

6th Grade DISCERNMENT

OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVE: To prayerfully ask questions about life, then listen for God's answers.

MAIN CONCEPTS:

- In order to find the right path in life, one must ask the right questions.
- Becoming a great person has more to do with service, love of God, and purpose than it does with money, popularity, or pleasure.

PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

Choose the components you wish to use given the time you have and the needs of your students.

INTRODUCTION

2 min

Summarize today's theme: Through these lessons we hope to become familiar with the vocations to which God calls people so that you will be able to follow his call always. Right now, you are in the single state of life, but someday God may call you to a particular vocation—married life, priesthood, or religious life. Today's focus is on discernment. In this context, discernment means being able to discover which path to take in life.

OPENING PRAYER

2 min

Let us draw near to God during today's lesson.

Read Isaiah 52:2

Pray a simple prayer from the heart or: Jesus, please help us to have the right perspective on life and to work toward what is important. With your inspiration, may we spend our time on what is going to last. Amen

DISCERNMENT

"Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what does not satisfy?" -Isaiah 55:2

OPENING ACTIVITY

QUESTION BALL

In silence toss a ball around the room. Every third person who catches it has to ask a rhetorical question that people ask themselves when figuring out what to do in life. For example: Should I take a foreign language this year? How should I wear my hair? Should I move to a new city when I grow up? What college should I go to?

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Launch into life by looking for a different set of answers

"If you don't change direction, you'll end up where you're heading." – Chinese proverb

Failure to Launch was the title of a popular movie a few years ago about a shiftless young man with no direction in life. The term "launch" in the movie's title is used by psychologists to describe the period when a young person is trying to make a life for himself outside of the care of parents.

For many young people, there is often a time of "spiritual launching"—of making decisions about what to believe, what to value, and what to pursue in life. This is precisely the time to be asking God about one's vocation.

Fr. Joe Hirsch, a priest in Wisconsin, says that during this launching period, it's critical to ask the right questions: "The questions we ask determine the direction of our lives. If we ask the right questions, we'll go one direction. Ask the wrong questions, and it's likely we'll go in the wrong direction."

Many people have internalized these kinds of questions:

- How can I be more popular?
- How can I have the most fun?
- How can I make more money?
- What will make me feel good?
- How can I be most successful?

But the saints ask different questions. The greatest heroes and leaders ask questions like these:

- Who am I?
- Why was I created?
- Who is Jesus Christ?
- What is my purpose and mission in life?
- Where am I going? How do I get there?
- Who will I serve?
- How much of myself will I give?
- To what state in life is God calling me?

Fr. Hirsch points out that "100% of men in the seminary are asking the second set of questions, and so are 100% of men and women in the best marriages." They are seeking answers to selfless questions, not selfish questions.

What kind of questions are you asking yourself? Try bringing your deepest questions to prayer, then listen to the Holy Spirit for answers. "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." -Mt. 10:39

Be Curious

1. What are some general differences in the two kinds of questions mentioned in the article?
2. If the first set of questions are common ways of thinking, how can a person switch to thinking about the second set of questions?
3. How would life be better if you not only asked yourself the second set of questions, but also answered them by the way you lived?

OPTIONAL VIDEOS

Optional video: Rachel's Story

Optional video: Nathan's story

Videos can be found at www.vocationlessons.com



VOCATION LESSONS | 6th Grade: Discernment



OPENING ACTIVITY

5 min

Question Ball

In silence toss a ball around the room. Every third person who catches it has to ask a rhetorical question that people ask themselves when figuring out what to do in life. For example: Should I take a foreign language this year? How should I wear my hair? Should I move to a new city when I grow up? What college should I go to?

Tell students that:

- They should not answer the questions.
- The questions they ask don't need to be questions they actually ask of *themselves*.



ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

Asking the Right Questions

1. Read through the reading page individually, in small groups, or as a class.
2. Have the students answer the reflection questions, through writing or discussion. Ask them if they have other questions as well.
3. Quiz the students to see if they grasp the main concepts. Answer students' questions. If it is helpful, refer to the Vocation Glossary, www.vocationlessons.com/glossary
4. Time permitting, watch **Rachel's Story** and/or **Nathan's Story**. Ask the students about what led to the changes in their lives.

EXPLORATION

15 min

Bread or Wasted Wages?

1. Explore a number of different thoughts that occupy people's minds and take up time. Write each topic in large letters on separate pieces of paper. On one side of the board write, "bread" and on the other write "wasted wages." Hand the topics out to the students and have them place them on the board. Have them decide if the topic is like the "bread" that God talks about in Isaiah 55:2, or like wasted wages (spending money on what does not satisfy). The more satisfying they think the activity is for the human mind, body, and soul, the closer it should be to the "bread" writing on the board. The less satisfying, the closer it should be to "wasted wages."

2. As a class, or in small groups, discuss why things were placed as they were. After discussion, does the paper need to be moved? If it seems to be able to fit into both categories, what is the difference in the way in which it is approached by the person engaged in that topic?



DISCERNMENT

EXPLORATION

BREAD OR WASTED WAGES?

First, each student writes one word on a separate piece of paper, using large letters. (Some students may need to write two words, depending on your class size.)

- football
- school
- dating
- reading
- complaining about little things
- attending Mass
- grocery shopping
- teen magazines
- shopping for a friend
- video games
- worrying about a test
- volunteering
- revenge
- eating dinner with your family
- praying

On the board, the teacher will have written "Bread" and "Wasted Wages." Tape each piece of paper to the board. If it is satisfying and meaningful, tape it near "Bread." The more satisfying you think the activity is for the human mind, body, and soul, the closer it should be to "Bread." The less satisfying, the closer it should be to "Wasted Wages."



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Note: Lead students beyond the relativistic outlook that "if it makes that person happy, then it is fine; it is just up to the person." Steer conversation into a deeper exploration of human nature and what ultimately satisfies. Just as some people may really like soda and another person really likes Cheetos, those foods ultimately do not satisfy the persons' need for nutritious sustenance. What ultimately satisfies the human mind, body, and soul?

REFLECTIVE PRAYER

10 min

Isaiah 55

1. Introduce the meditation: now is a prayerful time for you to internally interact with God. Today's prayer will be a reflection on Isaiah 55.
2. Print out the student pages with Isaiah 55: 2-3, 8-12.
3. Have the students silently read the passage and receive it as a letter from God to them. Have them underline things that relate to them right now, circle things that are encouraging, etc. They can write back to God their ideas, comments, and questions in the margins. (Since this activity is a personal prayer to God, assure students that the papers will not be collected.)

VOCAL PRAYER

2 min

The Angelus

1. If you have not previously in another lesson, introduce the prayer. Mary's "yes" to God can be our "yes" to following Him both today and later in our vocation.
2. Students pray the Angelus.



DISCERNMENT

REFLECTIVE PRAYER

ISAIAH 55:2-3, 8-12

Imagine this Psalm is a letter from God to you:

Why spend your money for what is not bread;
your wages for what does not satisfy?

Only listen to me, and you shall eat well,
you shall delight in rich fare.
Pay attention and come to me;
listen, that you may have life.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
the steadfast loyalty promised to David...

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways—oracle of the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways,
my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Yet just as from the heavens
the rain and snow come down

And do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
Giving seed to the one who sows
and bread to the one who eats,

So shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
It shall not return to me empty,
but shall do what pleases me,
achieving the end for which I sent it.

Yes, in joy you shall go forth,
in peace you shall be brought home.



VOCAL PRAYER

THE ANGELUS

Leader: The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary
All: and she conceived of the Holy Spirit.
Hail Mary...

Leader: Behold the handmaid of the Lord
All: be it done unto me according to Thy word.
Hail Mary . . .

Leader: And the Word was made Flesh
All: and dwelt among us.
Hail Mary . . .

Leader: Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,
All: that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Leader: Let us pray:
All: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord,
Thy grace into our hearts;
that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son,
was made known by the message of an angel,
may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His
Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.
Amen.