our suffering and can weep with us. He knows our pain and suffering because He has lived through it. He does not take the suffering away (His suffering was not taken away on the Cross), but He enters into our lives and turns the suffering into something better: a place of joy and peace.

Each one of us is a child of God. He loves each of us and he showed that by dying on a cross. Just as we might come over to a sad person to show them love, Jesus comes to us to show us love.

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He know what is feels like to be in pain, to be abandoned, bullied, or even hated and lonely. There will always be difficult things -- we might fall and hurt ourselves, people might hurt our feelings, and sad things will happen. Jesus suffered and died so that bad things will not defeat us: because Christ is Risen! The Cross was a bad thing and yet God transformed it into something good, the Resurrection. In our lives He turns our sufferings into joy.

## Conclusion: wrap-up & commitment

*5 minutes*

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

- What is one way to know you are loved, 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 ask God for help

## OBJECTIVE:

To participate in silence, self-reflection and  
prayer

## ESTIMATED DURATION:

50 minutes

## SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. ice
2. napkins
3. paper and pens

## 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: GIVING OUR PAIN TO GOD

*15 minutes*

Pass out an ice cube to each person in the group. Tell participants that they must hold onto it for 1 minute, and that this could hurt their hand a little. They can do whatever they need in order to stop the pain. Then have

everyone sit with their ice in hand. After the minute is over, pass out napkins to dry hands.

Ask the following questions to debrief the activity:

- Were you able to hold the ice cube the whole time?
- What made it difficult?
- What did you do to ease the pain?
- Could you have prayed to God to take the pain away?

Ask participants to the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

- Can you think of a time when something bad happened to you?
- How did you feel?
- What is pain?
- What does the word “suffering” mean?
- What kinds of things make us suffer in life?  
Bullying, a friend moving, getting hurt, etc.

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

*We can always pray to God and give up our pain to Him, instead of suffering alone. We could have dropped the ice cube, given it to God, and our pain would have ended. In our lives, we can give up any bad things and God will join*

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*us in our suffering and take our pain from us. Suffering is apart of life, and God does not want us to suffer alone. Instead, He wants us to help each other in our suffering.*

### ACTIVITY 2: THE CROSS

*15 minutes*

Pass out paper and pens. Have JOY sit before the Cross for 5-7 minutes in silence and allow them to journal. Have JOY write down a time that they experienced a taste of death; some type of pain or something bad that was done to them. Have them leave these notes by the foot of the Cross, to be given up to God.

Ask participants to the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

- What came to mind while looking at the Cross?
- Are you holding on to any hurt or sadness in your life?
- Are you able to talk about the pain in your life? Is it easy or difficult?
- Are you able to share this pain with God or others?

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

*Sitting in silence before the Cross gives JOY some time to reflect on the first session and how God is working in their lives. In order to be healed, we must be willing to live in the present. This means we will have to accept the negative and take responsibility for our lives. It is about loving others even when it's hard, or when they do not want or deserve it.*

*We can do nothing alone, but we know, with God all things are possible. God will transform our suffering as Christ's suffering was transformed on the Cross. By writing down our pain we are facing reality. We are confessing the pain and leaving it with God to transform through His Presence. Through doing this He turns our sorrow into joy. 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. We die to earthly things, so that we can say yes to God.*

## ACTIVITY 3: PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

*15 minutes*

We have an opportunity now to talk about our personal crosses: the things we wrote down and left at the Cross. We also have an opportunity to 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 JOY 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*

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*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 ask God for help in your daily life 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
11:45pm	Break
12:00pm	Session 2
1:00pm	Lenten Lunch
1:45pm	Activity
3:00pm	Vespers Service