**Theme:** Becoming Human by Finding Christ through **Freedom**

**Materials:** paper, pens,

**Goal:** JOY will learn about freedom.

**Objective:** JOY will identify freedom in their lives.

**Opening Prayer:**

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

Lord, we want to help You make the world a place where everybody loves You, and we all love each other. Help us to keep our attention on You and Your will for us. Help us to avoid getting distracted by the things that lead us away from You. Have mercy on us, Lord, and keep us always close to You.

Amen.

**Ice Breaker:** Tell us your name and the best thing you’ve ever received for free.

**Activity 1:** Spiritual Posture

Ask for three volunteers from the group. Have them stand in front of the group. Ask them to perform these simple movements, first bending forward (in front of themselves) and then in backwards (in the back of themselves).

1. Touch their toes
2. Give a hug
3. Sit in a chair

When they have completed these tasks, ask them to sit back in the group.

**Debrief:**

* Which way felt more natural? Why?
* Which way did your body want to move freely?
* Did you expect this activity to be difficult? Why or why not?

**Activity 2: Discussion**

This can be done as a whole-group discussion or in small break-out group discussions, depending on how many Youth Workers are present to facilitate.

* What is your definition of freedom?
* How might you misuse your freedom?
* How do you use your freedom well?
* What would be the impact of that freedom? (No sleep, homework, healthy foods)
* What enriches your life so much that you cannot give it up?

**Activity 3: Scripture**

Matthew 26:36-46

“36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go yonder and pray.” 37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” 39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” 40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 42 Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done.” 43 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. 45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

**Debrief:**

* Who are the characters in this passage and what are their roles?
* How could we be like Jesus and put our faith in God when things are terrible?
* How does Jesus choose to use His freedom even though it leads to death?
* How can we choose to use our freedom by giving our freedom to God?

**Conclusion:**

Go around the circle and ask each individual to name one new thing they learned during the session.

**Closing Prayer:**

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

“Thank You, Lord, for Your strength and guidance in my work. You are the fulfillment of all good things. Fill also my soul with joy and gladness, that I may praise You always.”

Amen.

**Learning Session 2:**

**Materials:** paper, pens, a few copies of the St. Panteleimon story below, as well as debrief questions (at least 3)

**Goal:** JOY will learn about freedom.

**Objective:** JOY will identify how to freely choose to serve God.

**Opening Prayer:**

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

“Christ our Lord, You gave sight to the blind man and wisdom to simple fishermen. Give to our minds the grace of the Holy Spirit. We ask for understanding to learn and choose to do good works to glorify You.”

Amen.

**Ice Breaker:** Tell us your name why you chose to come here today.

**Activity 1:** Saint Story - Saint Panteleimon

Break up group into 3 small groups. Give each group a copy of the story of Saint Panteleimon and the debrief questions.

[**https://www.goarch.org/-/feast-of-the-great-martyr-and-healer-saint-panteleimon**](https://www.goarch.org/-/feast-of-the-great-martyr-and-healer-saint-panteleimon)

Instruct groups to read the story and work together to answer the questions. After a few minutes, have the groups come back together into one and have each group share their answers.

**Story adapted below for JOY age readers:**

This Saint, who had Nicomedia as his homeland, was the son of Eustorgius and Eubula. His father was an idolater, but his mother was a Christian from her ancestors. It was through her that he was instructed in piety, and still later, he was catechized in the Faith of Christ by Saint Hermolaus (see July 26) and baptized by him. Being proficient in the physician's vocation, he practiced it in a philanthropic manner, healing every illness more by the grace of Christ than by medicines. Thus, although his parents had named him Pantoleon ("in all things a lion"), because of the compassion he showed for the souls and bodies of all, he was worthily renamed Panteleimon, meaning "all-merciful."

On one occasion, when he restored the sight of a certain blind man by calling on the Divine Name, he enlightened also the eyes of this man's soul to the knowledge of the truth. This also became the cause for the martyrdom of him who had been blind, since when he was asked by whom and in what manner his eyes had been opened, in imitation of that blind man of the Gospel he confessed with boldness both who the physician was and the manner of his healing. For this he was put to death immediately. Panteleimon was arrested also, and having endured many wounds, he was finally beheaded in the year 305, during the reign of Maximian.

Saint Panteleimon is one of the Holy Unmercenaries, and is held in special honor among them, even as Saint George is among the Martyrs.

**Debrief:**

* How does this story relate to the theme of freedom?
* What choice did the young doctor make to help him grow closer to Christ?
* What is the connection between freedom and choice?
* How can we follow the example set by St. Panteleimon and practice freedom in our busy daily lives?
* What lesson did you learn from this story?

**Activity 2:** Liturgy Discussion

“And grant us, Master, ***with boldness*** and without condemnation, to dare call You, the heavenly God, Father, and to say:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, ***Thy will be done***, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

**Debrief:**

* Why do you think the priest asks God to give us boldness before we pray the Lord’s prayer?
* What does it mean to be bold?
* Do we want “Thy will to be done”? If we do, what happens to our freedom?
* What makes it hard to give up our will to the Lord?

**Activity 3: Practice Freedom**

Pass out paper and a pen to each participant.

Ask participants to think about a big decision they recently made that was difficult to make, and write it down on their paper.

Ask the following questions and allow time in between for participants to write down their thoughts.

* How did you make that choice?
* What were/are your feelings and emotions around the choice you made?
* How do you make choices in your life?
* How could God be working in that situation?

**Conclusion:**

Go around the circle and ask each individual to name one new idea they learned during the session.

**Closing Prayer:**

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

“O Lord, You who steadied the hand of Peter as he began to sink on the stormy sea, if you are with me, no one is against me. Grant to me the shield of faith and the mighty armor of the Holy Spirit to protect me and guide me to do Your will. The future I put into Your hands, O Lord, and I follow You to a life in Christ.”

Amen.