

STRENGTHENING FAITH PROGRAM (SFP)

UNIT 3 – WHO AM I?

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STRENGTHENING FAITH PROGRAM (SFP)

UNIT 3 – WHO AM I?

INTRODUCTION

Who am I? We all have many identities – gender, race, age, creed, profession, hair color, fandom, language, nationality, ethnicity, ability, and more. No matter all the differences, the central human identity is “made in God’s image”. This identity shapes our relationship with everyone around us.

As Christians, our baptismal identity is “child of God” and “beloved”. This identity shapes our relationship with God and our presence in the world.

UNIT OUTCOME GOALS

- Everyone understands all people as made in God’s image and can articulate how that truth guides our relationships (OG2, OG7).
- Everyone understands themselves as a child of God and can articulate how that truth shapes our values and morals (OG2, OG4).
- Youth can identify when they see God’s presence in the world (OG6).
- Adults recognize Christ’s presence in their youth’s lives (OG2).

SUPPLIES

- Red, blue, and green crayons or markers (Community)

SESSION: BIBLE

UNIT 3 – WHO AM I?

AN IMAGE OF ME (10 MINUTES)

See Bible Handout 1

Say, “Draw a picture of yourself. Make it as personal as possible. Draw yourself doing your favorite activity while wearing your favorite clothes. Or draw yourself with your best hair striking your most ‘you’ pose. Or draw yourself in your bedroom, including all the stuff the expresses ‘you’ posted on your walls and sitting on your dresser and shelves. Somehow show us who you are.”

Say, “People who don’t like drawing are welcome to simply make a stick figure and surround it with words describing these things. This is acceptable. However, try to add visuals if you can.”

As people work, you might want to include the additional guidance:

Say, “There are many things you may not be able to include in your drawing without words. Surround your drawing with descriptor words. Include any of the following things if they feel important to your identity:”

- Personality, Characteristics, Style, or Mannerisms
- First Name, Nickname, or Last Name
- Age, Height, Weight, Hair Color
- Race, Nationality, Ethnicity, or Tribe
- Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation
- Religion, Creed, Values, Morals, or Guiding Principles
- Talents, Skills, Passions, Job, or Relationship Identities (such as parent, caretaker, etc.)
- Disabilities, Neuro-Identity, Genetic Conditions
- Fandom, Favorite Sports Team or Super Star, or Important Brand Identities
- Social Tribe (such as geek, jock, dork, nerd, preppy, goth, etc.)
- Prized Possessions, Valued Memories, or Life-Defining Moments
- Important People in Your Life, Idols, or Mentors
- Dreams, Hopes, Former Identities

Remind people when they have only 5 minutes left.

When it seems like some people are wrapping up:

Say, “Please share your work in youth-adult pairs. Talk about anything that surprises you about each other.”

MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE, PART 1 (10 MINUTES)

Invite everyone to open their Bibles to Genesis 1:26-27. Invite someone to read.

Say, “What do you think it means to be made in God’s image?”

Possible answers might include:

- Somehow look like God.
- Somehow act like God.
- Have qualities that only God has, such as reason or wisdom, creativity or inventiveness, things animals and other creations might not possess.
- Reflect God’s character or personality.
- Represent God to the world, like ambassadors.
- Rule the world like how God rules us.

Say, “You all drew amazing pictures of yourself. I invite you and your partner to look at each other’s pictures again. Do you see anything in those pictures that reminded you of God?”

Say, “If you see something that reminds you of God, do something to highlight those things, like circling them or putting stars around them. Feel free to add to each other’s images if there are ways you know the other person looks like God that they didn’t include on their own. As you look at each other’s pictures, remember what we learned about God and God’s character last week.”

Invite people to share one thing they found in each other’s images that remind them of God.

Have youth put their self-portrait in their binders.

MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE, PART 2 (20 MINUTES)

See Bible Handout 2

Say, “Let’s see what the Bible says about being made in God’s image.”

Read the Bible passages in the handout together as a large group. After each passage, ask them what that Bible verse tells them about being made in God’s

image. Use the conversation guide below if they get stuck. Then instruct them on what to draw and give them time to draw.

Conversation Guide:

- Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 5:1-3
 - Image means likeness. Maybe it's how a selfie captures your likeness and shows the world what you look like. Or maybe it's how a mirror reflects what we look like back to each other.
 - When Adam had a child, it said his son was just like him. I bet some of you have been told you look just like your parents.
 - Somehow, something about us reminds others of God.
- Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 8:4-8
 - We are rulers! We are given crowns!
 - God is our ruler. We are made like God. What do you suppose it means to rule like God?
- Genesis 2:8, 15 and Psalm 121:1-2
 - God plants a garden, and makes the human to be a gardener. We are to work together, as partners.
 - When God makes Eve, God calls her Adam's helper or partner. But the psalms say many times that God is our helper. To be made in God's image is to work together.
 - God cares for creation; humans are like God in that they too are to care for creation.
- Genesis 9:5-6 and Matthew 6:26-30
 - The Genesis text may be hard to understand because it says why we are important in the negative. Consider this: Why does God think it is so bad when a human is killed? Because they bear God's image! Hurting another human is like hurting God.
 - The Matthew text says why we are important in the positive. God values us more than everything else in all creation!

Have youth put their completed handout in their binders.

CREED

Have everyone say the Bible Creed together.

Bible Creed: We are Christian people shaped by the words of faith. We look to God's Word for wisdom and guidance.

SESSION: YOUTH

UNIT 3 – WHO AM I?

HUMANS AS GOD’S IMAGE (10 MINUTES)

Say, “We’re going to watch a video to learn more about being made in God’s image. As you watch, I hope you notice some of the things we already talked about.”

Watch <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/image-of-god/>

Say: “In the video, it said that God commanded his people not to make images or idols for two reasons. The first was because there is nothing we can create that could possibly be a true reflection of who God is. What was the second reason?”

Answer: Because God already made images of himself when God made us.

Say, “We are made to be like God. But the video also noted that even though humans create some pretty great things, they also create some pretty bad things. I am sure you can think of moments in your life when you were nothing like God.”

Say, “When the Bible describes us as rulers – little royalty – you know people can be good rulers or bad rulers. But Jesus showed us what it looked like to truly rule, to be a real image of God. How did Jesus rule?”

Answer: By serving and seeking the best for others.

Say, “So at times, when we are ruling like Jesus, we are being true images of God and reflecting God’s love into this world.”

ENCOUNTERING JESUS (10 MINUTES)

Say, “So let me ask you a serious question. Have any of you ever seen God?”

Most youth will probably say no or be unsure, but if there’s a youth that says yes, feel free to let them share their story.

Say, “If humans are made in God’s image, then I imagine we see God in this world all the time and just don’t realize it. We’re going to watch another video, and see if you can recognize when God shows up.”

Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9N8OXkN0Rk>

Say, “Where did God show up in that video?”

Let youth offer answers. If they give short answers, invite them to dig deeper by asking, “What made that person think they saw God?”

Say, “Jesus makes it very clear that we see God all the time, even if we don’t recognize it. Let’s open our Bibles to Matthew 25:31-40 and look at a story about how often Jesus shows up in this world.”

Invite someone to read.

Say, “Where does Jesus say he shows up in the world?”

Answers might include “in those in need”, “those who receive help”, “the vulnerable”, and “those who need love”.

Say, “What do these people have to do with God’s image? How are these people reflecting God into the world?”

You may need to help the youth with this one. Answers might include “I don’t know,” “is it in the sharing?” or “maybe it has to do with showing love?”

Say, “On the one hand, God is visible when we are serving others and giving love, and on the other hand, Jesus is present in those who need love and help. Maybe what we can really say is that God is present when kindness is shared; God’s present in the relationship where love is expressed.”

GOD SIGHTINGS (20 MINUTES)

See Youth Handout 1

Say, “What I’d like you to do now is to take some time to write about when you’ve shown and seen God in the world. You may not have realized God was present in the moment. The stories don’t have to be elaborate or superhero level. They just need to be true.”

If you have your own personal experiences, feel free to replace the following stories with your own experiences.

Say, “Let me give you an example of each type of story before you begin writing. These are true stories, though they happened to someone else, not me.”

Say, “First story. I was playing ball with my friends. The three of us were having a lot of fun. Then I noticed a kid watching us. I didn’t know them, but I thought, ‘What the heck?’ and called over to them, ‘Hey! You want to play with us?’ The kid’s face lit up and they ran over.

They weren't that great at catching the ball, honestly, but they had a good time. I think that's how God's love is supposed to work."

Say, "Second story. At church we made basic needs kits that contained toothpaste, hand sanitizer, a few snacks, socks, water, and a couple dollars. Later that day I saw a family with two children and a baby holding up a sign asking for help. I asked my parents to stop the car and I gave them my basic needs kit. It felt great to have something I could share. I felt like a wiseman giving baby Jesus a gift."

Say, "Final story. I was going to pickup food for dinner. As I got out of my car, a man yelled at me from a distance. He wanted to know if I had any money to spare. I shook my head and quickly went into the restaurant. After I got my food, I refused to look in his direction. I ignored him, got into my car, and drove away. Now it's nagging at me if that might have been Jesus. I feel like I ignored someone I could have helped."

Say, "As you can see, not every story has to be perfect. In that story, the person in need was ignored. As much as we've helped, I'm sure we've also ignored."

Say, "Now it's your turn. You have about 15 minutes to write two short stories, one about a time you've reflected God's love into the world and one about a time you've seen God's presence in others. And while you're writing your story, try to specifically name where you see God in the story. If you need help or have questions, don't be afraid to ask."

Have youth put their completed handout in their binders.

CREED

Have everyone say the Youth Creed together.

Youth Creed: We are Christian youth who know God loves us. We are practicing our faith every day.

SESSION: ADULTS

UNIT 3 – WHO AM I?

JESUS: THE IMAGE OF GOD (30 MINUTES)

See Adult Handout 1

Say, “You all know our youth are amazing – they drew some wonderful self-portraits – but they aren’t perfect. They probably didn’t include their flaws in their pictures, but each of them has their faults and failures. We all do.”

Say, “Though we will cover this in more detail in a later unit, today we want to introduce you to a little bit of the Gospel story, because the Gospel centers on how we are restored to being a true image of God after having failed so much.”

Say, “In the Church, we look to Jesus to show us what God’s image looks like and to help us become true children of God again. Let’s see how the Bible says this happens.”

Invite someone to read the top of the handout. Then invite someone to read each Bible verse in the first table. Instruct the adults to write the following words in the empty boxes.

- Colossians 1:15: Jesus is the firstborn of creation.
- Romans 8:29: God calls us to be like Jesus.
- John 1:12-13: Jesus empowers us to become children of God.
- 2 Corinthians 3:18: We are being transformed into Jesus’ image.
- 1 Corinthians 15:49: Reborn, we bear the image of Jesus.
- 1 John 3:1-2: We are God’s true children.

Say, “The heart of the Gospel says that that it’s impossible for us to fix everything we’ve broken and there’s nothing we can do to earn salvation or achieve heaven, but that Jesus has done everything for us. And in showing us the light of God’s love on the Cross, we’ve been freed to become like him. Jesus is making us into true children of God. But what does that mean? What does it mean to be transformed into Jesus’ likeness and become a true child of God?”

Invite someone to read each Bible verse. Instruct the adults to write the following words in the empty boxes.

- Colossians 3:8-10: Take off your old self and bad ways.

- Ephesians 4:22-24: Put on a new self with a new attitude.
- Romans 8:9-10: Have the Spirit of God alive inside us.
- 1 John 3:7-10: Practice righteousness and love.

Say, “At this point you may be laughing. You know how hard it is to get your children to act good when they are being naughty. What power could possibly change them into not simply perfect angels, but people who delight in being perfect angels? Let’s read Ephesians 2:8-10 to hear the central claim of the Gospel.”

Invite someone to read Ephesians 2:8-10.

Say, “As we continue through this program, one of your jobs is to remind your youth when you see the image of God showing up in their lives. You do not need to guilt them with phrases like, ‘What would Jesus do?’ but celebrate when they are acting like Jesus. Say, ‘That felt like a Jesus-thing you just did,’ or ‘I bet helping so-and-so was a God-moment for them.’ Help them to see how the promise God made in baptism is already coming true. Celebrate the God-moments with them.”

BAPTISM: RE-FORMING US (10 MINUTES)

See Adult Handout 2

Say, “In fact, the primary images of what baptism is all about are attempting to describe how this promise from God is re-forming us into new people.”

Say, “Here are the primary ways baptism is talked about in Scripture. Let’s see how many have to do with being re-formed by God.”

Highlight the following images:

- **Dying and Rising:** One of the primary ways we talk about baptism is death to our broken ways and rising with Christ to new life.
- **New Birth:** Those who are baptized are reborn in the image of God.
- **New Creation:** Our old selves are replaced by a new existence.
- **Clothed in Christ:** Like getting an extreme makeover, we get a new style.
- **Adoption:** We become part of a new family.

If there is time, open discussion about all the images.

Say, “When we gather back with the youth, we are going to use some of these images to talk about what it means for them to be baptized children of God.”

CREED

See Community Handout 1

Please

Have everyone say the Adult Creed together.

Adult Creed: We are Christian adults who help our youth trust God. We are empowering our youth to live out their faith.

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SESSION: COMMUNITY

UNIT 3 – WHO AM I?

GOD SIGHTING STORIES (15 MINUTES)

See Community Handout 1

The adults should have already received this handout. Tell them to have it ready for this activity.

Say, “As the youth began to learn, God’s image is reflected into this world all the time, because all people are made in God’s image. People have their faults, it’s true, but that doesn’t stop God’s image from shining through. The youth are now going to share some stories about the times they noticed God’s image show up in their lives.”

Have the youth read their God-sighting stories to their adults. When they finish, ask the adults if they’ve ever seen God and to share a story or two with their youth about a time God has shown up in their lives.

MISSION TO FIND GOD (15 MINUTES)

See Community Handout 2

Say, “If God’s image is present in every person, then we ought to expect to see God’s image reflected into this world all the time. God’s image clearly shows up in certain places, because we have promises in Scripture about where and how God will show up. The youth learned, for example, that Jesus promises to be present in people who are in need. That’s a place we will see God’s image. We also have promises that Jesus is present in worship – when we take communion or share peace. But God’s image isn’t limited to those places. It’s present in every person.”

Say, “As youth-adult pairs, I invite you to work together to build a plan to look for God’s image this week. How hard do you think it will be to find God? If you try, how many times do you think you could see God this week?”

If anyone is having trouble with this activity, consider using the Take Home material to help spark their imaginations.

WHERE WE ALWAYS SEE GOD (10 MINUTES)

Say, “Today we’ve focused on how God’s image shows up in this world, in both us and other people. But you all know that we don’t always reflect God’s image. Sometimes people are like mirrors covered in dirt and dust and grime, and it’s hard to see God reflected in them. Sometimes we have a lot of dirt and dust and grime covering us too. This dirt and dust and grime we call Sin, something we’ll learn about another time.”

Say, “But the Bible affirms that even if we mess up or fail, that can’t take away God’s image from us. God image’s is more powerful than our failures. Even the worst person can still reflect God’s image; God will find that gap between that junk where the image of God can shine clearly.”

Say, “However, the Bible teaches us that there’s one place we can clearly always see God’s image: In Jesus. As the adults learned, Jesus is the true image of God, so true that Christians recognize Jesus as one with God Above. If you want to know what God looks like, look at Jesus.”

Say, “In the Gospels, Jesus is regularly described as full of **compassion**. John’s Gospel says that Jesus is full of **grace**. We only see Jesus get **angry** a few times, but he uses his anger to make his compassion greater – his anger shows up when others refuse to care, and it causes him to step in and do the caring they won’t. When Jesus saw people, he **loved** them. He’s called **trustworthy**. Jesus is always declaring **forgiveness**. Do these things remind you of God in any way?

Hopefully someone notices those are all the characteristics of God.

Say, “As you search for God in the world, if you look for those characteristics, you’re certain to see God.”

TAKE HOME RESOURCES

Before concluding, pass out the following take-home resources:

- Where Have You Seen God? (3 pages)

CREED

Have everyone say the Community Creed together.

Community Creed: We are a Christian community who cares for each other. We are sharing God's love through our words and actions.