

Support Those Who Depart

JOHN 14:12-21

4



GOAL

Youth recognize the Holy Spirit as intimately present in all aspects of their lives and practice ways to remain connected to individuals and communities after a departure.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- G Game
- M Music
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God, prepare me to listen and to respond in ways that honor you and all of your beloved creation. Amen.

THIS SESSION

In this final session about how we *live in community*, youth explore the spiritual practice of departing. Thinking about departing as a spiritual practice means focusing on the rituals and services that mark these transitions and how they help the worshiping community to both grieve and celebrate. It is also important to remember that, although we may no longer be physically close, we still remain spiritually connected to others.

THE BIBLE STORY

In John 14, Jesus prepares his closest community for his imminent departure and explains that, although he must leave soon, the Holy Spirit will remain to continue the work he has been doing. This Spirit will continue to inspire, empower, love, and care for those who will be left behind. Similarly, when we leave the presence of others, the spirit of their impact continues to move and shape us. We continue to receive their love and support, even in their absence.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth experience many social transitions. They watch older siblings, classmates, and friends leave school and move away in pursuit of something new. Youth cycle in and out of classes, activities, extracurriculars, and teams. In the process, they cycle in and out of social settings and friend groups. Youth are familiar with departing.

Identifying the Holy Spirit as present even after Jesus says goodbye reminds youth that the spirit of their friends and loved ones is still present even after they have said goodbye. Youth will connect with practical ways to honor their loved ones even when they are physically distant.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “The Trinity” (p. 30): Prepare three sheets of newsprint and post on a wall.
- “Look and Wonder” (p. 33): Gather the newsprint from session 1 with lyrics to “O Look and Wonder.”

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Go in Peace” (p. 31): Gather a few benedictions to read.
- “Those Who Have Gone Before” (p. 32): Prepare a list of names and addresses of people who graduated and transitioned out of your youth group program over the past few years.

GETTING STARTED

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- Three sheets of newsprint
 - Writing utensils

THE TRINITY

AT QC

Write each of the following at the top of one of the posted sheets of newsprint: Creator, Jesus, Holy Spirit. As youth arrive, invite them to write down different adjectives, verbs, or nouns that they would use to describe each of those listed. Encourage youth to write down at least one word on each sheet.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

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- Writing utensils

COLLECTIVE PRAYER

AT C QC

Form three groups. Assign each group one of the sheets of newsprint from “The Trinity.” Based on the words written on these sheets, challenge each group to craft a sentence on the newsprint that thanks Creator/Jesus/Holy Spirit for something important they share and another sentence that asks Creator/Jesus/Holy Spirit for help in doing an important task. Invite them to read their sentences out loud one at a time as an opening prayer for the group.

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- Bowl of water

REMEMBERING THE DEPARTED

QC AT

Invite youth to spend a few moments reflecting on people they have said goodbye to in some way over the last year. These could be people who have moved, people who have died, or even those who are only temporarily gone. Encourage them to think about the way they said goodbye to these people and invite them to consider what they would want to tell them now. After a few moments, ask youth to think about how they remain connected to those people.

Place a bowl of water on a table at the front of the room. Invite youth to take turns coming to the table and placing their hand in the water. Encourage them to notice the ripples in the water and the sensations in their hand. Explain that, even after we say goodbye to our loved ones, the ripples they make in our lives continue to impact us.

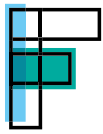
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- Three sheets of newsprint
 - Markers

TRANSITION RITUALS

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Form three groups. Distribute a sheet of newsprint and several markers to each group. Challenge youth to list as many celebrations or ceremonies that they can think of that are used to mark transitions.

After a few minutes, have groups take turns reading one celebration or ceremony from their list. If they are the only group with that celebration or ceremony listed, they get ten points. If another group has it listed, both groups get five points. If all groups have it listed, no group gets points. The group with the most points wins.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.

WHAT WE HEAR

AT QC

Distribute a piece of paper and pen to each participant. Instruct youth to make two columns on their paper and to label one “Notice” and the other “Wonder.” As you prepare to read John 14:12–21, invite youth to write what they notice about the Scripture passage in one column and what they wonder about it in the other column. Read John 14:12–21 and allow a time of silence as youth reflect on what they heard. Read the text again, either from the same Bible version or a different one. Again, allow a brief period for youth to write. Spend some time comparing what they wrote.

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- Bibles
 - Paper and pens

TALKING IT OUT

AT C

Have a volunteer read John 14:12–21 or reread only verses 15–18, if you have already done the “What We Hear” activity. As a group, discuss some of the following questions:

- Even though Jesus is not physically with us, how do you remember him?
- How do you know that God is with you always, no matter where you go?
- What commandments do you think Jesus wants us to keep in his absence?
- What does it mean for the Spirit to abide with us?
- How do we share the Spirit with others?

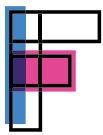
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- Bibles

WORD SEARCH

C CT

Provide each youth with a copy of Resource Page 1 and a pen. Ask them to read the words from the word bank and choose the one that resonates with them the most. Invite them to explain why this word connects with them. If time permits, allow youth to begin the word search. Otherwise, encourage them to take the word search home to complete on their own time.

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- Copies of Resource Page 1
 - Pens



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

AT C

Form four groups. Assign each group one of the following passages and have them read and prepare to summarize the passage to the whole group: Isaiah 11:1–5; Mark 1:4–8; Acts 2:1–4; Genesis 8:6–12.

Invite each group to share their summary with the whole group in the order the passages are listed. After all groups have spoken, ask how youth see the presence of the Holy Spirit moving in their own lives.

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- Bibles

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- Several benedictions (optional)

GO IN PEACE

C CT



Benediction comes from the Latin *bene* (“well”) and *dicere* (“to speak”). Today we use either *benediction* or *blessing* as we depart. Benedictions are often used at the end of a worship service to offer God’s blessings for the congregation as they depart from the service. A charge follows to go into the world to act.

Invite youth to think about the end of a worship service and how the leaders say goodbye to the congregation before they depart. Explain the meaning of *benediction*, or *blessing*, and *charge*. Read the benedictions you found or the ones below. Explain that this practice of blessing before departure has been since biblical times. In fact, these two benedictions are paraphrases of biblical texts. After reading them, invite youth to discuss which blessings resonate most with them.

- The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:13)
- The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord be kind and gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24–26)



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

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- Contact list of past graduates from your youth group or class
 - Paper and pens
 - Envelopes and stamps (optional)

THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE

S X

Explain that youth will be writing letters to some past members of the group to encourage them and also to share anything happening that may be of interest. Prompt the youth on what to write by using one of the following questions:

- ➔ What would you want to hear after transitioning away from this group?
- ➔ What was a memorable experience from your time with the youth at your church?
- ➔ What did you value about attending this group?
- ➔ What are you curious about hearing from past members of this group?

Distribute letter-writing materials to the group. Try to ensure that everyone on the list of names receives a letter. If they are open to a response, have them include their contact information. Some youth may write to multiple people. Collect the letters and mail them.

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- Resource Page 2
 - Device to play music (optional)

BREATH OF LIFE

QC



Tell youth the Hebrew word for *spirit* is *Ruach* (רוּחַ), which can mean “spirit,” “breath,” and “wind” and is often used to describe the ways God continues to move and animate the world.

Instruct youth to prepare themselves for a meditation. You may want to dim the lights and play soft music in the background. Read the meditation on Resource Page 2.

SUMMARIZING THE UNIT

C AT

Ask youth to think back over the past four sessions and what they have learned. Remind them the four sessions were “Gather across Differences,” “Feast and Listen Together,” “Uplift Those in Need,” and “Support Those who Depart.” Ask the following questions:

- How does each theme connect to the practice of *Live in Community*?
- What have you learned?
- What are ways you might deepen your practice around all four of the aspects of *Live in Community*?

PRAYER

QC

Ask participants to think of one word that expresses their wish for others in this group, this community. Inform them that you will prompt them to share their wish word during the following prayer. Say this prayer:

As we leave this holy place,
we do not leave your presence, O God.
As we say goodbye to one another for now,
we know that we remain connected.
As we return to our weekly activities,
we will remember what was said, done, and felt here.
Now we name our wishes for this group and its members. (*Say your wish and invite others to say theirs.*)

May your Holy Spirit continue to guide us in all that we do. Amen.



FOLLOWING JESUS

LOOK AND WONDER

M

Before you sing together, ask youth if any of them have thought about this closing ritual or found themselves singing this song over the past few weeks. If they have, invite them to describe their experience.

Sing or listen to “O Look and Wonder.” To hear the tune, go to bit.ly/FMOLookTune (0:21). To sing along in Spanish (words not provided), show the YouTube video “*Miren que Bueno* (O Look and Wonder)” (bit.ly/FMOLook, 1:52).

- Newsprint with lyrics to “O Look and Wonder”

Word Search

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth.” —1 John 14:16–17a

I J E V M R S W H D G B I Y M K
N O P A S G F V I N K R U A C H
T B P O A Q T X N T J E T W I O
E H N A S D K U B A E V Q Z Y L
R N E J U B V A B R E A T H O Y
C O U N S E L O R G J E C A L S
E H M Y T I M T C W A B I H M P
S R A V A Z J L O A K C E L E I
S B N S I E G N M W T R Y K A R
O C V H N T U I F N K E L G O I
R M T D E V E H O L Y G H O S T
B H L X R L Q Y R N A I M D E Z
F G R E H T P N T B F X L P N U
Q B A V N J Y E E K D R T A B E
U R N O L W P A R A C L E T E K
W I S D O M F E Y M S A U L N O

word bank

ADVOCATE
PARACLETE
HOLY SPIRIT
COUNSELOR

COMFORTER
RUACH
BREATH
WISDOM

HELPER
INTERCESSOR
DOVE
GOD

SUSTAINER
HOLY GHOST
PNEUMA
TEACHER

Breath of Life

Close your eyes and take some deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Feel your diaphragm rise and fall with each breath. Take a few moments to listen to the sound of your own breath.

Imagine a tree standing tall and blowing slightly in the wind. What color are the leaves on the tree? Notice the way the tree moves as the wind pushes and pulls at its branches. Listen to the sound of the wind as the breeze picks up and blows stronger. Watch as a big gust of wind blows leaves off the tree's branches. Let yourself follow the falling leaves as they drift in the breeze, slowly back down to the earth.

*breathe in
breathe out*

Breathe in again. Imagine breathing in a gust of the wind like the one that moved the tree's branches. Notice the temperature of the air as it enters your nostrils. Exhale.

Breathe in and notice any smells lingering in the air. Do they remind you of anything? Exhale.

Take a big breath and track the air as it flows in through your nose, down your throat, and fills your lungs. Feel it circulate around your body before breathing out deeply once more.

Take a few more deep breaths, giving thanks for the air that gives you life. Remember the way this breath moves around you, moves in you, and moves through you. It fills you with movement and connects you to the world around you.

- Breathe in connection.
- Breathe out loneliness.
- Breathe in hope.
- Breathe out despair.
- Breathe in peace.
- Breathe out dissension.
- Breathe in confidence.
- Breathe out fear.
- Breathe in compassion.
- Breathe out judgment.
- Breathe in forgiveness.
- Breathe out resentment.

In a few minutes, we are going to open our eyes and return back to the group. Remember the ways your breath connects you to God and others. Remember you can always return to your breath and experience this connection.

Open your eyes when you are ready.

