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

**Materials:** paper, pens, pitcher

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

**Objective:** JOY will identify personal distractions.

**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:** Skittles Icebreaker

(Note: This activity can also be done with any other assorted colored candies.)

Have participants sit in a circle. Pass around a bag of Skittles, telling each participant to pick two. Once everyone has their candies, explain that each color represents a question:

*Red: Tell us what you did this summer.*

*Orange: Tell us why you came to JOY today.*

*Yellow: Tell us a time when you tried something new.*

*Green: Tell us your favorite thing to do.*

*Purple: Tell us something no one knows about you.*

Going around the circle, students share information about themselves based on the color candy they have selected. If you only have enough time to go around once, participants can choose between their two colors. If someone has two of the same colors, they can give two different answers to the same question.

**Activity 1:** Pitcher Activity

Pass out a piece of paper and a pen to each participant. Ask participants to *think about* the thoughts that distract them, tend to take their attention, or worry them during their day (examples: homework, tests, sports, sick parents or grandparents, etc.). Ask them to write their answers on paper, fold these papers, and place them into a pitcher (located in the center of the circle).

Note: the pitcher in this activity represents our minds and how they can become cluttered with our thoughts and worries.

**Debrief:**

* When you have free time and your attention is not required of you, where does your attention go?
* Right now, where is your attention and what are you carrying around?
* How do these thoughts affect us?

**Activity 2: Discussion**

(Whole group discussion or small break out groups, depending on how many Youth Workers are present to facilitate the discussion.)

* What is stillness?
* What do you think about taking time to be still and quiet?
* What would your life be like if you didn’t carry the tough or worrisome things around in your thoughts?
* How can you practice stillness in order to give or offer your distractions to God?

**Activity 3: Scripture**

Luke 10:38-42

**“38** Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. **39** And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching. **40** But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” **41** But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; **42** one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.”

**Debrief:**

* Who are the characters in this passage and what are their roles?
* How could we be like Martha in our lives? Mary?
* How does Mary choose and act out stillness?

**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.

“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:**

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

**Objective:** JOY will identify ways to meet God in the present.

**Materials:** paper, pens, liturgy books, a few copies of the saint story below, as well as debrief questions (at least 3)

**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 and if you had the superpower to time travel, would you rather live the the present, past, or future and why?

**Activity 1:** Saint Story

Ask JOY: Have any of you ever heard of St. Anthony? If so, can you share something you know about him?

See what responses you get, then share the following story

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

St. Anthony lived in the desert in Egypt almost two thousand years ago, and he was a very holy man. But he didn’t understand how people who live in all the noise and busyness of a big city could really be close to God. So God told him to go into the nearest big city, Alexandria, and find a small store where there was a man who made and fixed shoes. St. Anthony didn’t think a shoemaker would be able to teach him anything he didn’t already know, but he was an obedient servant of God, so he went. When he got there, the shoemaker invited him in and asked St. Anthony how he could help him. St. Anthony said, “The Lord sent me for you to teach me.” The shoemaker was horrified. “Me? But Father, I don’t know anything. I’m sure I’ve never done anything good or worthy of attention.” St. Anthony reassured him. “Just tell me how you spend your days; God knows how to judge us fairly.” At that the shoemaker offered this description. “Well, Father, I struggle to follow the holy teachings of the Gospel. And I’m always aware of my faults and my lack of spiritual progress. So while I’m working I say to myself: You good-for-nothing, everybody else will be saved and only you will be useless. Because of your sin, you will never be worthy to see the Lord.” At this St. Anthony started to cry. He raised his eyes to heaven and gave thanks to God for teaching him how a humble mind is able to live as though in Paradise, even amidst the noise and bustle of city life. He hugged the puzzled shoemaker goodbye, and went back to the desert. While he walked, he thought more about the lesson God had just given him. “Humility is the key. Humility is the robe God put on when He came to earth as a man.”

**Debrief:**

* What do you think of this story?
* How are stillness, prayer, and humility related?
* What can we learn from the shoemaker?
* How can we follow his example in our own lives?

**Activity 2: Liturgy** **Discussion**

“Let us, who mystically represent the Cherubim and who sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-creating Trinity, now lay aside every worldly care. So that we may receive the King of all.” **Debrief:**

* Who is the “us” and “we” in the hymn?
* Why are we called to lay aside every worldly care?
* What does it mean for you to “receive the King of all”?
* How can we stop living in the past and future and live more in the present?

**Activity 3: Practice Stillness**

Pray with the group for a few minutes. Pray the Trisagion Prayer and then the Lord’s Prayer. Then try to practice stillness for 2-4 minutes.

**Debrief:**

* What was that like for you?
* What was going on in your body and mind as you were trying to be still?
* What could you do differently next time to help yourself be more still?

**Conclusion:**

Go around the circle and ask each participant 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.