

10th Grade Discernment

OPENING SCRIPTURE

5-7 min

Begin with a short prayer and/or lead a meditation based on Lesson's scripture. This would be a great opportunity to spend a little more time on helping them pray to be truly open to whatever God may be calling them to do.

Help students to realize that the rich young man went back to his life and lived it sadly. He didn't go back to that life because he was called to it. He went back to that life because the one Jesus proposed scared him. We must overcome our fear. No one should choose a vocation because he fears other vocations.

Have students ask for courage from the Holy Spirit to see the beauty in each vocation.

"Still I had no desire to be a nun, and I asked God not to give me this vocation; although I also feared marriage."

- TERESA OF AVILA,
AUTOBIOGRAPHY, 3.2

REVIEW

8-10 min

Have students recall and share what they learned doing the homework for the three lessons on Marriage, Religious Life, and the Priesthood.

(Students were asked to research the diocesan vocation website and what is expected for applicants to the priesthood, two religious orders of their choice, and to consider essential qualities in a spouse as well as important disqualifying qualities.)

This review can last anywhere from 5 minutes to 50% of the class period. The remainder of the class period is devoted to the following discussion and activity.

DISCERNMENT

Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." -MATTHEW 19:21

SCRIPTURE

THE RICH YOUNG MAN (Mt 19:16-30)^[1]

Now someone approached him and said, "Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?"

He answered him, "Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

He asked him, "Which ones?"

And Jesus replied, "'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother'; and 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

The young man said to him, "All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?"

Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, "Who then can be saved?"



Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

Then Peter said to him in reply, "We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?"

Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life."

^[1] Scripture taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition, available at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>.



DISCUSSION

Goal:

To prepare students to undertake the writing exercise: “What Could I Live Without?” In this exercise, each student spends time imagining and describing the best possible life in each vocation, and considers personally which vocation might be hardest to do without, as a way to continue discerning about which vocation might be God’s will.

Preparation:

If it has been some time since working on the other three lessons, skim the highs and lows section of each lesson, just enough to have some ideas to suggest if discussion flags. The students will probably be able to think of many good highlights of each vocation without too much prompting.

(Optional) Step 1:

If students have not worked on the other three lessons in a while, it might be a good idea to prepare them for this discussion by taking some time to reread or recall stories from the lessons. The goal is for students to have “highs” of each vocation fresh in their mind. Assign each student one of the stories, or assign the stories to groups of students and then proceed.

Suggested stories

- Bl. Louis and Zélie Martin (refer to Marriage Lesson)
- St. Damien and Bl. Marianne Cope (refer to Religious Life Lesson)
- St. John Vianney (refer to Priesthood Lesson)

Step 2:

Solicit from students “highs” of each vocation from beginning to end. Each lesson deals with this in great depth. Get as many “highs” listed on the board as possible, and work for an even balance of highs between marriage | religious life | the priesthood.

[2] Adapted From Fr. Brannen’s To Save a Thousand Souls, 170-173.

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Revisit highs mentioned in the notes of earlier three lessons if discussion flags. For each “high” ask students why they think this would be wonderful, exciting, an honor, etc. Help students to appreciate the high points, and to visualize them. Help them to imagine the tangible sounds, smells, tastes, and touches, etc., associated with each highpoint—wedding music, congregation clapping at a priest’s silver jubilee, Christmas carols during midnight mass in the cloister, smell of chicken soup when feeding a hungry child, the touch of the holy oils when giving last rites, etc.

Step 3:

Assign students the exercise based on Fr. Brannen’s “What Could I Live Without?”^[2]. This can be done via a writing assignment, or prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

HOMEWORK

When discussion has progressed far enough for students to appreciate a significant number of highs in each vocation, proceed to one of the next two options.

1. Prayer Option: Bring the students to the church, before the Blessed Sacrament, and hand out the “What Could I Do Without?” meditation. Lead them through a quiet mediation.

2. Writing Option: Assign students the exercise “What Could I Do Without?” Students will free-write their responses.

In this healthy exercise, the student is helped to realize that no one should choose a vocation because he fears the others. You choose a vocation because God calls you to it, and has formed you in such a way that your particular vocation will give even more joy than the other vocations would.

Students should be given plenty of time. They will flag in their writing, but tell them to just keep thinking and writing.

Note: This exercise is not meant to lead students to make a final decision about their life’s vocation. Rather, it is helpful for students to ask themselves this question so they may someday choose with proper admiration for each vocation, not to avoid a vocation.



DISCERNMENT

HOMEWORK: WHAT COULD I LIVE WITHOUT?

A PRAYER/Writing EXERCISE

FOR GIRLS

Use your imagination to write or pray about the best life possible in each of the following vocations:

- Life as a contemplative religious sister
- Life as an active religious sister
- Life as a wife and mother

For example, imagine every aspect of meeting a good man, getting married, and having children. Imagine your career, your family vacations, your joy at holding your first grandchild. Imagine being happy in your marriage. And now imagine your death, as you prepare to meet God face to face, with your family gathered at your bedside.

Then imagine finding a religious order where you felt at home, where the sisters became your closest friends for life. Imagine how your love for God grows over the years, and the intimacy you feel as a Bride of Christ. Think of the work you will do, perhaps teaching, bringing hope to the poor, helping others find Jesus through their joys and sorrows. Imagine yourself happy in this life. And then imagine your death, surrounded by your sisters, confident in eternal life.

FOR GUYS

Use your imagination to write or pray about the best life possible in each of the following vocations:

- Life as a contemplative/active religious brother (your choice)
- Life as a priest
- Life as a husband and father

For example, imagine every aspect of meeting a good woman, getting married, and having children. Imagine your career, your family vacations, your joy at holding your first grandchild. Imagine being happy in your marriage. And now imagine your death, as you prepare to meet God face to face, with your family gathered at your bedside.

Now imagine entering seminary to become a priest. Imagine how you grow in virtue over the years, and that after ordination, you are completely focused on bringing people to Jesus—through the sacraments, through your counseling, and through your preaching. Think of the thousands of babies you will baptize, the thousands of people whom you will teach to love God. Imagine yourself happy in this life. And now imagine yourself as a very old priest, loved by the people, who approaches death with peace, thankful for having lived a good life, and ready to spend eternity with Jesus in Heaven.

WHAT COULD I LIVE WITHOUT?

After you complete a wonderful description of each possible life, think about them. Ask yourself, “**Each life is wonderful! But God made me with unique traits and desires. Which life could I do without? Which life would it be hardest for me to say goodbye to?**” **To which life is God calling me?** Think and pray about this.

Note: This is not supposed to be your defining moment in discernment, but it is helpful to think about. We should never choose a vocation because the other ones don’t appeal to us. Choose a vocation because God calls you to it, and has formed you and your life in such a way that your particular vocation will give even more joy than the other vocations would.