

Youth Night

Acts of the Apostles

Purpose of the Night

This youth night is designed to give the teens a better knowledge and understanding of the Acts of the Apostles. Our Church is built upon the witness of these very first apostles and we can learn a lot from them. We can obviously learn about the development of church teaching, but more importantly, we can learn how to apply their witness into the witness of our lives.

Supplies needed

Bible for each small group
Paper and pencils for each small group
Random items (see below in *Preparation*)

Environment

The environment for this night should depict the importance of witnessing, both by the apostles and saints, but also modern day witnesses. Display pictures around the room of apostles and saints. Also, include some signs with Scripture verses and quotes pertaining to witnessing. Also put up some pictures of witnesses today. These can be well known people, or simply just individuals in our everyday lives. At the front of the room, place an open Bible on a table and large cross with red cloth draped over it symbolizing the blood of the martyrs.

Preparation

Snacks/fellowship time (20 minutes)

Before diving into the topic, have snacks or even a meal available for the youth as they arrive. Play fun music while youth are coming in. Allow them time to socialize with their friends as well as to meet any new people. Be sure to have yourself as well as any core team mingle among the kids and reach out especially to anyone who may be new. This time would also be a good time for any announcements as well as announcing any birthdays.

Small Group Skits (20 minutes)

Divide the youth into small groups. Gather a bunch of really random items and place the items at the front of the room. Examples of items can include stuffed animals, a role of tape, a golf club, or a coffee filter. Have a representative from each group select three items. Each group will act out the story of Pentecost found in *Acts 2:1-4*. They will have to incorporate their three items in some way in the skit. Also, each group will act out their skit

in a different genre. Genres can include documentary, western, sci-fi, silent film, sitcom, talk show, news broadcast, musical, etc. Write the genres down on separate pieces of paper and have the groups each select one at random. Give the groups about 10 minutes to create their skits and then gather them back to present them.

Introduction of the Topic (5 minutes)

Transition the youth into the main space to begin the night. The youth minister will begin by introducing the topic of the Acts of the Apostles. Explain briefly the importance of the early apostles and their witness in the early church.

Proclamation

Proclamation verse: "But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." – Acts 1:8

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Reading (Acts 1:6-9)

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.

Prayer

*Heavenly Father,
We come before you this day in thanksgiving for the witness of the early Apostles. Lord, come into our hearts during this time that we might be inspired by their witness to live for you in our everyday lives. We ask this in your name.
Amen.*

(Optional) If you have a musician who can begin the night with a praise and worship song, that could be used as the opening prayer

Explanation

Video: "Evidence" (5 minutes)

(This video can be found on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPHe51B7Z00>)

Teaching (10-15 minutes)

Choose a speaker to talk to your group about this topic and its importance in our lives. The speaker can be the youth minister, a core member, a parish priest or deacon, a guest speaker, or anyone who you feel may be qualified to speak on the topic. You can use the outline below to provide some thoughts for this talk.

Processing the video: The importance of being a witness

- When watching this video, how did it make you feel? What was going through your head as this girl was on trial and what were your thoughts on the verdict? Can you relate to the video at all?
- Now obviously, it is not illegal to be Catholic in our country today. However, there are a number of obstacles that we face in our everyday lives that make it difficult to witness to our faith.

The witness of the Apostles

- In Acts 1:8, just before Jesus ascends to heaven, He stood before His apostles and said *"But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Jesus makes a promise to His Apostles that they will receive the Holy Spirit and will become witnesses to the faith.
- In Acts 2:1-4, we read of the event of Pentecost where the Holy Spirit comes upon the Apostles and inspires them to fearlessly go out and proclaim Christ to the world. The Acts of the Apostles gives us a glimpse into the mission of the apostles following in the footsteps of Christ.
- We hear a number of miraculous occurrences such as the conversion of 3000 people by the apostles right after Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter healing to crippled man (Acts 3), Philip converting the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), Paul restoring a dead man to life (Acts 20), as well as so many more things. On top of this, we also hear of so many stories of heroic virtue as the apostles stopped at no cost to follow the will of Christ which eventually lead to martyrdom for most.

Our own witness in our lives

- In our own lives, we can learn a lot from the apostles and can apply much of what they said and did in our very own life. It's hard to be a witness. It's hard to publicly stand up

and follow Christ fully in the midst of everything that goes on. Often times, we can feel like we are on trial, just like in the video.

- However, Christ has commissioned us just as He commissioned His disciples. He speaks those same words to us that we find in Acts 1:8 – *“But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* The Lord is with us and He freely gives us His Holy Spirit to inspire us to carry out His will. Let us not be afraid to listen to Him and witness to Him in our lives.

Application

Small Groups (15-20 minutes)

Lectio Divina

Each person in the group will receive a slip of paper with the Scripture passage below on it and a pencil. The group leader or one of the youths should read the passage aloud. Take about 30 seconds to silently think about it. Have it read again. Take about a minute to silently meditate upon it and encourage the group take notes or underline key words that might stick out. Have it read one final time and then begin to discuss.

Acts 1:6-8 – *“When they had gathered together they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He answered them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Small Group Questions

- Was there a word or phrase from this passage that really stood out or jumped out to anyone?
- What is the meaning of this passage?
- What does Jesus mean when He says “you will be my witnesses”?
- How do His followers ultimately respond to that call of being a witness?
- In our lives, we all have the same call to go out and be witnesses in our everyday lives. What does it mean to witness to the faith?
- Jesus calls us to witness to our faith by leaving behind everything we have and spreading the gospel around the world. Some have taken this call quite literally and have become missionaries to foreign countries or other extreme callings. For those of us (the majority of Christians) who do not have this calling, how can we witness to the faith in everyday life?
- How can we be a witness in our school, on our sports teams, within our groups of friends, or within our families?

- Why is witnessing to the faith so important? What benefit is there for us?
- What are some practical ways in which we can witness to our faith today?

Celebration

Teen Witness (5 minutes)

Gather the whole group back together and invite one of your youth, preferable an older one who is maybe a junior or a senior to share a brief personal witness on how their life has been impacted by the Lord and how they have been called to live out their faith. Meet with them ahead of time to go over their witness. While writing their witness, have them pray with *Acts 1:8* to see how their own life can relate to that of the apostles.

Closing prayer (5 minutes)

If possible, transition the group into a separate space to close out the night. The ideal location would be in the church if available. Invite the youth to quietly make their way in and have a seat. The youth minister should take a minute to prayerfully recap the whole night. After the recap, take some time to enter into some silence and allow the youth to voice any intentions they have. Close with reciting the Apostles Creed as the closing prayer which can be found on the next page.

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth;
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under
Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father
almighty; from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

Amen.