

RETRO

A LIFE NIGHT ON
ORIGINAL HOLINESS AND
ORIGINAL SIN

QUICK GLANCE

ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

This Life Night sets the stage for the entire semester on Paschal Mystery. Before we can see how salvation was won, we must know why we need a savior. Teens journey way back in time to the Garden of Eden to learn God's original plan for humanity and the consequence of original sin.

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1: 26-27 | Genesis 2-3 | John 1:1-3 | Colossians 1:16-17 | Romans 5:12, 19

CATECHISM

CCC 289-292 | 343 | 362-369 | 374 | 388 | 396-421

KEY TERMS

Original Holiness | Original Sin

RESOURCES

Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* #11
St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* #42-43

ENVIRONMENT

Dust off the old CDs, dig out the VHS tapes, and admit to the out-of-date clothing in your closet – because we are going retro! Decorate the meeting space with recognizable items from past decades, with a heavy emphasis on the 2000s, when most of these teens were born.

GATHER

Retro Quiz

This Life Night begins with a fun game that tests the teens' knowledge of the origins of well-known songs and movies. This game proposes that truly knowing something includes knowing its beginnings.

PROCLAIM

Talk: Original Holiness / Original Sin

The teaching uses demonstrations and relevant examples to explain God's original plan for humanity and the effects of original sin.

BREAK

Connect Groups

Teens have the opportunity in small discipleship groups to discuss God's plan for humanity and how original sin impacts their lives today.

SEND

Prayer for Hope and Trust

Teens pray together through a call-and-response litany of hope that underscores how sin and death do not have the final word.

GETTING READY

LIFE NIGHT DATE: _____

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Read through the entire Life Night and pray with it.
- Brainstorm environment ideas.
- Promote the Life Night to teens and their families.
- Determine which core member will lead the Retro Quiz and who will keep score.
- Prepare the media clips for the Retro Quiz.
- Collect decoration pieces and vintage outfits.

DAY OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Decorate the meeting space.
- Appoint a core member to present the media clips for the Retro Quiz.
- Select core members to read the Prayer for Hope and Trust during the Send.
- Practice the Retro Quiz.
- Test audio-visual equipment.

SUPPLIES

	Media clips
	Four noisemakers (whistles, bells, buzzers, whoopee cushions, etc.)
	Connect Small Group Discussion Starters
	Two nature images for projection, one of them out-of-focus

ENVIRONMENT

Decorate the meeting space with old tech, movie posters, and vintage toys and games. Find treasures at yard sales or from your closets. Search “retro” on Pinterest to get inspiration for designs and colors.

Expand the environment beyond decorations to include clothing and music! Dress in outfits inspired by what you wore as teens. Play a retro or early-2000s playlist as all gather for the Life Night.

GATHER

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS 5 min

Welcome everyone to the Life Night and introduce the topic. Open with a prayer. Then, invite the teens at Life Night for the first time to briefly introduce themselves to the group.

RETRO QUIZ 15 min

The original is always the best – right? But how well do the teens know the original? This game is a fun way to introduce the Life Night. One core member plays a game show host and leads the game.

Gather the teens by grade to create four teams. Core members can fill in to make the teams evenly divided. Give each team a noisemaker to buzz in with the answer. Noisemakers can be whistles, bells, buzzers, etc.

Play a famous media clip. Teams buzz in when they can identify the original. If the team is correct, they earn 10 points. If they are incorrect, other teams will get a chance to answer for 5 points in the order they buzz in. Play several rounds and announce the winner.

- Top Gun: Maverick (2022) = Top Gun (1986)
- I Will Always Love You (Whitney Houston) = I Will Always Love You (Dolly Parton)
- 10 Things I Hate About You (Julia Stiles) = Taming of the Shrew (Shakespeare)
- Ice Ice Baby (Vanilla Ice) = Under Pressure (Queen and David Bowie)
- Clueless (Alicia Silverstone) = Emma (Jane Austen)
- Landslide (Dixie Chicks) = Landslide (Fleetwood Mac)
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (Johnny Depp, 2005) = Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (Gene Wilder, 1971)
- I Love Rock & Roll (Britney Spears) = I Love Rock & Roll (Joan Jett)
- West Side Story (2021) = West Side Story (1961)
- Jolene (White Stripes) = Jolene (Dolly Parton)
- Ocean's Eleven (George Clooney, 2001) = Ocean's Eleven (The Rat Pack, 1960)
- Tom's Diner (AnnenMayKantereit) = Tom's Diner (Suzanne Vega)

PROCLAIM

GETTING STARTED

This Teaching Guide is not just an outline; it's a tool to help you craft a powerful and personalized talk that will leave a lasting impact. You hold the power to make this topic relevant and engaging for your youth group, and this guide is here to assist you every step of the way.

But don't just stop at the main points - unleash your creativity and incorporate media to captivate your audience. Whether you use the suggested media or find your own, make sure it's attention-grabbing and thought-provoking.

And if your teens are ready to take it deeper, don't hold back. The Going Deeper call-out box contains valuable insights that can truly transform their lives. And if your youth group includes Hispanic/Latino teens, the guide provides helpful suggestions to ensure everyone feels seen and heard.

But the most important thing is to be yourself and let the Holy Spirit guide you. Practice your talk, pour your heart into it, and trust that you have the power to make a difference in the lives of these teens. This guide is just the beginning - the rest is up to you!

MAIN POINTS

1. God has a plan for all of us.
2. We are created in the image of God.
3. God created humans to be holy and set apart in creation. Yet, original sin makes it difficult for us to be naturally holy.

KEY TERMS

Original Holiness - The original state of humanity, a state of harmony that could only be surpassed in heaven. Original holiness included closeness with God and no plan for suffering or death. **(CCC 374-376)**

Original Sin - The first temptation by the devil resulted in Adam and Eve's distrust of God, leading them to abuse their freedom by disobeying God's command. The results of this first sin are passed to all humanity. All subsequent sin is disobedience toward God and a lack of trust in his goodness. **(CCC 397)**

TEACHING GUIDE 15 min

Capture the attention of the teens with a brief demonstration.

DEMONSTRATION

Gather a Bible and a Biology, Geology, or another science textbook for this fun introduction to the Creation narratives in Genesis.

Lift the Bible and cue the teens to shout, “WHY.” Then, hold up the science book and prompt them to shout, “HOW.”

Alternate books and see if they can yell “WHY” and “HOW” in unison when you hold up the corresponding book. Increase the speed and order.

Make the point that Scripture is not meant to be a scientific account of Creation (how), but that it does answer the question science cannot: “Why?”

- There are two unique questions to explore through this Life Night.
 - Why do we have a soul and the ability to think about, know, and love God?
 - What is original sin, and how does it affect us?

**Main Point 1:
God has a plan for all of us.**

- We often don’t understand the plan because looking at the big picture is difficult. In addition, we are concerned with everyday things like school work, relationships, keeping commitments, etc.
- When we read the book of Genesis, we can see God’s revelation in a unique way.
- God created us for a distinct purpose. And He shares who He is in a way that we can attempt to understand so our purpose can unfold.
- The human being is created with a soul that comes from God. Everyone has one. The soul is immortal, the part of us that lives forever.

- Therefore, we all have both a spiritual and physical part. Together, these physical and spiritual parts form our human nature.

Illustrate the previous point with a demonstration using an Oreo cookie.

DEMONSTRATION

The two components of a human – spiritual and physical – can be likened to an Oreo cookie: The chocolate cookies are the physical person, and the filling is the soul.

Chocolate cookies or cream filling alone do not make an Oreo. When you combine the two in a certain way, only then do you have an actual Oreo.

Animals have bodies, and angels have spirits. Neither animals nor angels are humans. Only a human being is created with both. Only humans are the “complete Oreo!”

- Humans can reason, contemplate, empathize, and sacrifice because human beings have a soul.
- This soul gives the human person the ability to know and love God.
- The soul is the most intimate part of man.

**Main Point 2:
We are created in the image of God.**

- Some think people sin because we are born bad, but this couldn’t be further from the truth.

SCRIPTURE

Read Genesis 1:25-31 or ask a leadership teen to read it.

- When we read Genesis, we find that humans are created in the image of God – “very good” – and in a state of friendship and harmony with God and the creation around him. (**Going Deeper 1: “Creation”**)
- Our body, soul, and innate goodness help us fulfill the purpose of sharing in God’s love and bringing mercy and justice to the world.

Main Point 3:
God created humans to be holy and set apart in creation.

- So what is our place in the plan of God? God intended for humans to be “holy,” which means to be set apart. We are designated stewards and protectors of the world created by God.
- In God’s plan, there is order. When things are in their right order, it is known as “righteousness.”
- Righteousness is perfect original justice as intended by God.
- We know what injustice is. We sense it whenever we see something unfair, or someone is not getting what they deserve.
- Perfect justice gives everyone what they need based on their place in the creation of God.
- When we put God first, holiness and justice follow. That is the original plan of God. **(Going Deeper 2: “Righteousness”)**
- Unfortunately, there is the reality of sin. At the beginning of humanity, Adam and Eve rejected God through sin. They doubted God’s goodness and disobeyed God.
- As a result, humankind was deprived of original justice and holiness.
- Like a spiritual genetic trait, original sin is passed to each of us. **(Going Deeper 3: “Original Sin”)**
- The good thing is we have a Redeemer. There is a solution to the sin that we inherit. Jesus returned us to the state of original holiness and justice by opening heaven’s gates.

BREAK

CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION 25 min

Come together in Connect Groups. Connect Groups are six to eight teenagers and one core member leader. Small group sessions occur within the Safe Environment parameters for your diocese. These small groups remain the same throughout the semester and are the same groups that meet outside the Life Night.

Begin your Connect Group time with a prayer. If this is your first or second meeting as a group, ensure the members are acquainted. Conduct a check-in where each person shares for a minute or two about their week. Then, lead a discussion based on the provided questions. The goal of the discussion is to have the teens see how original sin affects them today and how the longing for “more” points us back to God’s original plan of creation.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- Do you think most teens today are happy and content? Why or why not?
- Are you truly happy and content right now? Why or why not?
- Why is the beginning of our story important? How does the story of the Creation and Fall impact our lives today?
- Where have you experienced the effects of original sin? (sickness, death, temptation, etc.)
- In what areas of your life do you desire more? What feels incomplete or lacking?

SEND

OUT OF FOCUS 5 min

Bring the group together, and project an image of an out-of-focus nature scene. Recap the Life Night using this visual and the following example:

Look at this beautiful image. Wait... is it beautiful?

At first, the blurry image bothers us because we know it is not how it should look. We have the urge to fix it and see the picture in focus. This is what happened with original sin – our sin blurred God’s original plan and glory.

But, in time, we get used to the blurry image and aren’t bothered by it much. If we keep the image up there long enough, eventually, we may assume that’s as good as it gets.

But the truth is there IS more.

Project the image in high-definition clarity.

There was an original harmony, holiness, and beauty that we were created for, and anything less will leave us unsatisfied. Humanity messed up the plan – we blurred the image, but if we are to know God and ourselves honestly, we must see the story’s beginning – the original idea.

PRAYER FOR HOPE AND TRUST 10 min

The Closing Prayer concludes the Life Night on a note of Christian hope. Call the teens into a time of prayer. Teach the teens the response to the litany, and alternate core members or leadership teens reading the following litany slowly and prayerfully.

After the litany, close the Life Night with the Hail Mary. Make announcements and send the teens joyfully, promising to see them next time. Play a decades’ music playlist or upbeat Christian music as the teens depart.

Prayer For Hope and Trust

Response: Lord, we place our hope in you.

God of hope, we bring you all who have lost hope.

Lord, we place our hope in you.

We pray for those made hopeless by disappointment, bitterness, or guilt.

Lord, we place our hope in you.

We pray for those whose spirits are drained by grief, fear, or despair.

Lord, we place our hope in you.

We pray for people who are persecuted, violated, or left for dead.

Lord, we place our hope in you.

We pray for people who are confused, disillusioned, or apathetic.

Lord, we place our hope in you.

God of hope, we bring you all who feel alone and isolated.

Lord, we place our hope in you.

We pray for those made to feel less than human by age, disability, or sickness.

Lord, we place our hope in you.

We pray for those who feel the loss of a loved one,

For those who see no reason to live,

For those who find it impossible to believe in a loving God.

Lord, we place our hope in you.

God of hope, we thank you for the promise of restoration through a new day and life.

Amen.

SESSION 9

POSITIVE PROSE

POWER OF WORDS - AFFIRMATION

NOTE

You will need a glass-encased candle and a stick lighter for this session. A sanctuary candle works great.

KEY THEMES

1. Your voice and choice of words are essential to building up God's kingdom.
2. Affirmations are one way to reveal God's truths to others.
3. Affirmations strengthen community and encourage others to continue along their faith journey.

GATHER 10 min

Welcome your Connect Group and check in with them. Invite each person to share a high and low point from the past week. Take your time with this extended check-in.

Let the teens share their experiences with the last session's Weekly Challenge to purge profanity from their media consumption and note the effects.

OPENING PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit, open our minds to this lesson, discussion, and time of fellowship together. Father God, we ask that you allow us to encounter you through the words we speak, the words we hear, and from the Word, your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for the gift of this faith community, and allow us to be a community that gives you all the glory through our words and actions. Amen.

PROCLAIM 10 min

- Words have power. And over the past two sessions, we have been exploring words, focusing more on their negative effects. This session is the last in this series and examines the positive impact of words.

Ask: What about your speech habits have you paid more attention to over the past two weeks? Have you made any changes in speech? Are you more intentional with your speech? Does your language reflect the person you want to be? Does your choice of words reflect the God you serve? Give time for a few teens to answer.

SCRIPTURE

Read Genesis 1:3 and Matthew 8:8.

- In Genesis chapter 1, God creates the world through his word.
- In Matthew's Gospel, a centurion asks Jesus to heal his servant, asserting in faith that only by Jesus' word could this be done if He willed it.
- The Bible is called the Word of God, and Jesus is referred to in Scripture as the Word. **(John 1:14)**
- The Bible is clear that how we treat others, specifically those less fortunate than us, is of the utmost importance. This includes our treatment of others through what we say and how we say it.
- We know we should not injure others through words. This is something that all of us are taught growing up, but many of us still need to be taught the importance of words of affirmation.

SCRIPTURE

Read Thessalonians 5:11.

- We should build others up with words of affirmation, strengthening our community and giving glory to God. Yet this is sometimes easier said than done.
- It can be awkward or uncomfortable to share things we admire or find inspiring about others, but doing so not only gives joy but much-needed encouragement to continue to walk in their Christian journey.
- Our world is inundated with negative news, thoughts, and comments. As Catholic Christians, we must set the tone in sharing the good in the world.

- Jesus offers encouragement to that same centurion whose servant He healed as Jesus tells him, “Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” **(Matthew 8:10)**
- We know that the Holy Spirit lives within our baptized brothers and sisters, so it is good to recognize how we see God in each other. It makes it easier to share an affirmation when framed as sharing how you see God in the other person.
- Let’s strive to be more like Christ by encouraging others and building them up with our words. Words are powerful; let us use them for good, for the glory of God.

BREAK 15 min

Discuss the following questions or facilitate your own conversation based on affirmation.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Do you hear more positive or negative things throughout the day? Why do you think this is?
2. When was the last time someone complimented you? When did you last tell someone something you liked or admired about them?
3. What is the difference between a compliment and an affirmation?
Compliments refer to exterior characteristics, such as appearance or accomplishments, while affirmations refer to interior qualities, character, and how God shines through the person.
4. How could someone’s culture, personality, gender, or family background affect how easily they affirm others and accept compliments?
Some cultures are more verbally expressive than others. Some personalities are more introverted than others. Affirming someone of the opposite sex could be misconstrued as a romantic interest, making it a complicated interaction. Women are socialized to receive and give compliments more readily, so it may come more naturally to women and girls. One’s family background will affect their ability to communicate well. Bottom line: giving and receiving affirmation will come more easily to some. We can understand one another better when we acknowledge the myriad of explanations, including but not limited to those we have considered. Despite one’s predisposition to giving or receiving feedback, we should all strive to communicate how we see God’s goodness in one another and be willing to accept it free from ulterior motives.
5. Scripture tells us we should love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31), so we must think of affirmations for ourselves and not just for others. Free of judgment, name something you like about yourself. Why did you choose this?
6. Why do you think it can be challenging to share with others what you like or admire about them?
7. Who could you do a better job encouraging?

SEND 25 min

Affirmations

Experience the power of positive language through an affirmation session!

Begin by summarizing how an affirmation is different than a compliment. A compliment refers to exterior characteristics, such as appearance or accomplishments, and it is not necessary to know someone well to pay them a compliment. You can extend compliments to strangers. Affirmations refer to interior qualities, character, and how God shines through the person. Affirmations are more meaningful because they speak to who you are, not what you do. Exchanging affirmations is intimate and builds trusting friendships.

By this time, the Connect Group has been journeying together for some time. You are well enough acquainted to share respectful and sincere affirmations. Still, this activity may be awkward for some teens, so generously encourage them all to participate fully.

Sit in a circle on the floor or in chairs. Begin in prayer. Use a spontaneous prayer that invites the Holy Spirit to be present and speak through the group members so each person may hear God affirming their goodness.

Give one person the lighted candle to hold. This person is the affirmation receiver. Group members take turns sharing a sincere affirmation aloud while making eye contact. Once everyone has shared an affirmation, pass the candle to the next person in the circle. Manage the time carefully so everyone has a turn.

Weekly Challenge

Challenge the teens to affirm someone at their school or in the community this week.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father God, please activate the power of our words. Help us to use our words to bring life and not death, blessings and not curses. We pray that our words are always filled with love, kindness, and compassion toward others. Father, we also ask that you give us the wisdom to speak words of encouragement, comfort and hope to those who are hurting. Help us to be a source of your light in this world, and to use our words to bring glory and honor to your name. Amen.