



#pictureLent Youth Activities

#PictureLent 2016 is built around the “I Am” statements from the Gospel of John. The Sunday theme words and devotions follow the Year C Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. The Monday theme words and devotions focus on the selected I Am statement for the week. The remaining theme words and devotions explore the depth of the “I Am” statement across the Old and New Testaments.

The Bread of Life

Week One (beginning Ash Wednesday) (Feb. 10-13)

Feb. 10 (Ash Wednesday): Return / Joel 2:12-17

Feb. 11: Heard / Exodus 16:11-15

Feb. 12: Bread / John 6:30-35

Feb. 13: Full / Luke 9:12-17

Supplies: Plate for each person and a handful of an edible item to “write” with like small pretzel sticks, carrot and celery sticks, raisins, or French fries.

Key Question: This Lent, what spiritual food will you feast on to nourish your soul?

Activity: Read and discuss how God provided for the physical nourishment of people in the Exodus and Luke scripture passages. In John, Jesus changes our understanding of what sort of nourishment we should expect from God by saying “I am the bread of life”. During Lent, we fast, repent, pray, reflect and look for ways to draw closer to God. Have the youth write out with the pretzels (or alternate food) something they can do during Lent to truly nourish themselves. This could be something they do on their own or with other Christians; anything that will help them experience God and move forward on their journey with Christ. Offer youth an opportunity to share what they wrote and then work together to brainstorm a list of ways people can be spiritually fed. Challenge your group to come up with a diverse list of “spiritual foods” – containing both personal and group practices, acts of worship and devotion, and acts of compassion and justice. Conclude by prayerfully consuming your food-written words and asking God for the perseverance to seek spiritual nourishment throughout Lent.

Resources and Topics for Expanding the Lesson: General Rule of Discipleship, Jerusalem Cross, Means of Grace



The Good Shepherd

Week Two (Feb. 14-20)

Feb. 14: Test / Luke 4:1-13

Feb. 15: Shepherd / John 10:14-15

Feb. 16: Ruler / Micah 5:2-5a

Feb. 17: Separate / Matthew 25:31-40

Feb. 18: Lead / Psalm 23:1-6

Feb. 19: Tend / Isaiah 40:9-11

Feb. 20: Watch / Acts 20:28

Supplies: Three different versions of the Bible – from any language most of your students will understand and three to six images of Jesus as the good shepherd. Look for diverse images in terms of how Jesus appears and the artistic style and medium. Place them in different areas of your space. Countless images can be found online, in Christian iconography, or in art books. Some different representations to consider including:

The Good Shepherd Mosaic in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna, Italy

Ioannis-Xarilaous Vranos icon with a person on Jesus' shoulders as the sheep

The Good Shepherd image in the St. Callisto Catacomb in Rome

Key Question: How does the shepherd care for you? How will you serve as a shepherd to others?

Activity: Explain that the first part of tonight's Lenten activity will be done in silence with the exception of the scripture reader who will give brief instructions.

Have youth open a Bible or Bible app to John 10:11. Direct youth to follow along as you read John 10:11-16, without comment or explanation, from one version of scripture. Point out the different images around the room and direct youth to move to the image that most interests them during the second reading.

Read John 10:11-16 from a second version of the Bible. Tell youth to look at the image during the third reading and ponder what aspects of this scripture or Jesus as the good shepherd that it brings to life.

Read John 10:11-16 from a third version of the Bible.

Invite youth to share about why they chose to go to a specific image or how it portrayed the scripture or Jesus as good shepherd to them. Shift the discussion to be about how Jesus cares for people today and specifically the youth and their family or friends.

How does the good shepherd care for you? Share about how God uses Christians to serve as shepherds in the lives of others and discuss how youth can serve as a good shepherd to someone else.

Resources and Topics for Expanding the Lesson: Games that illustrate Christ as shepherd (Google 'I Am' with Protect the Sheep Game or Know Your Sheep Game for ideas)



The Gates

Week Three (Feb. 21-27)

Feb. 21: Go / Luke 13:31-32

Feb. 22: Gate / John 10:7-10

Feb. 23: Justice / Amos 5:14-15

Feb. 24: Listen / Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Feb. 25: Belong / Psalm 100:1-5

Feb. 26: Open / Isaiah 26:1-4

Feb. 27: Narrow / Matthew 7:13-14

Supplies: Create a generally circular sheepfold out of chairs, tables, couches or any large items available to you. Put a gap on one side to serve as the entrance.

Key Question: How have you experienced Jesus as a gate? How can you live as people of Christ's pasture?

Activity: If your group is larger than 10-15, divide into smaller groups for the first part of this activity.

Do a brief architectural tour of doors in your close proximity. At each door ask the group the same series of questions: How would you describe this door? Where does it lead? (Stretch them to answer for heading both in and out of it.) How do you know where it leads?

End your tour by sitting together in the sheepfold. Describe how you are sheep and just entered a model sheepfold. There is no door to it, just an open gap to serve as an entrance and exit.

In Biblical times, a shepherd using this kind of sheepfold would serve as the gate or door. Once all the sheep had entered, the shepherd would lay down as the gate.

Read John 7:7-9. Discuss what Jesus means when he describes himself as a gate and ask how youth have experienced his gate.

Reread verse 9. If Jesus as a gate or door had been a stop on our architectural tour a few moments ago, where would you say Jesus, as a door, leads? What do you think Jesus means when he says you can go out the gate and find pasture?

Close in prayer reminding the youth that when they leave the sheepfold, they go with the good shepherd into the good pasture.

Resources and Topics for Expanding the Lesson: Psalm 100, two types of sheepfolds in Israel and John 10:1-6.



The Light of the World

Week Four (Feb. 28 – Mar. 5)

Feb. 28: Produce / Luke 13:6-9

Feb. 29: Light / John 8:12

Mar. 1: Darkness / Isaiah 9:2a

Mar. 2: Life / John 1:4-5

Mar. 3: Fulfill / Psalm 56:12-13

Mar. 4: Fear / John 3:19-21

Mar. 5: Shine / Matthew 5:14-16

Supplies: Bibles, writing utensils, a small piece of paper and candle for each person. Lighters. Prayer station directions posted for all to see or small handouts.

Key Question: In what situations do you see sin or darkness today? How is Christ's light shining into those situations? How can you help shine the light of Christ?

Activity: Our world is filled with dark corners: places where sin separates us from God as individuals and as communities. Christ says to us in John 8:12 that he is the light of the world and if we follow him we will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. Christ's love redeems and restores us as he shines light into the darkness of our lives. We then are witnesses to the light and can shine God's love to others.

Let's explore John 8:12 through prayer. For many years, Christians have lit candles as they offered prayers to God. We will each pray about a specific situation that is on our hearts using the posted steps.

I am the Light Prayer Station:

Prayerfully read John 8:12.

Think about an area of darkness or sin in your life, community or the world. Write it on the paper.

Imagine Jesus speaking the words of John 8:12 into that situation.

Light a candle as you pray for Christ's light of love to shine into that situation.

Watch the flames of the candle and imagine light moving into every part of the situation.

Pray about how you can bring the light of God's love into the situation.

Move your paper near the candle to show how God's light shines onto the situation.

Flames and smoke from candles rise upward. Imagine your prayer is rising up to God with them.

Resources and Topics for Expanding the Lesson: Play a round of the song game *Encore* using the word **light**. (If you don't know the game, check it out here: <http://tinyurl.com/encoregame>)

An additional round could be played where teams share verses or stories from scripture referencing light.

Expand to three light-oriented prayer stations using other scriptures from the week's readings and having a station for personal situations, a station for community situations, and a station for global situations.

How is the light of Christ illuminating those shadows and drawing people towards his marvelous light?



The Resurrection and the Life

Week Five (Mar. 6-12)

- Mar. 6: Found / Luke 15:11-24
- Mar. 7: Resurrection / John 11:25-26
- Mar. 8: United / Romans 6:1-5
- Mar. 9: First / 1 Corinthians 15:20-22
- Mar. 10: Witness / Acts 1:21-26
- Mar. 11: Seek / John 5:25-30
- Mar. 12: Pursue / Philippians 3:10-14

Supplies: Paper and markers or crayons for each person, audio or video recording of “I am the Resurrection” by Ray Repp (© 1967 UWP of K+R Music Publishing. CCLI #130199)

Key Question: What does it mean to die and yet live? How does hope in Christ comfort you amidst the realities of the world?

Activity: Martha’s brother Lazarus is dead and as Jesus meets her on his way to her home, he makes a radical statement in John 11 saying, “I am the resurrection and the life”. Listen to the words of Jesus in John 11:25-26.

This is only one resurrection story in scripture; another appears in the Parable of the Prodigal and his Brother in Luke 15:11-24. Recap or read the parable.

How does the prodigal son experience resurrection? What is the role of the father? How does the brother respond? How do you see Jesus’ I am the resurrection and the life statement in this parable?

In the 60s, the music of the church wasn’t adequately expressing the faith of young people. One might say a musical resurrection began to happen for young people as they rejected the traditional music of the church and new kinds of Christian music emerged – folk music, beat music, and eventually the Jesus Movement – allowing them to sing their faith in relevant ways.

Ray Repp wrote a folk song in 1967 that paraphrases Jesus’ “I am the resurrection” statement. As we listen to this resurrection song, prayerfully draw your response to Jesus’ I am statement and the Parable of the Prodigal.

Our Lenten journey is leading us towards Easter and Christ’s resurrection from the dead and we are preparing to celebrate as resurrection people.

How are you living as a resurrection person? How does hope in Christ comfort you?

Resources and Topics for Expanding the Lesson: John 11:1-44



The Way, Truth, and Life

Week Six (Mar. 13-29)

Mar. 13: Have / John 12:1-8

Mar. 14: Way / John 14:1-6

Mar. 15: Beautiful / Psalm 16:11

Mar. 16: Truth / John 8:31-32

Mar. 17: Beautiful / Psalm 25:5

Mar. 18: Life / John 3:16

Mar. 19: Spring / Psalm 36:9

Supplies: Masking tape, chalk, or some other way to define three concentric circles for your group members to move through (areas in a line could also work, but wouldn't physically illustrate the security of the central spot and possible risk at the edges). The inner circle is Trust Easily, the middle is Awkward, and the outermost circle is Danger Zone. A paper circle or plate and writing utensil for each person.

Key Question: When do you struggle to follow Jesus? What would grow your relationship with God or help you trust Jesus more?

Activity: We have three concentric circles representing our different comfort levels in following Jesus or trusting Jesus when faced with a situation. They are:

Trust Easily—the inner circle, you respond this way in a situation where you are completely comfortable, when it is easy for you to follow Jesus.

Awkward—this is the middle circle, you respond this way in a situation when you are a little bit uncomfortable or on edge, when you feel challenged but usually feel you are still able to follow Jesus.

Danger Zone—this is the outermost circle, you respond this way in a situation where you are afraid or totally uncomfortable, when you cannot or do not follow what you think Jesus would want. The situation presents you with some sort of risk and you decide you cannot follow Jesus' teaching in this situation because the risk is too great.

Directions: Instruct students to move to their comfort level for a given situation after it's read. Read 4-6 of the following situations; adapt the list to your context or current events.

Attend worship service.

Invite the new kid at school to sit with you at lunch.

Ride public transportation.

Tell a trusted adult about a friend who is in serious trouble.

Help in the children's ministry.

Say hello to a neighbor as you get the mail.

Say hello to the homeless person panhandling.

Give some of your own money as an offering.

Serve a meal at a soup kitchen.

Stand up to a bully who is picking on one of your peers online.

Stand up to a bully who is picking on one of your peers in the cafeteria.

Pray at a restaurant.

Pray out loud at youth group.

Sometimes it's hard to follow Jesus or to trust that his way is best. And sometimes what is hard for one person is easy for another.

In his earthly ministry, Jesus spent a fair amount of time trying to pound stuff into the disciples' heads because they didn't always get it. He'd try to teach them something, they wouldn't get it, so he try rephrasing it, they'd ask some questions, and the process would continue.



In John 14, Jesus is trying to reassure the disciples again that they don't need to completely understand what is coming up in the days and weeks ahead but that they just need to trust him. Listen to Jesus words as words of reassurance to the disciples near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and also as words of reassurance for you when you are in a danger zone situation.

Read John 14:6. Jesus wants to know you and to be in relationship with you so that you can grow in your trust of him.

Distribute the circles and writing utensils. On your circle, do 2 things. First, draw you and Jesus, together in the middle, in that area of easy trust. Then around it, write or draw ways that you could grow your relationship with Jesus or what you could do to learn to trust him more.

Resources and Topics for Expanding the Lesson: Do a group trust game (many ideas online), John 14:1-6, John 8:31-32



The Vines

Week Seven (Mar. 20-27)

Mar. 20 (Palm/Passion Sunday): Shout / Luke 19:47-40

Mar. 21: Vine / John 15:1-8

Mar. 22: Revive / Psalm 80:14-19

Mar. 23: Servant / Isaiah 42:1-4

Mar. 24 (Maundy Thursday): Wash / John 13:12-17

Mar. 25 (Good Friday): Gave / John 19:25-30

Mar. 26 (Holy Saturday): Save / Psalm 31:15-16

Mar. 27 (Easter Sunday): Raised / Luke 24:1-7

Supplies: A rope long enough for your entire group to hold on to it and still have some extra space. Copies or a projection of “A Vineyard Call to Worship” by Safiyah Fosua (UMC Discipleship Ministries) found at <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/god-is-the-true-vine-21st-century-worship-resources-for-the-fifth-sunday-of>

Key Question: How have you strengthened your connection to the Vine this Lent? How are you strengthened and equipped to show God’s love by being connected to the Vine and to the other branches?

Activity: The “I am” sayings are a series of metaphors Jesus uses to teach. Let’s physically become the final “I am” statement and see what we can learn from it.

Read John 15:1-5 and present the rope as the Vine – Jesus. The scripture says we, Christians, are the branches, so let’s become branches by standing next to the Vine without touching it. Ask and discuss what it means to abide.

During Lent we’ve been focusing on how we can grow closer to God; these things strengthen our connection to the vine. Let’s walk through Lent and ponder what we’ve done.

For each thing you’ve done to grow closer to God, let’s put one finger around the rope (if someone runs out of fingers, be creative to represent a stronger connection to the vine). Adapt or condense this review of Lent to fit your group’s needs and experiences.

Lent began with Ash Wednesday – if you got ashed or attended an Ash Wednesday worship service, wrap a finger around the vine.

Our first “I Am” statement told us that Jesus is the Bread of Life and you each wrote out, in food, a practice you could try to get closer to Jesus. If you did that during Lent or participated in communion sometime during Lent, put a finger around the vine. Or, if you prayed at a mealtime or did something to feed the hungry – spiritually or physically – during Lent, wrap a finger around the vine.

The second “I am” statement told us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. We listened to different versions of scripture and looked at different artistic portrayals of Jesus. If during Lent you did something to help shepherd someone else or you benefited from good Christian shepherding from another person, wrap a finger around the vine. If you read in the Bible, not as a part of a group gathering, or used art as a way to draw closer to God sometime during Lent, wrap a finger around the vine.

Next Jesus said, “I am the Gate,” and we looked at the metaphor of Jesus as a gate or door discussing where Jesus leads. If you have gone through Jesus’ gate, wrap a finger around the vine. If you have attended worship or a gathering with other Christians or have done a service project during Lent, wrap a finger around the vine.

Then Jesus said, “I am the light of the world,” and we prayed while lighting a candle. If you did something to bring the light of Christ’s love into a dark situation during Lent or if you spent time with God in prayer, wrap a finger around the vine. If you tried out a new way of praying, lit candles as you prayed, or reflected on God while looking at a form of light, wrap a finger around the vine.

The next “I am” statement told us that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life and we looked at the parable of the prodigal and the story of Lazarus. If you have experienced a fresh start in some way during Lent or if you looked to God during a difficult time, wrap a finger around the vine. If you used music to worship or communicate with God, wrap a finger around the vine.

Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” and we looked at when it is easier or harder to trust God. If you did something to grow your trust in God or did something that God was calling you to do but was in your



awkward or danger zone during Lent, wrap a finger around the vine.

Think back over Lent. Were the other things you did to abide in Christ or grow in your relationship with God? If so, say them aloud as you wrap a finger around the vine.

Look at your connection to the vine. How does being tightly connected to the vine strengthen you? Look at the entire vine. Notice the empty spaces – some of these spaces would be filled by branches of other Christians who aren't here with us tonight. Who are some other branches that have influenced you? Discuss the importance of being connected, through Jesus, to other branches.

Some of the spaces are also places where we have the opportunity to help connect new branches to the vine by sharing Christ's love with those who don't know God. Think about someone you know that you can share God's love with this week. Close using 'A Vineyard Call to Worship' as a responsive prayer.

Resources and Topics for Expanding the Lesson: Discuss the pruning and fruit-bearing aspects of the John 15 passage.

