

The Unchanging Truth for a Changing World

A Semester Curriculum for Middle School Grades

by

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Curriculum Development

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science Degree in Education

Graduate Studies

Martin Luther College

New Ulm, MN

July 2019

Signature Page

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Abstract

In an ever-changing world for our middle-school students, they are facing new and different temptations that can affect their mental health. Adolescents need a curriculum to teach and guide them on how to navigate against the variety of life encounters they may have. As states start passing laws that require some sort of mental health curriculum to be taught, this is something WELS schools can start to teach as well. A curriculum that will teach about various adolescent issues, such as social struggles, mental health struggles, and teenage development, would benefit all middle-schoolers. Above all, our adolescents need to have the one thing they all can lean on when learning about difficult content, God's unchanging, ever-powerful Word. With God's Word as the focus, this curriculum is not only teaching the content but is also equipping the students for eternity.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Problem/Purpose of the Study

The world is rapidly changing. New content is being created daily. An article from 2018 states that over 90% of the data from the world has been created in the last two years (Ahmad, 2018). Adolescents have new avenues of communication with their peers, and the newest phone app adolescents are using seems to change weekly. There are new temptations, even if they stem from old temptations, such as juuling and vaping. The use of tobacco from 2017 to 2018 in middle schoolers has seen an increase in about 1.5 million youth (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Online video websites, such as YouTube, offer their own unique set of issues for adolescents, such as the MoMo Challenge. From all of this, it can be seen that adolescents in our world today wrestle with different temptations than adolescents faced even ten years ago. On top of these temptations, they also contend with today's media. Students need to grapple with what society says through media and compare that to what the Almighty God says in his word. Students are struggling more and more with the topics of abortion, homosexuality, and living together outside of marriage. The world is going to continue to tug at adolescents. On top of this, students wrestling with new temptations being thrown at them, and applying God's Word to these situations. These new temptations are also causing adolescents to struggle with mental illness. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services stated that 20% (2019) of adolescents have had a serious mental health disorder at some point. It can be clearly seen that all of this is causing adolescents to struggle protecting their faith and also their mental health.

Mount Olive Lutheran School's mission statement shares the light in which all of Mount Olive's teachers should teach, "Christian training of children for life and eternity" (2019, p.1). There are two parts that play a key role in the construction of the curriculum that stems from that statement. The first part is training for life. In order for this to happen, the students need to know what they are going to encounter in this world. The more important part of that statement is to teach them for life in the view of what God says. What better place to teach adolescents of the changing world, than in a place that will teach them of the world in the light of God's Word. Adolescents need to be taught so they will be prepared to put their faith into action when temptation might arise. Adolescents will learn that when 21st-century temptation arises, they can say, "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). But if they do fall into any sin, they will be reminded of Jesus' promise to them, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

Importance of the Study

Research consistently reports that youth depression and anxiety are increasing. Anxiety and depression have increased over time from 5.4% in 2003 to 8.4% in 2011-2012 of all 6-17-year-olds. Anxiety and depression also increase as students get older (Children's Mental Health, 2019). We have a problem in our society, and it seems as it is getting worse as time goes on. Many factors could be leading to this including peer influence, body image, expectations put on our youth (Mayo Clinic, 2018). While these are not uncommon experiences from years ago, how they present themselves is different in today's world.

With society rapidly changing, students need a Word of God and mental health curriculum that is up-to-date with what is happening in society. The truths of God's Word can be applied to any situation, but it would be beneficial to adolescents in middle school if they had a curriculum that had topics that pertained to the temptations they are facing or the temptations they will face.

The curriculum had preselected topics by the teacher. These topics are ones that are considered critical to student wellness. The curriculum also assigned a project for the students to give their Biblical thoughts on topics they feel are important to what they are facing in the world. The curriculum discussed these different topics with the students, and finally used God's Word to help the students focus on the correct use or path for the given topic.

Project Goal

With temptation always around us, and the temptations changing as our world changes, the students need to know what temptations are out there. This curriculum will provide middle school students a religion curriculum that will focus on temptations they are likely to face now or in the near future. The course will align with best practices and God's guidelines for how his followers should face these temptations. There are twelve essential questions for the course, with more questions involved with each lesson. The following are the twelve essential questions for the curriculum:

1. What type of world are we living in today?
2. What does God say about how each person was created?
3. Does God say anything about social media?
4. How does God help with peer pressure?

5. How do I manage my time to make sure there is time for God?
6. What makes a Christian role model?
7. Is there a proper use for drugs and alcohol?
8. What role does the church play as a part of your community?
9. How do Christians respond to bullying?
10. How can God help our mental health?
11. How do God's view and the world's view of sex vary?
12. What can you share of God's Word that will have an impact on others?

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The idea of teaching health in schools is nothing new. For many years, schools have been teaching about substance abuse, sex, and bullying. Until last year, mental health literacy was relatively unknown and only taught in school by some schools (DiGiulio, 2018). Last year, 2018, Virginia and New York led the way by passing mandates that mental health must be taught in all the public schools in the state. This is something that could soon be coming to many of the states, so having a curriculum that would meet that law would be beneficial to schools. With the idea of this type of curriculum being rather new, the research is limited as to its effectiveness. As to a mental health/21st-century student curriculum, what can set our school's curriculum apart is the spiritual component that we can tie everything to. These types of resources will be looked at in this literature review.

Empirical Resources

While the research is limited, there is a positive view on teaching mental health as well as sex education and bullying education. While New York's mental health curriculum is rather new, the state law gives a plethora of research as to why a mental health curriculum is important. It talks about the importance of reducing the stigma of mental health, how mental health issues lead to many of the suicides in young people, and how mental health issues can cause people to not graduate high school without the proper help (NY Education Law §804, 2018). This research about our young people gives plenty of reasons as to why a mental health curriculum would be beneficial. The next step would be determining if they work. While the New York curriculum is only one year old,

there is support that a well-done curriculum can lead to a positive result. A look at Niagara Falls City School District in New York, and there is evidence that it is succeeding (Mackie, 2019). Research has been done on the effectiveness of mental health curriculums. One such research study done in the United Kingdom by Pinfold et al. (2003) found that “short educational workshops can produce positive changes in participants’ reported attitudes towards people with mental health problems” (p. 342). Another report done by Rones and Hoagwood states that

As a significant part of the larger community where children live, as well as a critical component in the system of care, it would seem to be in the best interest of the schools to facilitate children’s functioning academically, socially, and emotionally (2000, p. 236-237).

Finally, Naylor et al. (2009) looked at the possible effects of a mental health teaching program. At the conclusion of their study, they found that it did help reduce stigma, knowledge, and foster positive attitudes in the students. While the research is limited, there seem to be positive results in the working of a mental health curriculum.

While mental health is a part of this curriculum, there are other parts such as bullying and sex education. While these can fall into the realm of causations of mental health issues, they are taught separately from mental health. The research also supports a positive correlation to the teaching of these topics. When it comes to sex education, Szydlowski (2015) stated that sex education has been successful in reducing unintended pregnancies, STDs, and HIV. A 2006 study on reducing bullying by Crothers, Kolbert, and Barker found that students believe that a curriculum taught by the teacher had some of the greatest influences in reducing bullying in school.

While a well-rounded health curriculum, including mental and physical health, is something that is new, the research, though limited, fully supports the idea that a curriculum could offer positive outcomes for students.

Resources on Curriculum Topics

While a 21st-century Student curriculum could span a whole year, and take many different courses, there needed to be some guide as to what topics would be taught in the curriculum. This research started with the study done by Rones and Hoagwood when they stated in their discussion,

Media reports make it clear that children and adolescents today must cope with a more complex set of social issues than a generation ago. The list of horrors is by now well known: substance use and abuse and related unintended injuries; sexual risks and sexually transmitted diseases; suicide and self-mutilating behaviors; school, community, and domestic violence; physical and sexual abuse; eating disorders; and homelessness. Each of these events has been found to place a child at risk for the development of emotional, behavioral, or developmental disorders (2000, p. 236).

On top of these issues that our youth are facing today, Sophie used observation and interview to identify the top ten issues that are facing our youth today. Sophie found the top issues to be negative body image, long to have supportive communities, time management struggles, peer pressure, mental and physical health, lack of role models, drugs and alcohol, social media, bullying, and sexual behavior (2018).

A list of topics was created from those two studies, and next there was a great deal to learn about them. On top of teacher knowledge was to learn how to teach the

topics to students. Three main websites helped with the understanding of these different topics, and the best way to present to the students. The three websites included reachout.com, kidshealth.org, and hhs.gov.

Finally, God's Word, *New International Version* 2011, is an amazing resource for our students. Countless Bible passages still fit into 21st-century issues. The blessings that we have in our WELS schools are that a curriculum like this can add the comfort that Jesus gives to us all through his Word. A curriculum in WELS schools that is void of what Jesus says would not be a complete curriculum. Through the work of the Holy Spirit we are reminded that, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Summary

Mental health is an upcoming issue for our schools, and how can schools help our students. As two states already passed legislation for a mental health curriculum, the need for one can be seen and does not need legislation to organize. On top of legislation, research backs up the idea that curriculums and lessons do have a positive impact on the various aspects that students face in this 21st-century world. In addition to the lessons, the added bonus WELS schools have is the ability to apply what God says to these issues.

Chapter III: Implementation

Introduction

Using the research during the creation of the curriculum was important. Not having too much to overwhelm students or having items that did not pertain to them was a challenge when constructing the curriculum. The amazing part of putting together this curriculum was to see how timeless God's Word truly is, and how even though many of these issues are not talked about specifically in the Bible there are still countless passages that apply perfectly.

Procedures

The first step in the creation of this curriculum was to determine the areas of study that would be focused on for the curriculum. Chapter II talked about some of the resources that were used to narrow down the scope. After narrowing down the scope to an introduction lesson and ten lessons, the idea of each lesson was generated. As suggested by the literature, many of the students may know little or nothing about some of these topics. Each lesson needed some time to build that background knowledge of the topic. Following the buildup of background knowledge, each lesson went into the application of what God said about each topic. This application looked at the misuses of the topic along with possible benefits of the topics. The goal of the created curriculum was to build a safe place for students to discuss some of these tough topics that they are facing or going to face in the near future.

This curriculum was implemented into the Christ Light curriculum for the seventh and eighth-graders at Mount Olive Lutheran School, Appleton, WI. What was used previously was dropped, as the feedback received was that the previous resources did not

seem as applicable to the students and a little outdated. Mr. Landon Zacharyasz taught this curriculum to the seventh-graders, and Mr. Nathan Gartner taught it to the eighth-graders. The total number of students that received this curriculum was 43. It was interesting to see how each teacher taught the curriculum to the students in his own unique way. It was also beneficial to be able to converse with someone as to what went well and what possible changes would be good for the curriculum and its continued use.

When evaluating the course, there were two ways that it was done. The first evaluation was a pre-test and post-test (see Appendix E) that was given to the students. These tests evaluated if there was a stigma and knowledge of said topics before the teaching of the curriculum and if that stigma and knowledge have changed after the teaching of the curriculum. The next way the curriculum was evaluated was from the communication between Mr. Zacharyasz and Mr. Gartner as the curriculum was taught. The other pair of eyes teaching the curriculum helped evaluate the course, and determined if the main idea of the lessons was showing itself clearly.

Artifacts

Each chapter of the curriculum (see Appendix A) contained an essential question that guided the whole chapter. Within each chapter there were additional questions that guided each part of the chapter. There was a scope and sequence that shared each chapter and assessment within the curriculum, the potential number of days for each chapter, and the essential question for the chapter. At the end of every chapter, there was a “spiritual exercise” section. This section was used as additional classroom discussion or as an assessment after each chapter. Not all the spiritual exercises were tied into the chapters,

but rather they were areas that seemed as if they would be beneficial to middle schoolers, and they were not getting these tools anywhere else.

Three main assessments were created for this curriculum. The first assessment was the mid-unit check (see Appendix B). This was planned to be an online discussion between the students on what they have learned so far in the unit. This can be adapted as needed, but an online format was chosen because it would allow for smaller groupings, and allow for a record of what was discussed in the group. This would allow the teacher to make sure all are participating, the students are understanding and able to apply the knowledge they are learning, and if there are any points that need to be made to the class, either to enforce or to curb. The next assessment was the final assessment (see Appendix C). This assessment called for a paper to be written on a person from the Bible who gave into sin. The students looked for the law and the gospel in the story, and how this then applied to them as seventh and eighth-graders. The goal was for the students to get into God's Word, see the Law and Gospel being applied, and be able to apply that in their lives when they fall into sin.

The major assessment was the project (see Appendix D). Here the students created two devotions based on a topic that they were passionate about. The two devotions needed to tie together and get approved by a pastor or the teachers. Once the devotions were approved, the students started preparing for the production of the devotions through the means of creating a video. The motivation behind this project came from the *Grace Talks* that are shared through *Time of Grace*. The daily devotions are powerful, and are something the students could do as well. Once the devotions were recorded, the plan was for them to be assembled to watch as a devotion within the

classroom, and something they can have for life and go back to when they need that comfort from God's Word about that topic. It was also something that could be shared with parents to show what their children are doing and to get them into God's Word.

Results

The *Unchanging Word in an Ever-Changing World* was taught during the first semester of the 2019-2020 school year to the seventh and eighth-graders at Mount Olive Lutheran School, Appleton, WI. This curriculum was used during the Christ Light block of the school day. There were 36 allotted class periods to finish the curriculum, and in eighth-grade it took 40 class periods and seventh-grade took 43. The overage on allotted class periods was due to the fact that some of the topics sparked much discussion within the students in both classes. Another reason was in seventh-grade there some time needed for the teacher to figure out the flow of the curriculum, as Mr. Gartner had designed the curriculum and knew the flow that he wanted it to have in eighth-grade.

The lessons were well received by the students. While the students were more engaged in certain topics, they saw the importance in studying each topic. The lively discussion, application to their lives, and most importantly the connection to God's Word allowed them all to see God's truths applied to each topic. A group of eighth-grade students that had appreciated the curriculum after the fact, and have asked for more lessons that fit the style of what was done in *Unchanging Word in an Ever-Changing World*. That is great to hear, as that means the curriculum fit and applied directly to them and their lives.

The *Spiritual Exercises* achieved the goal for which they were intended. They helped the students to grow in their spiritual lives in different ways, hopefully ways they

have not considered before and things they could take into the future. The *Spiritual Exercise* that impressed the most was the reading of the *Teen Talks* from *Forward in Christ*. There were multiple students who said, “I feel like this is speaking to me,” as they read and commented on different articles. It was also powerful to have students learn about prayer and then write their own prayer in the first *Spiritual Exercise*. These prayers were then used to close out our Christ Light lessons during the course of this curriculum. The assessments overall were a plus, but need some adjustments. The mid-chapter assessment went well, and it was interesting to see the online conversations the students had around the topics we had studied the first part of the curriculum. Reference Appendix G, where you will see some of the conversations the students were having. You will see two questions that the students answered. The first question was how would what they learned apply to their lives of faith, and the other was what did they find the most interesting. Here is some insight into a student’s answer to how does it apply to their lives of faith, “I think that role models will affect my faith the most because your words and actions could come from who you look up to and follow” (Appendix G). Another student answer, this time to what they found most interesting would be, “I agree with (*name removed*) on the peer pressure chapter. It is very interesting to see what a big role in the approval of others play into what we do and how we act” (Appendix G).

The devotional video was more of a challenge. Encouragements were given to the students to avoid leaving to the end. While that was the goal, there were still some that left it to the end. On top of that, more structure with the technology would be beneficial. Getting the devotions to the teacher became a challenge because of the various technologies used to record the devotional videos. Because of this challenge, 14 of the 22

eighth-grade videos were not turned in on time. When the students got down to the content of the devotion, it was mixed results. Some struggled with just writing a devotion and the content that goes into it, such as Law and Gospel. Some struggled on how to combine the two videos into one topical study. With that being said about the struggles, there were some students who did a wonderful job putting their devotions together with Law and Gospel. Appendix I shows two rubrics from the devotion project. In these two projects you will see the scores, as well as some remarks made concerning the devotions and the process. Some of the topics the students chose included the armor of God, self-esteem, and forgiveness.

The final assessment was a paper based on a figure of the Bible who sinned. This paper was well done by the students, and they were able to see the Law and the Gospel from the story and apply it to themselves. In eighth-grade, there were 14 different Bible stories that were focused on. A well-done paper was on Jonah with a focus on his sin after he preached to Nineveh (Appendix H, sample one). The unique way that students can apply the Bible story to their life was impressive. It was wonderful to see their application of Law and Gospel, such as a student who wrote about Peter and his denying Jesus. In Appendix H, sample two, a student makes that connection from Peter to their life along with applying the Law and Gospel. They all showed their understanding of the Gospel message and what the Gospel means to them.

Finally, the students completed a pre-test and a post-test. The tests were the exact same questions given to the students on the first day of the unit and given to the students at the end of the unit. The more detailed data will be found in Appendix F. The data is split by question, grade, and pre-test and post-test. The data is split by grade because

there were two teachers teaching the curriculum, one in seventh and one in eighth. The split would show that even with two teachers, the results were similar. Twenty-two eighth-graders took the pre-test, but only 20 that took the post-test. Twenty-one seventh-graders took both the pre-test and the post-test. Before each chart, you will see the question that the students responded to and the split it falls into: seventh-grade pre-test, seventh-grade post-test, eighth-grade pre-test, and eighth-grade post-test. The answers are color-coded: Blue-Strongly Agree, Red-Agree, Yellow-Neutral, Green-Disagree, Purple-Strong Disagree. The data given here includes the seventh and eighth-grade numbers combined. Each answer was given a numerical value – strongly disagree equals one, disagree equals two, neutral equals three, agree equals four, and strongly agree equals five. The average score was found for each question for both the pre-test and the post-test. Finally, the increase or decrease from the pre-test to the post-test is included for easy reference.

Table 1

Comparison of Pre and Post-test Averages

Question	Pre-test Average	Post-test Average	Difference
Question 1: I understand how media and our world can affect someone's body image views.	4.47	4.64	+0.17
Question 2: I can apply God's Word to our 21st-century use of social media.	4.05	4.29	+0.24
Question 3: I think I could pick out negative and positive peer pressure among classmates and friends.	3.67	4.12	+0.45
Question 4: I am confident I use my time most effectively.	3.44	3.41	-0.03
Question 5: I know what to look for in a Christian role model.	4.07	4.56	+0.49

Question 6:I know drugs and alcohol are bad for me to use, and I can explain why they are bad.	4.53	4.80	+0.27
Question 7:I feel connected to my church.	3.95	4.07	+0.12
Question 8:I am confident in understanding of how to act when there is bullying.	4.19	4.27	+0.08
Question 9:I know what mental health is.	4.12	4.56	+0.44
Question 10:I can differ between God's view of sex and the world's view of sex.	4.00	4.56	+0.56

All of the results, except for question four, showed a stronger agreement from the pre-test to the post-test. It was encouraging to see that growth from all the students, both in seventh and eighth grade. Two results to take note of would include question seven and question four. The results of question seven were something that have been taken to the school pastor. Seeing that there are some students that do not feel connected to their church caused concern. Because of this concern, brainstorming has begun to see what could be done, and some things are already in place to work to get families (and therefore students) in church more so that connection can be made. There were some strongly disagrees, and that really hurt to see some students really have no connection to their church. Next, the eighth-grade class was asked why there was no improvement with question four. Their answer was that they saw what good time management looked like. Once they reflected on their own time management, they saw that theirs is not where it needs to be in regard to the question. That type of reflection is something wonderful to see in the students, and hopefully they can take that reflection and help their time management.

Overall, the curriculum provided what was intended. It was intended to give students a way to grow in God's Word around topics that they are facing or are going to

face in the very near future. The data shows that the students did grow in the areas of the curriculum. The assessments did show that they were thinking critically about their topics, and they were working on applying both Law and Gospel. The main result of the curriculum would be the growth of the students' faith. While only God can see if growth happened in their hearts, it is the prayer of the teachers that faith growth did happen and based on actions and words either spoken or written it seems as if the students' faith had grown.

Chapter IV: Reflective Essay

Introduction

Since the writing of this curriculum, more and more stories, events, and situations have come out or are shared that attack Christianity and its values. Students in our middle schools hear these stories, and they need guidance on how to handle these events.

Teachers are in the unique spot of talking about these potentially uncomfortable stories, and they are more importantly in the spot where they can take these events and take the students to God's Word to see what God has to say. This then allows the students to use what they have learned about God in his Word and continue to apply it to their lives as more stories, events, and situations come about that challenge their beliefs in God.

Conclusions

What I Did. The curriculum started with a conversation between myself and a fellow eighth-grade teacher in the spring of 2019. The talk started around some current event stories, and the idea of how we were going to talk to the students about these as they challenge our faith. This led to the idea of the curriculum. After that conversation a literature review was done of the greatest challenges for middle school students. This led to the creation of Chapters 2-11.

After the chapter topics were created a different literature review was done. This review was learning about each topic, and the best way to share this information with the students. This led to many websites that shared much information. It would be impossible to share all the websites that were visited in learning about all the different topics. The internet is truly a wealth of information. Because of this, information was used or cross checked with government websites such as the CDC or HHS, used from groups such as

NAMI, and data gathered from research completed. With so much information on the internet it was important to make sure they were valid and true facts.

The final literature review that was done was the look into God's Word. The internet was used to find passages that had a focus similar to the topics for the curriculum. These narrowed focuses allowed me to take these passages, study them, and see if they applied to what I was trying to teach the middle schoolers. This was also a great Bible study for myself, as I grew in my understanding of many of these topics, and how God's Word does apply to any and all situations.

After the literature reviews, I started to put together the lessons. A majority of the lessons followed a similar format. First, students received the background information. The second part of the lesson was to show the sinful side of the given topic, and finally the third part was to take what God says and apply it to the topic. The main flow for the lessons was to be discussion. I wanted students to feel comfortable discussing these topics, and ask any questions they had about the topic or something they had seen or heard. This discussion would then allow the teacher to always bring it back to what God said about the topic.

Finally, I added the finishing touches to the curriculum with the addition of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the assessments. I created the ideas for the assessments, what I was looking for when assessing, and the rubrics for grading the assessments. The *Spiritual Exercises* were based on things that I had seen that my students were lacking as Christians and were to be something that could supplement the curriculum and allow the students to grow.

As stated before, the curriculum was taught in the fall of the 2019-2020 school year at Mount Olive Lutheran School. It was taught by two different teachers to the seventh and eighth-graders during their Christ Light block. Being taught by another teacher allowed a different set of eyes to be looking at the curriculum, which allowed some constructive criticism which will be seen in the next section.

What I learned. As students worked on the post-test survey, the final question was “What would you change.” Many of the answers were positive and can be summarized as “nothing.” Whether this was because there truly was nothing to change or because they did not know what to change was difficult to tell. One way to see how the students felt about the curriculum was through their discussion. It was delightful to see how students were very willing to talk about topics that pertained to them. A certain eighth-grader really opened up when we got to talking about eating disorders. It turned out that this student knew someone who was struggling with this, and she was really passionate about it and wanted to share what she knew about it. I also learned that with some of these tough topics, some students did not want to share. A parent emailed letting me know that their family had someone struggling with one of the topics, and their child was glad we were talking about it in class, but that specific lesson was tough on that student. I was not sure how many of the topics would fit seventh and eighth-graders in a suburban, middle-class, religious, Wisconsin school, but was amazed to see how many of them actually were impacted by the topics.

One of the suggested changes, which came from a student and was also a challenge from the other teacher teaching the curriculum, was how could God’s Word be incorporated in the entire topical study. Often times the application of God’s Word fell

till the last part of the lesson, and the student wanted it throughout the entire lesson. This was a great comment, and one that I have already started wrestling with and trying to figure out a solution.

Students in this era are good with technology, but they still need to be taught how to use it. I overestimated the students and their ability to create a video and get it to me. I know in the future I need to have a better system for the technology usage when creating their devotion. On top of that, the students could also use some additional guidance on constructing devotions. I assumed they had some idea of what would create a solid devotion, and how to tie the two days together. While most of them understood the idea, putting it into practice was difficult. Having some additional checks along the way with the devotion writing would have been beneficial.

The goal of the course was for the students to grow in their faith and to be more comfortable with applying to God's Word to life's challenges that would come their way. As for the goals, it seems as if the curriculum achieved the desired goal. The students seemed to be more comfortable and confident to take on life's challenges based on how they answered the pre-test and post-test. Every area grew except one, and the reason was that students realized what they needed to do, and they were not doing that. Something needed to change. The more important goal was to see their faith grow. I would say that happened. The discussions that were had in class demonstrated that they were applying God's Word to their lives. The devotions, papers, and mid-unit check online discussion showed that they were thinking about both Law and Gospel as they took different topics and applied it to themselves. In the end, only God can see if faith was grown during this

curriculum, but based on words and actions that could be seen and heard, the students showed growth in their faith.

Recommendations

While this was a curriculum written for the students to grow, it also allowed the teachers to grow. They learned more about the challenges that our young people are facing, and also how to talk to them about their challenges. It also gave a chance for the researcher to grow in God's Word as he found passages that could be shared with the middle schoolers. Putting together the curriculum was a very enjoyable task as well as teaching it. This is something Mount Olive is looking to teach on an every other year cycle to our seventh- and eighth-graders. Adjustments and revisions will need to be made to keep it current for the next round of teaching the curriculum. Along with that, here are other potential changes and adjustments I would make to the curriculum before teaching it again:

- Plan extra class periods. 36 was clearly not enough as both eighth- and seventh-grade went over that allotment. Planning "flex days" would be beneficial, and it would allow the teacher to not rush through the curriculum to keep on pace.
- The pre-test was valuable as it identified students who were not confident in certain areas, especially those who did not feel connected to their church. The downside was they were anonymous, so we were not sure how to reach those who did not feel connected. I plan on brainstorming a way to get the best of both.
- Work on incorporating God's Word better throughout the lesson, and not just in part three at the end.

- More carefully walk through the idea of writing a devotion with the students, possibly a day to learn and study other devotions. A checklist could also help with the writing. Additionally, finding a universal technology platform to use would cut down on headaches from troubleshooting many different technologies.
- Use more of the *Spiritual Exercises* that worked well, and either cut or adjust the ones that did not seem to work as well.

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Appendix A: Curriculum

The Unchanging Word in an Ever-Changing World
Middle School Curriculum
Teacher Guide

Created by:
Nathan Gartner

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Introduction

I was just reading an article about how teen suicide rates are up in the United States, for the first time in a long time. This statistic is deeply saddening, but it is not too startling when looking at all the things that our adolescents are facing. Depression and anxiety are prevalent in many of our young people, phones have offered new challenges, and every time we blink there is a new social media site that is all the “rage.” With all these challenges that are new/different even from the time I was in grade school (2004), it was time to point them all to God. That is the goal of this curriculum. I found an article written by Sophieⁱ about the 10 common problems facing teenagers today. You will notice that there are 11 lessons that mirror those 10 problems noted by Sophie (along with an introduction). Each lesson aims at discussing different aspects of the challenge, what it is and why it may be wrong, and finally ties in God with the challenge.

Each lesson is designed to have discussions with the students. I am a believer that discussion is the way to teach Christ Light. The goal is for the students to continue to think of questions on the challenges, and then strive to answer them and apply God’s Word to their questions and the challenges.

The final project is where the students will create their own mini-devotion series on a topic of their choice. This project fits into the 21st Century skills with collaboration. It also makes the students dive into God’s Word.

Each lesson is concluded with a “Spiritual Exercise” portion. These were created based on “spiritual” skills that I saw lacking in middle schoolers. The goal is to have the students thinking about their faith and acting in different formats with their faith. You can use them as you see fit. They could be done in class or they could be done as assignments. The passages or hymns located in the section could be used as memory treasure along with any of the passages given thought out the curriculum.

The next page offers a scope and sequence. This is based on a more freely discussed class and lessons. The lessons could take more time with more discussion or they could go quicker with lesson discussion. Use the scope and sequences as needed in your classroom.

The mid-chapter and final assessment are there to get the students thinking and applying what they have learned about the challenges. It gives them a chance to discuss with students in a “online chat.” The final project gives them a chance to reflect and apply while using the Bible.

Every classroom is different, and every student is different. With that being said, I do believe that almost all of these challenges present themselves in some way, shape, or form in every school or child’s life. May God bless your studies with your students on these difficult areas of study. May God use you as a tool of sharing God’s Word to help strengthen the students’ faith of whom you serve.

Blessings,
Nathan Gartner

Scope and Sequence

Lesson	Introduction to 21 st Century Christianity	Body Image	Social Media
Length of Lesson	1-2 Days	2-3 Days	2-3 Days
Essential Question:	What type of world are we living in today?	What does God say about how each person was created?	Does God say anything about social media?

Lesson	Devotion Project Introduction	Peer Pressure	Time Management
Length of Lesson	1 Day	2-3 Days	1-2 Days
Essential Question:	What can you share of God's Word that will have an impact on others?	How does God help with peer pressure?	How do I manage my time to make sure there is time for God?

Lesson	Role Models	Mid-Unit Check-in	Drugs and Alcohol
Length of Lesson	2-3 Days	1 Day	2-3 Days
Essential Question:	What makes a Christian role model?	What can we take away from the first half of the unit?	Is there a proper use for drugs and alcohol?

Lesson	Community and the Church	Bullying	Devotion Project Check-in
Length of Lesson	2 Days	2-3 Days	1 Day
Essential Question:	What role does the church play as a part of your community?	How do Christians respond to bullying?	What can you share of God's Word that will have an impact on others?

Lesson	Mental Health	Sex	Final Assessment
Length of Lesson	2-3 Days	2-3 Days	1 Days
Essential Question:	How can God help our mental health?	How do God's view and the world's view of sex vary?	How can we apply the Bible truths to temptations we will face today?

Lesson	Devotion Project Final Days
Length of Lesson	1-2 Days
Essential Question:	What can you share of God's Word that will have an impact on others?

Chapter 01: Introduction to 21st Century Christianity

Essential Question: What type of world are we living in today?

Part One: Where is God in our world and in our lives?

1. How would you describe the world we live in?

2. In our world today, in what ways do we see God?

3. In our world today, in what ways do we not see God?

4. What examples from the Bible would fit what our world looks like today? Explain that fit.

5. Even when it seems like God is hidden in our world, what promises does he give?

6. Does Ecclesiastes 1:9ⁱⁱ give Christians comfort or concern?

7. According to studiesⁱⁱⁱ, only 56% of millennials go to church compared to 70% a few generations ago. What reasons can you think of for this drastic number?

8. It is a well-known statistic that students after confirmation can drastically decrease their church attendance. What are things that you could do to help your church attendance. What are things the church could do to help the church attendance?

9. How is the current spiritual state of our world a positive and negative for Christians?

Part Two: What struggle do middle school students face in our world today?

10. Read the two stories from Benjamin Colon^{iv}. Note that one of the stories is about children in 2008 and one of the stories is about the same children in 2018. Note the differences, and circle the struggles of the child in 2018.

2008 Story:

“Let’s imagine a seventh grader. He’s a quiet kid, polite, with a few friends. Just your ordinary, run-of-the-mill twelve-year-old. We’ll call him Brian. Brian’s halfway through seventh grade and for the first time, he’s starting to wonder where he falls in the social hierarchy at school. He’s thinking about his clothes a little bit, his shoes too. He’s conscious of how others perceive him, but he’s not that conscious of it.

He goes home each day and from the hours of 3 p.m. to 7 a.m., he has a break from the social pressures of middle school. Most evenings, he doesn’t have a care in the world. The year is 2008.

Brian has a cell phone, but it’s off most of the time. After all, it doesn’t do much. If friends want to get in touch, they call the house. The only time large groups of seventh graders come together is at school dances. If Brian feels uncomfortable with that, he can skip the dance. He can talk to teachers about day-to-day problems. Teachers have pretty good control over what happens at school.

Now, let’s imagine Brian on a typical weekday. He goes downstairs and has breakfast with his family. His mom is already at work, but his dad and sisters are there. They talk to each other over bowls of cereal. The kids head off to school soon after. Brian has a fine morning in his seventh-grade classroom and walks down to the lunchroom at precisely 12 p.m.

There’s a slick of water on the tiled floor near the fountain at the back of the cafeteria. A few

eighth graders know about it, and they’re laughing as yet another student slips and tumbles to the ground.

Brian buys a grilled cheese sandwich. It comes with tomato soup that no one ever eats. He polishes off the sandwich and heads to the nearest trashcan to dump the soup. When his sneakers hit the water slick, he slips just like the others. The tomato soup goes up in the air and comes down on his lap.

Nearby, at the table of eighth graders, a boy named Mark laughs. He laughs at Brian the same way the boys around him laugh at Brian. They laugh because they’re older, and they know something the younger kids don’t. They laugh at the slapstick nature of the fall. The spilled tomato soup is a bonus. The fall is a misfortune for Brian. That’s all. It’s not an asset for Mark. A few kids hear the laughter and look over, but Brian gets up quickly and rushes off to the bathroom to change into his gym shorts.

Mark tries to retell the story to a friend later. The friend doesn’t really get it because he wasn’t there. He can’t picture it. In fact, Mark seems a little mean for laughing at all.

After lunch, Brian returns to homeroom in his gym shorts. No one seems to notice the change. He breathes a sigh of relief. The cafeteria fall is behind him. He meets his sisters at the end of the day and they ask why he’s wearing gym shorts. He tells them he spilled some tomato sauce on his pants. They head home and spend the afternoon and evening together, safe and sound, home life completely separate from school life. Brian doesn’t think about the incident again. Only a few people saw it. It’s over.

Now, let’s imagine Brian again. Same kid. Same family. Same school. He’s still in seventh grade, but this time it’s 2018.

When Brian sits down for breakfast, his dad is answering an email at the table. His older sister is texting, and his younger sister is playing a video game. Brian has an iPhone too. He takes it

out and opens the Instagram app. The Brian from 2008 was wondering about his position in the social hierarchy. The Brian from 2018 knows. He can see it right there on the screen. He has fewer ‘followers’ than the other kids in his grade. That’s a problem. He wants to ask his father what to do, but there’s that email to be written. Instead, Brian thinks about it all morning at school. While his teacher talks, he slips his phone out and checks to see how many ‘followers’ the other kids in class have. The answer doesn’t help his confidence. At precisely 12 p.m., he heads to the cafeteria. He buys a grilled cheese. It comes with tomato soup that no one ever eats.

At the back of the lunchroom, Mark sits with the other eighth graders. He holds a shiny new iPhone in one hand. Mark has had an iPhone for five years. He’s got all the apps. Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. He’s got lots of followers too. He doesn’t know all of them, but that’s okay.

A few years ago, Mark made his first Instagram post. It was a picture of his remote-control car. Mark used to really enjoy remote control cars. Mark checked Instagram an hour after putting up that first picture. A bright red dot showed at the bottom of the page. He clicked it. Someone had ‘liked’ the picture of the car. Mark felt validated. It was good that he posted the picture. A little bit of dopamine was released into Mark’s brain. He checked the picture an hour later. Sure enough, another ‘like’. More dopamine. He felt even better.

For a while, pictures of the remote-control car were sufficient. They generated enough ‘likes’ to keep Mark happy. He no longer got much joy from actually driving the remote-control car, but he got plenty from seeing those ‘likes’ pile up.

Then something started to happen. The ‘likes’ stopped coming in. People didn’t seem interested in the pictures of the car anymore. This made Mark unhappy. He missed the ‘likes’ and the dopamine that came with them. He needed them back. He needed more exciting

pictures, because exciting pictures would bring more views and more ‘likes’. So, he decided to drive his car right out into the middle of the road. He had his little brother film the whole thing. He filmed the remote-control car as it got flattened by a passing truck. Mark didn’t bother to collect it. He just grabbed his phone and posted the video. It was only a few minutes before the ‘likes’ started coming in. He felt better.

Now it’s eighth grade and Mark has become addicted to social media. Sure, he needs a lot more ‘likes’ to get the same feeling, but that’s okay. That just means he needs more content. Good content. Content no one else has. That’s the kind that gets a lot of ‘likes’, really, really fast. Mark has learned the best content comes from filming and posting the embarrassing experiences of classmates.

When he notices that water slick at the back of the cafeteria, he’s ready. Each time someone walks by and falls, their misfortune becomes an asset for Mark. A part of Mark wants them to fall. He hopes they fall.

Brian walks across the cafeteria with his soup, minding his own business. Suddenly, his feet slide out from under him. The tomato soup goes up in the air and comes down on his lap. He’s so embarrassed, that when he stands up and rushes off to the bathroom, he doesn’t notice Mark filming.

Mark’s fingers race over his iPhone screen before Brian is out of sight. That was a great video he just took, and he wants to get it online. Fast. He knows he’s not supposed to have his cell phone out in school, but the teachers really only enforce that rule during class. They all use Twitter and Instagram too. They understand.

Mark doesn’t know who he just filmed, and he doesn’t care. It’s not his fault the kid fell on the floor. He’s just the messenger. The video is a kind of public service announcement. He’s just warning everyone else about the water spot in the cafeteria. That’s what Mark tells himself.

He gets the video uploaded to Snapchat first. No time for a caption. It speaks for itself. He has it up on Instagram seconds later. By then, the ‘likes’ are already coming in. Dopamine floods into Mark’s brain. There’s a comment on Instagram already! “What a loser!” it says. Mark gives the comment a ‘like’. Best to keep the audience happy.

This has been a rewarding lunch. The bell’s going to ring in a few minutes. Mark sits back and refreshes his screen again and again and again until it does.

Meanwhile, Brian heads back from the bathroom, having changed into his gym shorts. He’s still embarrassed about the fall. It happened near the back of the cafeteria, though. He doesn’t think many people saw. He hopes they didn’t. But when he walks into the classroom, a lot of people look at him. One girl holds her phone up at an odd angle. Is she...taking a picture? The phone comes down quickly and she starts typing, so he can’t be sure.

Class begins. Brian is confused because people keep slipping their phones out and glancing back at him. He asks to go to the bathroom. Inside a stall, he opens Instagram. There he is on the screen, covered in tomato soup. How could this be? Who filmed this? Below the video, a new picture has just appeared. It’s him in his gym shorts. The caption reads, “Outfit change!”

Brian scrolls frantically through the feed trying to find the source of the video. He can’t. It’s been shared and reshared too many times. He notices his follower count has dropped. He doesn’t want to go to class. He just wants it to stop.

He meets his sisters outside at the end of the day. Several students snap pictures as he walks by. Neither sister says a word. Brian knows why.

Home was a safe place for Brian in 2008. Whatever happened in school, stayed in school.

Not now. Brian arrives at his house, heart thundering, and heads straight to his bedroom. He’s supposed to be doing homework, but he can’t concentrate. Alone in the dark, he refreshes his iPhone again and again and again and again.

Brian’s family is having his favorite dish for dinner, but he doesn’t care. He wants it to be over so he can get back to his phone. Twice, he goes to the bathroom to check Instagram. His parents don’t mind, they’re checking their own phones.

Brian discovers that two new versions of the video have been released. One is set to music and the other has a nasty narration. Both have lots of comments. He doesn’t know how to fight back, so he just watches as the view counts rise higher and higher. His own follower count, his friend count, keeps going in the opposite direction. Brian doesn’t want to be part of this. He doesn’t like this kind of thing. He can’t skip it though. It’s not like the dance. And he can’t tell a teacher. This isn’t happening at school.

He stays up all night refreshing the feed, hoping the rising view count will start to slow. Mark is doing the same thing at the other side of town. He has lots of new followers. This is his best video ever.

At 3 a.m., they both turn off their lights and stare up at their respective ceilings. Mark smiles. He hopes tomorrow something even more embarrassing happens to a different kid. Then he can film that and get even more ‘likes’. Across town, Brian isn’t smiling, but sadly, he’s hoping for exactly the same thing.”

How many of the struggles of Mark would fit into struggles you or classmates would say you have?

11. Struggles and temptations may change with time, but God does not change. Work with a partner to think/find passages to support that God does not change, even when the world does change.

12. Read Hebrews 4:15. Obviously Jesus' temptations were different than yours, but how does this passage still give you comfort?

13. The great comfort is that God will forgive all our sins. Doesn't matter what they are. Give passage proof that backs up that truth.

This unit will look at a list of ten items that are common struggles for middle school students. Please take the exit ticket to determine your confidence level in what God says about those various topics.

Spiritual Exercise:
Prayer

What is prayer?

What does God say about prayer?

What are parts of a good prayer?

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

Biblical examples of prayer?

Having learned about prayer, please write your own prayer below:

Chapter 02: Body Image

Essential Question: What does God say about how each Christian was created?

Part One: What does our world say about body image?

1. What is body image?

According to the Collin McShirley^v, “Body

Image is the _____ that a person has of their _____ and the _____ and _____ that _____ from the _____.

2. Put that explanation in your own words.

3. There are four components of the definition above. What part does each component play in body image?

- _____: _____
- _____: _____
- _____: _____
- _____: _____

4. What role does media play concerning body image?

5. What role do each of you play in other people’s shaping of their body image?

6. What are some other factors that could influence body image, and how could those factors influence?

7. What is puberty? How can puberty affect body image?

Part Two: What can negative body image lead to?

8. Negative body image can greatly impact teenagers. What are some ways you think it could impact children your age?

9. Negative body image can affect one's self-esteem. What is self-esteem, and how can it be affected?

10. Eating disorders can arise because of negative body image. The most common eating disorders are:

- _____:
- _____:
- _____:

11. How might a teenager's spiritual life be challenged by a negative body image?

12. How might a teenager's physical life be challenged by a negative body image?

Part Three: What does God say about body image?

13. When we read the account of creation, when God created man, he used three words to describe that creation. What were those words, and what do they mean?

14. How does Psalm 100:3 support number 13?

15. Both 1 Corinthians 3: 16-17 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 speak of similar things when it comes to our bodies. Prepare an "elevator speech" on what both of these passages are talking about.

16. How does 1 Corinthians 6:20 help with potential negative self-esteem?

17. Read Romans 12:1-2. Paul talks about our bodies and what to do with them and what not to do. What does that "to-do" and "not to-do" list look like in today's terms?

<u>To-Do</u>

<u>Not To-Do</u>

18. 1 Timothy 4:8 offers us the reminder of what we long for. What is the longing?

19. Dinner conversation: If your parents ask you what you learned in Christ Light; how would you answer?

Spiritual Exercise:
Meditation^{vi}

Meditation is the training of the mind. Similar to fitness as training for the body. There are many mediation techniques out there. The most important mediation we can do is to meditate on God's Word.

It is very easy to quickly and easily read over a section of Scripture without fully looking at the words and the meaning. This spiritual exercise is helping us to train our mind to study deeper the truths of God's Word.

Section of Scripture:
Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

¹ The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,[a]

I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

Meditation:

<i>Read the verses.</i> 1. In my own words, what does this verse say?	
<i>Read it again to yourself.</i> 2. What in this verse shows me God's love?	
<i>Read it again to yourself.</i> 3. What does this tell me to do that I've failed at, or what does it tell me not to do, that I've done? For what do I own God an apology?	
<i>Read it again to yourself.</i> 4. With all this in mind, what can I ask God to give me? How can I ask God to help me?	

Chapter 03: Social Media

Essential Question: What does God say about social media?

Part One: What is social media?

1. Social media are “websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking^{vii}.” Put that definition into your own words.

2. Which social media do you use? What do you use it for?

3. What influences are there that can affect the use of social media?

4. What are benefits of social media?

5. Would you say that social media has too much of a role, just the right role, or too little of a role in society today?

6. What is a good age for young adults to get their own social media? Why?

7. What role do parents play (or should play) in your social media?

Part Two: What negatives can come from social media?

8. We spoke about self-esteem in chapter two. What was self-esteem again?

9. How can social media impact self-esteem?

10. Cyberbullying can easily happen through social media. What is cyberbullying, and give an example.

11. “The Big Disconnect^{viii}” is something that can happen through social media. It speaks to the lack of nonverbals. How can this disconnect cause problems?

12. A survey conducted by the Royal Society for Public Health^{ix} in the UK found that 14-24-year-olds using social media reported higher amounts of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Social media was supposed to connect. Why might this be the results of the study?

13. Think back to the story from lesson one. How did social media impact Brian and Mark?

Part Three: What does God say about social media?

14. Read 1 Timothy 6:10. Why would this passage fit with social media?

15. The Bible doesn’t specifically have anything written about social media, but there are passages we can use to get a picture of how we can use it. Use Ephesians 5:1-7 and Ephesians 4:29-32 to come up with a way that Christians can use social media in a God-pleasing way.

16. The 8th Commandment (you got this from Catechism class) fits well into the idea of social media. How do the two fit together?

17. How do both 1 Corinthians 10:23 and 1 Corinthians 6:12 fit with the idea of social media?

18. Read Matthew 28:19-20. Can social media play a part in this? How so?

19. With many of the risks stated in number 12 that are connected with social media, how can God's Word help combat those negatives (think of many of the items we read and talked about)?

20. Number 6 asked what age is appropriate for someone to get a social media account. Do you stick by your answer or would you change it? Why?

21. If someone you knew was thinking of getting an Instagram account, and they asked you for advice what would you give them?

Spiritual Exercise:
Hymn Study

Hymn 490: Love in Christ is Strong and Living

Stanza One:

Love in Christ is strong and living
Binding faithful hearts in one;
Love in Christ is true and giving –
May his will in us be done!

Stanza Two:

Love is patient and forbearing,
Clothed in Christ's humility,
Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring,
Reaching out in charity.

Stanza Three:

Love in Christ abides forever,
Fainting not when ills attend;
Love, forgiving and forgiven,
Shall endure until life's end.

Choose one of the three stanzas and give a summary of that stanza in your own words.

Stanza _____

How does this hymn fit into your life? You can apply it to the things we have discussed in class or apply it a different way.

If there was one line you were going to remember from this hymn, which line would it be and why?

Chapter 04: Peer Pressure

Essential Question: How does God help with peer pressure?

Part One: What is peer pressure?

1. Who are your peers?

2. What exactly is peer pressure?

3. Give an example of good peer pressure.

4. What are some positive effects of peer pressure?

5. Peer pressure can be both openly expressed and more indirectly expressed. What is the difference? Think of an example for both.

6. Why is peer pressure such a powerful pull?

7. How does media play a role within peer pressure?

8. Often times peer pressure is referenced as peer influence or social influence. Which term do you like best and why?

Part Two: What are the negatives of peer pressure?

9. What is an example of negative peer pressure?

10. What are some negative effects of peer pressure?

11. Why are teens more susceptible to peer pressure than other age groups?

12. Pressure to conform is strong. How can the idea of conforming play a part in peer pressure?

13. When peer pressure goes against your ideals, what are ways to get out?

14. Self-esteem and self-control come into play when it comes to peer pressure. How does each play a part?

15. Why is it so important to know yourself and know what God says about temptation?

16. What are some Bible examples of those who (or didn't) gave into peer pressure?

Part Three: What does God say about peer pressure?

17. Peers and peer groups are important to teens. What advice God does give when looking for friends in Proverbs 13:20, John 15: 12-17, and Job 2:11.

18. Paul shares a golden nugget when it comes to peer pressure. What is that nugget according to 1 Corinthians 15:33?

19. Proverbs gives much advice when it comes to peer pressure. Analyze these two passages: Proverbs 12:26 and Proverbs 13:20.

20. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul urges the Corinthians to not pick up sinful life styles. Why are we to avoid this? How can we avoid this?

21. Think of 1 Peter 5:8. How does negative peer pressure fit into this?

22. What does God say about positive peer pressure in Proverbs 27:17?

23. When the world wants you to conform, what does Jesus say about you in John 17: 14-16. What does this mean?

24. When negative peer pressure does come, what promise does God make in 1 Corinthians 10:13?

25. How does God's command and promise in Matthew 28:20 fit into the concept of negative peer pressure?

Spiritual Exercise:
FVL Schools Theme^x
Romans 8:37-39



<i>Read the verses.</i> In my own words, what does this verse say?	
<i>Read it again to yourself.</i> What in this verse shows me God's love?	
<i>Read it again to yourself.</i> What does this tell me to do that I've failed at, or what does it tell me not to do, that I've done? For what do I own God an apology?	
<i>Read it again to yourself.</i> With all this in mind, what can I ask God to give me? How can I ask God to help me?	

Chapter 05: Time Management and Making time for God

Essential Question: How do I manage my time to make sure there is time for God?

Part One: How do I manage my time?

1. List everything that you have going on the next two days.

2. As you keep progressing in your academic career, you notice that there is more to do. How do you keep track of it all?

3. What are some struggles teens have when it comes to time management?

4. Here are tips to help with time management:

Stay Organized:

Limit Distractions:

Map out your days:

Develop routines:

Break down into smaller tasks:

5. What are some possible results from poor time management?

6. What is easier to do, things you want to do or need to do? How can this get someone in trouble concerning time management?

7. Practice planning out your next couple of days. What struggles are you encountering? How are you going to work through the struggles?

Part Two: How do I make time for God?

8. What are some common reasons why people don't give time to God and his Word?

9. What is the danger in all of those reasons?

10. What are ways to make a conscious effort to stay in God's Word?

11. How does the third commandment fit into this?

12. What does God's Word say about time management? Use Ephesians 5:15-17 and Colossians 4:5.

13. What encouragement can you give to others who are struggling with time management?

Spiritual Exercises:
Planned Devotions

Your goal is to find some sort of devotional material (can't be *Grace Talks*). This could be the WELS devotion series or any devotion series you have at home. Your goal is to read one devotion a day for a week straight. The hope is that this will become part of your routine, and you will continue into the future.

Day 1:

Devotion Title: _____

Section of Scripture: _____

Day 2:

Devotion Title: _____

Section of Scripture: _____

Day 3:

Devotion Title: _____

Section of Scripture: _____

Day 4:

Devotion Title: _____

Section of Scripture: _____

Day 5:

Devotion Title: _____

Section of Scripture: _____

Day 6:

Devotion Title: _____

Section of Scripture: _____

Day 7:

Devotion Title: _____

Section of Scripture: _____

Chapter 06: Role Models

Essential Question: What makes a role model?

Part One: What makes a good role model?

1. Who would you consider a role model of yours?

2. Why would you consider that person a role model?

3. What role do media and celebrities play in choosing a role model?

4. Do celebrities' lifestyles make them good role model choices? Why or why not?

5. What makes a good role model?

6. Why are role models a good thing in a teenager's life?

7. How do role models affect a teenager's life?

8. Do you see yourself as a role model?

Part Two: Heroes of Faith

9. The Bible is full of heroes of faith. These men and women are heroes for different reasons. Work with a partner to pick three heroes of faith and answer the questions about these people.

Hero of Faith #1: _____

Where do you find this person's story (book of the Bible?): _____

What makes this person a hero of

faith? _____

What similarities do you see between yourself and this person?

What lesson could you take away from this person that you could apply to your life?

Hero of Faith #2: _____

Where do you find this person's story (book of the Bible?): _____

What makes this person a hero of faith? _____

What similarities do you see between yourself and this person?

What lesson could you take away from this person that you could apply to your life?

Hero of Faith #3: _____

Where do you find this person's story (book of the Bible?): _____

What makes this person a hero of faith? _____

What similarities do you see between yourself and this person?

What lesson could you take away from this person that you could apply to your life?

Part Three: What does the Bible say to look for in a hero/role model?

10. The Bible shares many things to look for when looking for a role model. What does Proverbs 13: 20 say about the importance of role models?

11. Read Titus 2:7-8, Matthew 5:13-16, 1 Peter 2:12, and 1 Timothy 4:12. What do these passages say to look for in a role model?

12. What is the best trait of a role model according to 1 Corinthians 11:1?

13. The Bible speaks of role models that God put into our lives. Who are those people according to Ephesians 6: 1-3?

14. Proverbs 1:8 and Proverbs 23:22 speak to the need of parents, and their role as role models. What does Proverbs say?

15. Look back to number one of this chapter. From what you know, does that person fit the criteria of what God says about a role model?

Can you think of someone (else) who fits the criteria that God gives as a role model?

16. In a sinful world it can be tough finding role models. With the person next to you, where can you look to find a solid role model?

Spiritual Exercise:
Conduct an interview

You will be conducting a short interview (of someone other than your parents). In this interview you will be asking this person questions on the topic of role models. You will come up with the questions to ask your person, and you will record your answers. One of the questions must be if they had a role model, and why it was that person.

Question #1:

Question #2:

Question #3:

Question #4:

Question #5:

Question #6: Did you have a role model growing up? Who was it, and why was that person your role model?

Chapter 07: Drugs and Alcohol

Essential Question: Is there a proper use for drugs and alcohol?

Part One: Does this apply to me?

1. Are drugs and alcohol a seventh and eighth-grade problem?

2. Why does the temptation of drugs and alcohol become a strong temptation as you get older?

3. Summarize the effect that drugs and alcohol can have on the teenage brain according to Matt Gonzales^{xi}:

Drugs have a more drastic effect on children and teens than on adults because the brain continues to develop until about age 25. As children grow older, the brain develops unevenly. The parts of the brain in charge of coordination, emotion and motivation develop much more quickly than the parts that control reasoning and impulse. That is why teens seem to respond emotionally much more often than adults. It's also why they're more prone to risk-taking behavior. In addition, a developing brain is more easily damaged than a fully matured brain. "Teens have chemically naive brains that have not been exposed to drugs or alcohol," Dr. Kevin Wandler, chief medical officer of Advanced Recovery Systems, told DrugRehab.com. "The neurochemical effects that they get are much more intense than folks older than 25." Alcohol and other drugs disrupt brain development. They negatively affect a

person's memory and ability to respond to stimuli and stressful situations. That's why people who abuse drugs at a young age often suffer mental health problems — including depression, personality disorders or suicidal thoughts — later in life. Developing brains are also more prone to addiction. Teenage brains adapt more quickly to repeated drug use, leading to cravings and dependence. Addiction most commonly begins during the teenage years and continues into adulthood. A 2011 study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse found that 90 percent of Americans with substance use disorders began using alcohol or other drugs before age 18.

4. What is juuling? Why is it so popular? Why is it so dangerous?

5. Why has marijuana been in the news in Wisconsin?

6. Besides brain side effects, what other side effects can drug and alcohol have on teenagers?

7. Explain how peer pressure can play a part in drug and alcohol usage.

8. Why do teenagers do drugs and drink alcohol?

9. Why shouldn't teenagers do drugs and drink alcohol?

10. How does media play a role in drug (juules) and alcohol usage?

Part Two: What are these types of drugs:

11. Substance Jig-Saw^{xii}

Alcohol:

Marijuana:

Inhalants:

Part Three: What does God say?

12. Read these sections of Scripture: John 2:3-11, 1 Timothy 5:23, and Ecclesiastes 9:7. Based on what these passages say is alcohol good or bad?

13. When does the thought from number 12 change according to Ephesians 5:18 and Romans 13:13?

14. How does 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 1 Corinthians 10:23-24 fit into this concept?

15. Read Romans 13:1-5. How does this fit into the use of drugs and alcohol?

16. Think of the 4th Commandment. How does this fit into the use of drugs and alcohol?

17. Read Romans 12: 1-2. How does this fit into the use of drugs and alcohol?

18. Read Romans 14: 15-21. How does this fit into the use of drugs and alcohol?

19. Based on everything we have read, what would you say is God's stance on drug and alcohol use?

20. If the temptation of usage of drugs or alcohol comes up, what is a course of action that could help you in that situation?

21. How can you hold your friends accountable in times of temptation?

Spiritual Exercise:
Christianity vs. Other Religions



This is a very common bumper sticker. Each letter represents a different religion. Name as many of the different religions as possible:

What is the purpose of this bumper stick? What is it trying to say?

What is the different between Christianity and other religions?

What is human reason? How does human reason play a part in all of this?

There are an estimated 2.2 billion Christians in the world. There are roughly 7.5 billion people in the world. This should give us an urgency to witness. How can you witness to others?

Chapter 08: Community and the Church

Essential Question: What role does the church play as a part of your community?

Part One: What does God say about the church?

1. Hebrews 10:24-25, Matthew 18:20, and Colossians 3:16 speak about the church. What message do they share?

2. What is the difference between the Church (capital C) and church (lowercase c)?

3. What is the main benefit that comes from belonging to a church?

4. What are secondary benefits that come from belonging to a church (five of them)?

5. Rank the benefits from number four. Be prepared to defend your answer.

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

6. Read Romans 12:4-5 and 1 Corinthians 12:14-16. How does this apply to our church community?

7. What should you look for in a church?

8. The “80/20 syndrome^{xiii}” is where a small percentage of the members (20 percent) take on the responsibility of ministerial work, while the other 80 percent are mere spectators. Do you agree with this syndrome? Do you see this in the church?

9. Bill Nance^{xiv} states there are six things that teens want from their church. They are “a place with Jesus, a place with adults that care, a place to belong, a place to serve, a place to encourage, and a place to grow.” Do you agree with this list? Is there something you would take off or something you would add?

Chapter 09: Bullying

Essential Question: How do Christians respond to bullying?

Part One: What is bullying, and how does it show itself?

1. How is bullying defined?

2. There are three different types of bullying: verbal, social, and physical. What is the difference between each one? Give an example.

Verbal:

Social:

Physical:

3. Give a short explanation of all the different roles within a bullying situation:

Kids who Bully:

Kids who are bullied:

Kids who assist:

Kids who reinforce:

Outsiders:

Kids who defend:

4. According to a 2012 study^{xv}, only 40% of bullying instances were notified to an adult. Why is the number so low?

5. What can you do in a bullying situation?

Part Two: What are the results of bullying?

6. Why do children bully?

7. Why do children get bullied?

8. What are the results of bullying on the children who bully?

9. What are the results of bullying on children who are bullied?

10. What are the results of bullying on the bystanders?

11. What role does the media play in bullying?

12. How can peer pressure affect bullying?

13. Can a friend be bullying another friend?

Part Three: What does God say about bullying?

14. The Bible doesn't specifically say anything about bullying, but it does give us principles that we can apply to bullying. Use these references in a summary of what God would say about bullying: Mark 12:31, Luke 6:31, Genesis 1:26-27, James 3:9-10, 1 John 4:20, Ephesians 4:29, James 1:22, and Psalm 139:23-24.

15. Which commandments would fit into the realm of bullying? How would they fit?

16. What Bible stories that involve bullying can you think of? How did those stories end up?

17. Matthew 5:44-45 gives the perfect example of what to do when there is wrong against us. What is that?

18. Why is that so hard to do?

19. How can we help ourselves follow Jesus' example?

20. How can God's Word affect a bullying situation? Is there an example of that power?

21. You are tabbed with teaching a lesson on bullying to second graders. What are some of the key elements you will want to make sure to have in your mini-lesson?

Spiritual Exercises:
Christianity vs. the World

Read John 15:18-25.

Please summarize that section of Scripture:

Can you think of any instances from history where the world has shown its hate for Christianity?

Can you think of any instances from the United States today (within the last couple of years) where the world has shown its hate for Christianity?

Why does the world hate Christianity?

How can you combat the world's hate against Christianity (you)?

What passage would you carry with you through this fight against the world:

Chapter 10: Mental Health

Essential Question: How can God help our mental health?

Part One: What is mental health?

1. What is mental health?

2. What is mental illness?

3. Why do middle schoolers need to learn about mental health?

4. What impact can mental illness play on middle schoolers?

5. Stigma is a word that can be used when people talk about mental illness. What does “stigma” mean?

6. What effect can that have on mental illness and middle schoolers?

7. How does media play into the “stigma” created?

8. Who plays a role in the mental wellness of all students? How do they fit that role?

Part Two: What are some specific mental illnesses?

9. What is Depression?

10. What is Bipolar disorder?

11. What is anxiety?

12. These three mental illnesses can show themselves in very similar fashion. (Note: that some of these signs do not mean someone falls into one of the categories).

Feelings:

Thoughts:

Physical:

Behaviors:

13. What are some ways that students cope with their struggles with mental illness?

14. Why would we say the answers to number 13 are not coping solutions?

15. Look at the image^{xvi}. What is it sharing, and why is it so powerful?

This is powerful...



16. Which of the three mental illnesses listed effects middle schoolers the most? Be ready to defend your answer.

Part Three: What does God say about our mental health?

17. When sin entered the world, what happened to everything? What happened to our bodies?

18. The Bible doesn't specially say a lot about mental illness. The Bible does give us passages that can be applied. Look at Philippians 4:6-7 and 1 Peter 5:7. Apply those to mental illness.

19. While those are wonderful passages, how do we better remind/apply them to our lives?

20. Paul shares about his "thorn in his flesh" in 2 Corinthians 12:16. How can this apply to people who struggle with mental illness?

21. Jesus is the Great Physician. In Matthew 11:28-30, what is the invitation he shares?

22. What are some of the worldly tools God has blessed our world with to help mental illness?

Spiritual Exercise:
Bible vs. Human Reason

What is human reason?

How can/does human reason cause a problem for people who are reading the Bible?

What are some specific Bible stories/teachings that go against human reason? Think of two. One:

Two:

What is faith?

Where does your confidence come from when believing the Bible?

How does Hymn 382 fit into the Bible vs. Human reason debate?

Chapter 11: Sex

Essential Question: How do God's view and the world's view of sex vary?

Part One: God vs. the world difference.

1. What is God's idea of sex? Use Genesis 2:24, Hebrews 13:4, Mark 10:6-9.

2. What is the world's view of sex?

3. How do those two differ?

4. What can be some consequences of sex before marriage?

5. What would be some advice about saying no to sex before marriage?

6. What does God say about sinful sex? Use Ephesians 5:3.

7. Which commandment pertains to sex?

8. Why does the world say sex before marriage is okay?

9. How does the media portray sex?

Part Two: What are common sexual temptations?

10. What is homosexuality? What do you know about homosexuality in the news? In the world?

11. What is pornography? How has this changed over the course of time?

12. What is sexting? Why is this a new temptation that has emerged? What legal issues come along with sexting?

13. Why might people want to live together before marriage?

14. Many sexual temptations stem from lust. What is lust?

15. What is adultery? How is that a sexual temptation?

Part Three: What does God say about sexual temptations?

16. What are some examples of sexual temptations from the Bible?

17. Is sexual temptation worse, better, or the same as it was in the past? Defend your answer.

18. What does God say about homosexuality? Use these passages: Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and 1 Timothy 1:9-10.

19. How should we treat someone who struggles with the sin of homosexuality?

20. Pornography and sexting are not specifically talked about in God's Word. How can we apply what we have learned to say these are wrong?

21. What does God say about lust? Use Matthew 5:27-28.

22. Paul shares that sexual sins are “different.” Why are they different? Aren’t all sins the same? Look at 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.

23. When we fall in sexual sin (or any sin) what comfort do we have? Use 1 John 2:1-2.

24. 2 Corinthians 2:14,15 uses the word compels. What does that word mean, and how does this passage fit into this section?

25. List four reasons why people might avoid sex? Rank your four reasons from one (most effective) to 4 (least effective).

26. What would you say to someone who is struggling with a sexual sin?

27. What do you do if you find yourself struggling with a sexual sin someday (or today)?

Spiritual Exercises: Other Teens

You will be looking for a spiritual article to read. You will be heading to *Forward in Christ*>Archived Articles>Teen Talks. Search through the archived articles, and find a teen talk that seems interesting to you. Read the article and answer the following questions about your article.

Title of article:

Author of article:

Summary of article:

What was something that really stood out (quote, statistic, etc.)

What questions (think of two) came up during the reading of this article?

Would you recommend this article to someone else to read? Why or why not?

Curriculum Resources

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- ^{xvi} Photo taken from Worth-It Facebook page. Original post from May 15, 2019.

Appendix B: Mid-Unit Check

Mid-Unit Check-in

We have come to the half-way point of our unit. Let's see what you have learned through the first six lessons.

The Assessment:

You will be working in groups of three or four for this project. You will be having an **online discussion** with your group members. You will work with your partners to answer all the questions. Starting directions: *One person starts by answering the question. The next person will then add to the previous comment and add something of their own. Please write your response in a unique color and put your name in parentheses after it. (Gartner)*

Directions:

- One person in the group is going to need to share the document with the other group members.
- Once the document is shared, pick the color that will represent you in all your answers.
- Pick a question and be the first to answer the question.
- Once your group members have started to answer questions, you will follow up to their comment.
 - Follow up options:
 - Add-on to what your classmate stated
 - Ask a question on something that your classmate stated
 - Add to the discussion with new additional information
- You will add **two** comments to every question.

Expectations:

You will be assessed by your two comments under every question, your comments add to the discussion based on the criteria stated above, and that your comments show a depth of understanding of the topics you will be answering the questions on.

Due Date:

The discussion will be due on: _____

Appendix C: Final Assessment***Final Assessment***

We have come to the end of our study on these topics. We are going to apply what we have learned, and use it to analyze a story from the Bible.

The Assessment:

You will be writing a six-paragraph paper that analyzes a person (or group) from the Bible. You will be looking at their sin, Law and Gospel, and applying that sin to our world today.

Directions:

- First thing you will need to do is to find a story from the Bible that shares the story of someone's sin. That sin will be the basis for this paper.
- Once you have picked your story, you will be writing your six-paragraph paper. Here is the format for your paper:
 - Paragraph One: You will be introducing the whole paper. Make sure you give a hook that will bring the audience into wanting to read more of your paper.
 - Paragraph Two: You will be giving a summary of the story. Make sure you give enough detail, but not too much detail in your summary.
 - Paragraph Three: Here you will be focusing on the sin. Does the sin that is committed still show its self today? How so or how not? Is it similar to something else? Has it evolved?
 - Paragraph Four: What was the Law and Gospel in the story? How did the person in the story react to the Law? How did they react to the Gospel?
 - Paragraph Five: What is the main take away(s) from this story? How does this story apply to a seventh or eighth-grader? If there was one thing to remember what would it be?
 - Paragraph Six: The conclusion to the paper. Wrap up the entire paper, and give a solid conclusion.
- The paper will be double-spaced, 12-point font, and in Times New Roman font.

Expectations:

You will be assessed on the following aspects of the paper. First, you will be assessed on the application of the Bible story to your life. Next you will be assessed on the appropriate summary of the Bible story. Finally, you will be assessed on the fluidness and grammar of the paper.

Due Date:

The paper will be due on: _____

Appendix D: Devotion Project***Devotion Project***

As Christians we want to be able to fully understand God's Word the best we can. You are learning about God's Word right now during Christ Light and Catechism class, and you will continue to learn what God says about many different topics. As you become more knowledgeable with God's Word and what he says, the next step is to share what he says with others. That sharing can take place in an informal way (daily conversations with people) or a more formal way (devotions). There will be many opportunities in your life to share God's Word with people in both formal and informal ways, and you all have been prepared for this with your Christian education.

The Project:

In this project, you and a partner will be writing two devotions. You will pick a topic that you and your partner are passionate about. Once that topic has been decided you will write the devotions. You will have your teacher check them over. Once they have been approved, you will record the devotions in a "Grace Talks" style. The goal is for these devotions to be able to be used in class to help your classmates grow in their faith.

Directions:

- The first step is to pick a topic.
- Once the topic is chosen, you will want to determine with your partner the path you will want to take with the devotions. Make sure you include these in your devotions:
 - Introduction, Bible passage(s), a message that includes both Law and Gospel, and a conclusion
- Work with your partner to write the devotions.
- Once you have written your devotions, you will need to get approval from your teacher for the next step.
- Once approval has been received, you will want to start memorizing your devotion(s) for videotaping.
- You will want to be thinking of the production of the recorded devotions.
- Record your devotions.
- Turn in to your teacher.

Expectations:

You will be assessed in three areas, your devotions, the recording, and your role in the project. Your devotions will be assessed on being Biblically sound with Law and Gospel along with the message of the devotion. The recording will be assessed on the delivery of the devotion. Finally, you will be assessed on your role within the project and what part you played within the group.

Due Date:

There will be a couple of due dates within this project:

- Devotion One: _____
- Devotion Two: _____
- Devotion Recordings: _____

Devotion Project Rubric

____ DEVOTION ONE (6)

Topic and the message are consistent throughout the devotions
Law and Gospel are both present within the devotions
Introduction and conclusion offer a hook to the devotion and close the devotion

____ DEVOTION TWO (6)

Topic and the message are consistent throughout the devotions
Law and Gospel are both present within the devotions
Introduction and conclusion offer a hook to the devotion and close the devotion

____ DEVOTION RECORDINGS (6)

Message is clearly articulated in the recording
The recording is able to be watched and listened to
The recording is done in a professional manner

____ MECHANICALLY SOUND (2)

The devotions have been checked to be free from grammatical and mechanical errors.

____ TOTAL POINTS EARNED / 20 POINTS

Appendix E: Pre-Test and Post-Test

The Unchanging Word in an Ever-Changing World Attitude and Behavior Pre-test:

Grade: _____

Read each statement and then circle the word or phrase that best describes your attitude toward that statement.

1. I understand how media and our world can affect someone's body image views.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
2. I can apply God's Word to our 21st-century use of social media.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
3. I think I could pick out negative and positive peer pressure among classmates and friends.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
4. I am confident I use my time most effectively.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
5. I know what to look for in a Christian role model.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
6. I know drugs and alcohol are bad for me to use, and I can explain why they are bad.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
7. I feel connected to my church.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
8. I am confident in understanding of how to act when there is bullying.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
9. I know what mental health is.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
10. I can differ between God's view of sex and the world's view of sex.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
11. What would you like to learn about challenges middle schoolers face?

The Unchanging Word in an Ever-Changing World Attitude and Behavior Post-test:

Grade: _____

Read each statement and then circle the word or phrase that best describes your attitude toward that statement.

1. I understand how media and our world can affect someone's body image views.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2. I can apply God's Word to our 21st-century use of social media.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3. I think I could pick out negative and positive peer pressure among classmates and friends.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4. I am confident I use my time most effectively.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

5. I know what to look for in a Christian role model.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

6. I know drugs and alcohol are bad for me to use, and I can explain why they are bad.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

7. I feel connected to my church.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

8. I am confident in understanding of how to act when there is bullying.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

9. I know what mental health is.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

10. I can differ between God's view of sex and the world's view of sex.

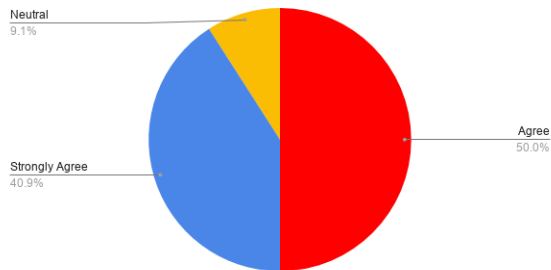
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

11. What would you change about this unit we just went through?

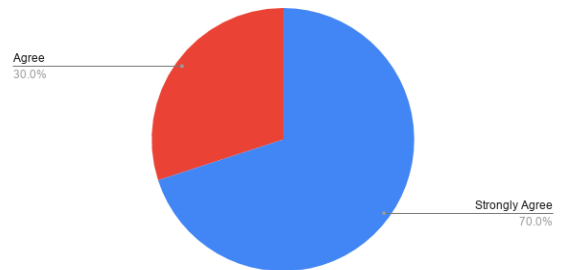
Appendix F: Pre-test and Post-test Data

Question 1: I understand how media and our world can affect someone's body image views:

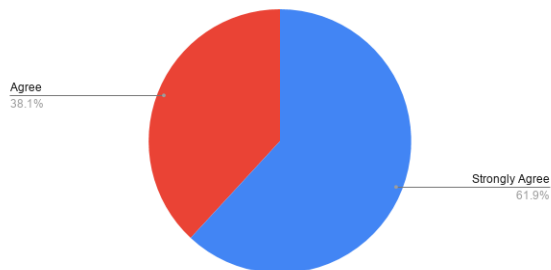
8th Grade Pretest: I understand how media and our world can affect someone's body image views.



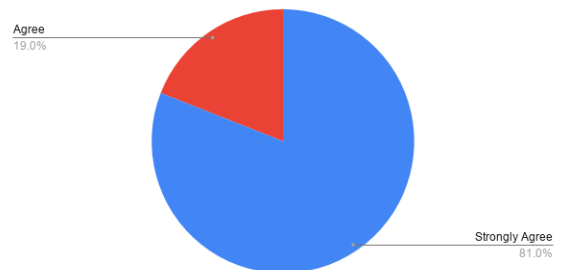
8th Grade Posttest: I understand how media and our world can affect someone's body image views.



7th Grade Pretest: I understand how media and our world can affect someone's body image views.

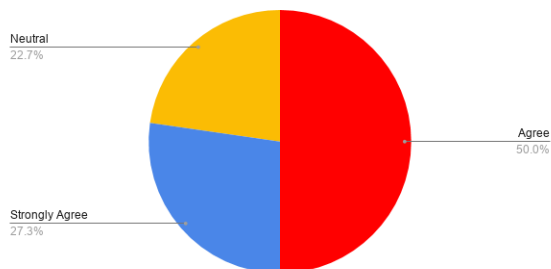


7th Grade Posttest: I understand how media and our world can affect someone's body image views.

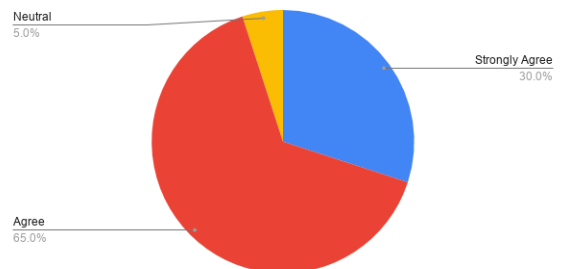


Question 2: I can apply God's Word to our 21st-century use of social media.

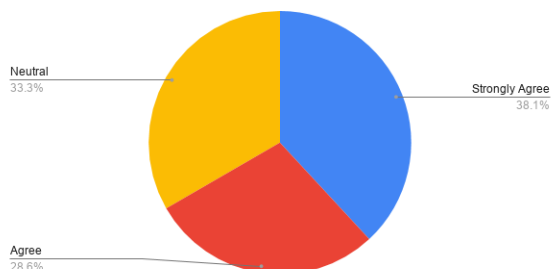
8th Grade Pretest: I can apply God's Word to our 21st century use of social media.



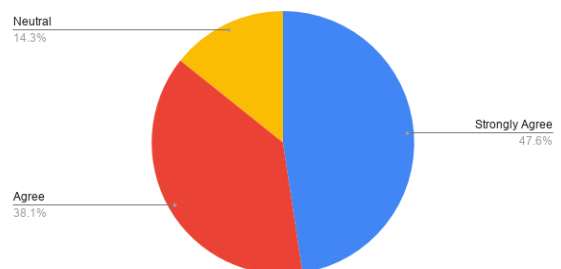
8th Grade Posttest: I can apply God's Word to our 21st century use of social media.



7th Grade Pretest: I can apply God's Word to our 21st century use of social media.

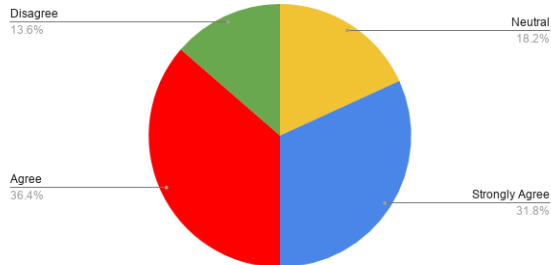


7th Grade Posttest: I can apply God's Word to our 21st century use of social media.

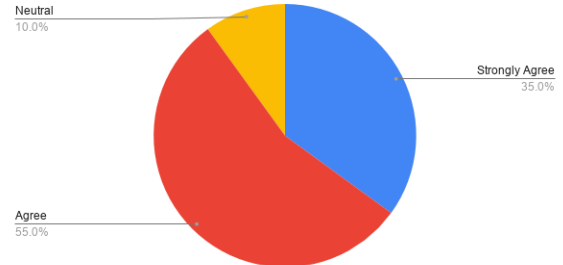


Question 3: I think I could pick out negative and positive peer pressure among classmates and friends.

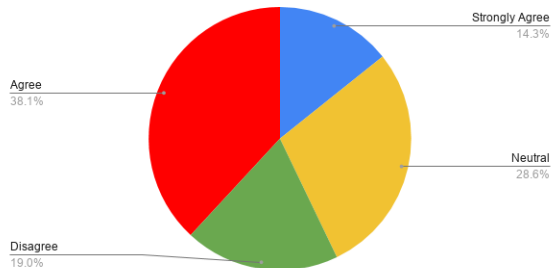
8th Grade Pretest: I think I could pick out negative and positive peer pressure among classmates and friends.



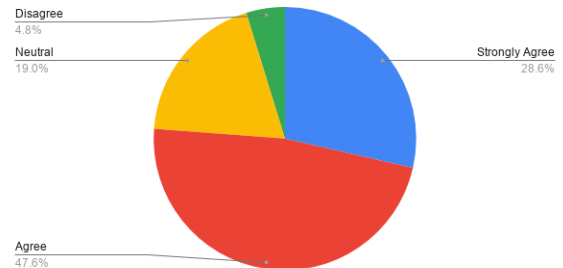
8th Grade Posttest: I think I could pick out negative and positive peer pressure among classmates and friends.



7th Grade Pretest: I think I could pick out negative and positive peer pressure among classmates and friends.

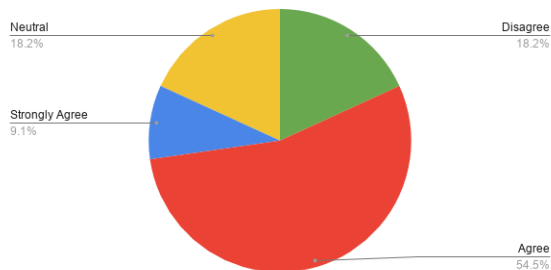


7th Grade Posttest: I think I could pick out negative and positive peer pressure among classmates and friends.

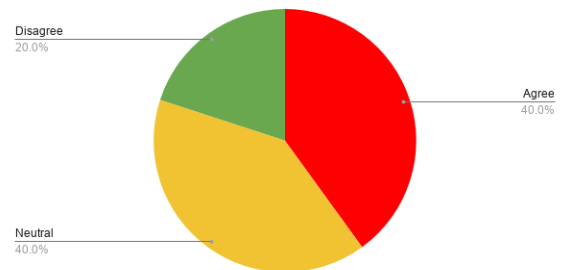


Question 4: I am confident I use my time most effectively.

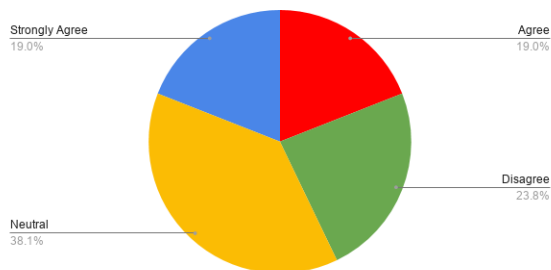
8th Grade Pretest: I am confident I use my time most effectively.



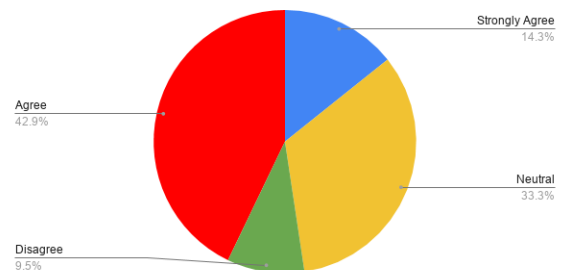
8th Grade Posttest: I am confident I use my time most effectively.



7th Grade Pretest: I am confident I use my time most effectively.

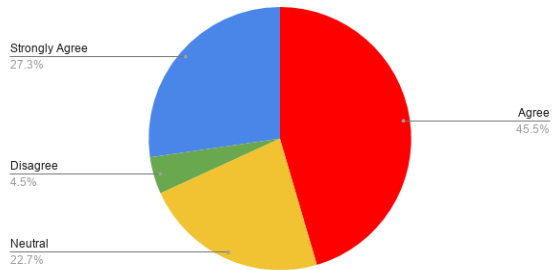


7th Grade Posttest: I am confident I use my time most effectively.

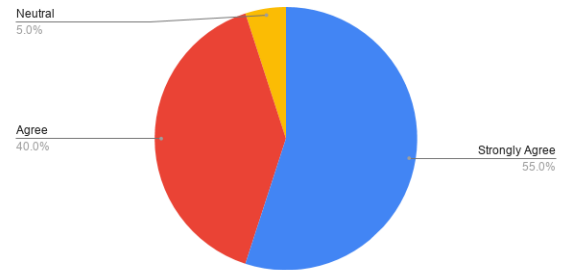


Question 5: I know what to look for in a Christian role model.

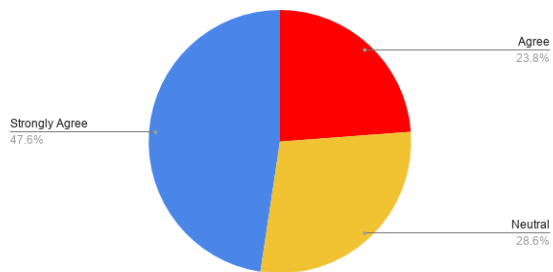
8th Grade Pretest: I know what to look for in a Christian role model.



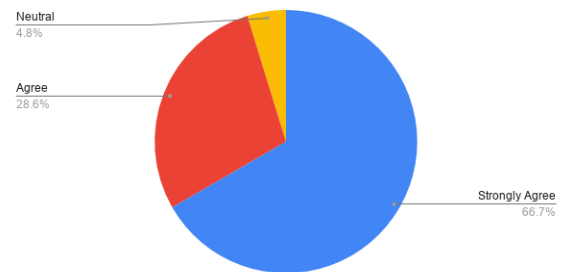
8th Grade Posttest: I know what to look for in a Christian role model.



7th Grade Pretest: I know what to look for in a Christian role model.

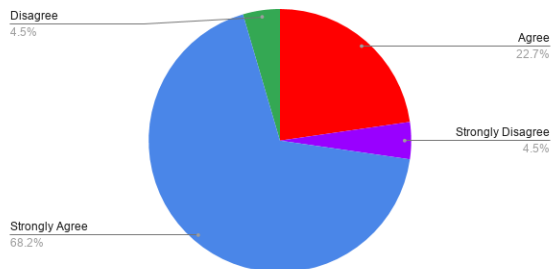


7th Grade Posttest: I know what to look for in a Christian role model.

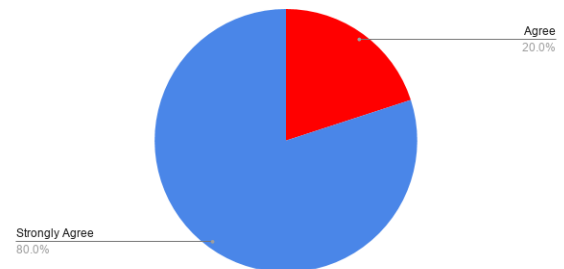


Question 6: I know drugs and alcohol are bad for me to use, and I can explain why they are bad.

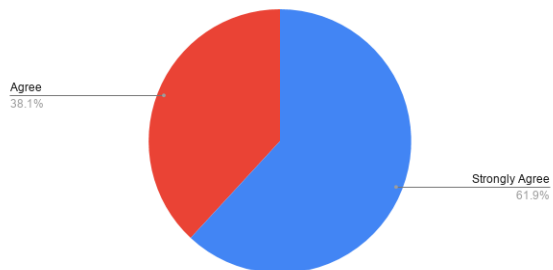
8th Grade Pretest: I know drugs and alcohol are bad for me to use, and I can explain why they are bad.



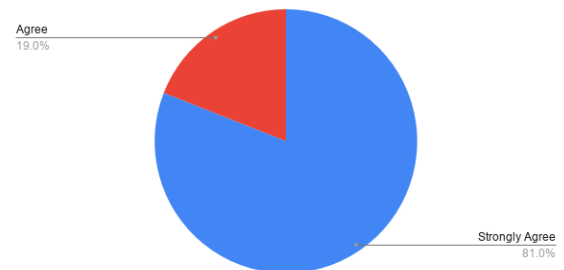
8th Grade Posttest: I know drugs and alcohol are bad for me to use, and I can explain why they are bad.



7th Grade Pretest: I know drugs and alcohol are bad for me to use, and I can explain why they are bad.

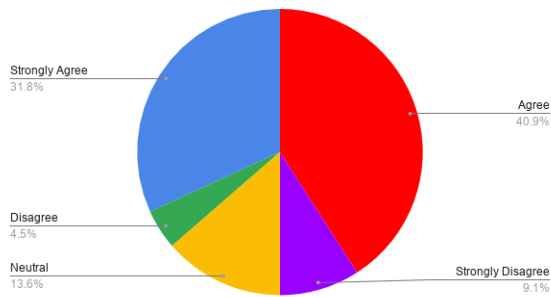


7th Grade Posttest: I know drugs and alcohol are bad for me to use, and I can explain why they are bad.

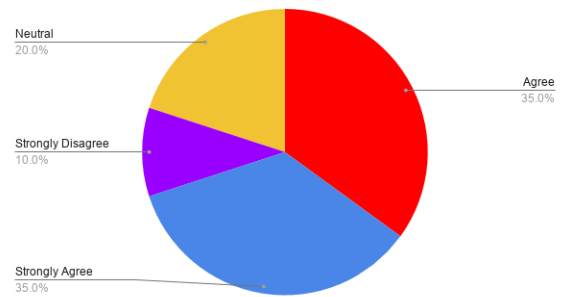


Question 7: I feel connected to my church.

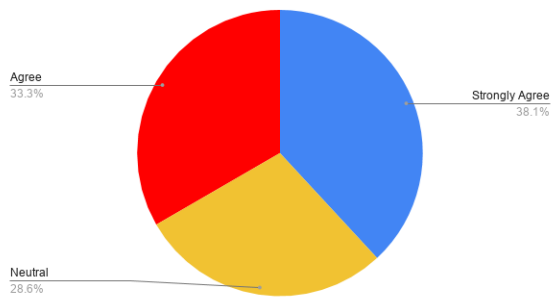
8th Grade Pretest: I feel connected to my church.



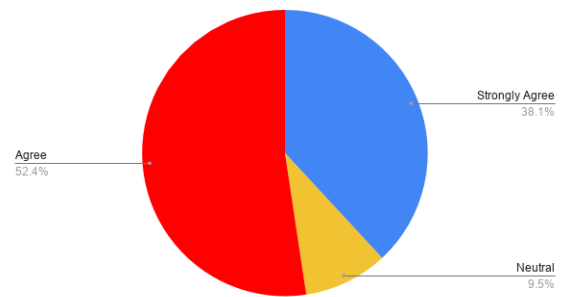
8th Grade Posttest: I feel connected to my church.



7th Grade Pretest: I feel connected to my church.

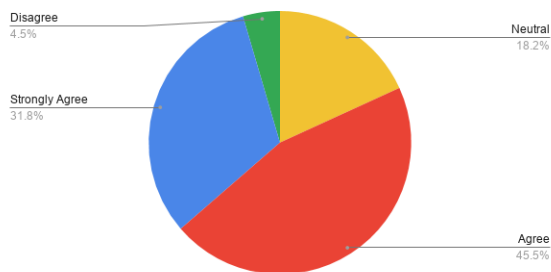


7th Grade Posttest: I feel connected to my church.

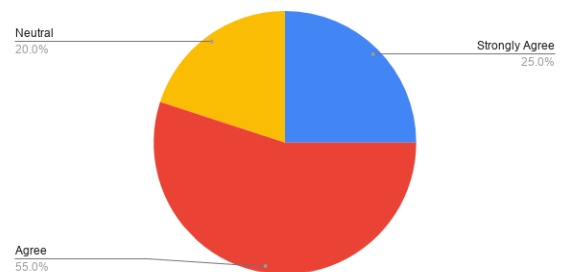


Question 8: I am confident in understanding how to act when there is bullying.

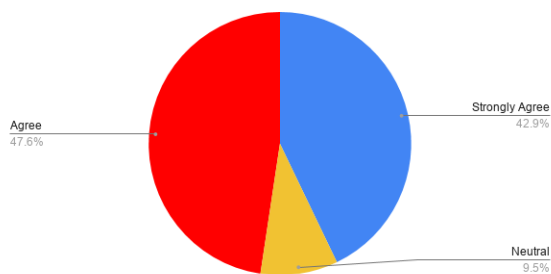
8th Grade Pretest: I am confident in understanding how to act when there is bullying.



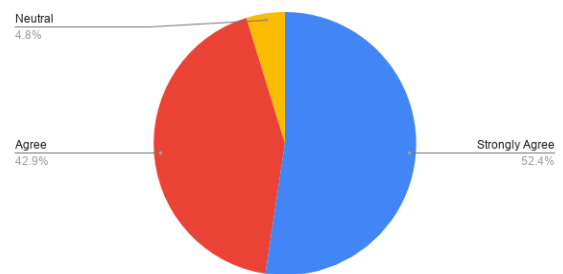
8th Grade Posttest: I am confident in understanding how to act when there is bullying.



7th Grade Pretest: I am confident in understanding of how to act when there is bullying.

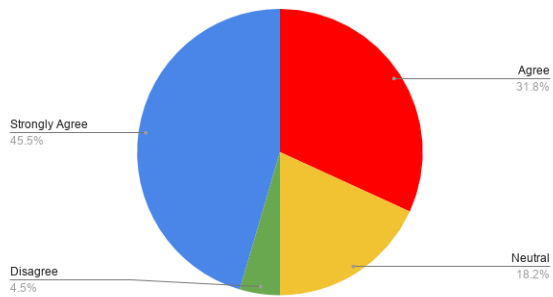


7th Grade Posttest: I am confident in understanding of how to act when there is bullying.

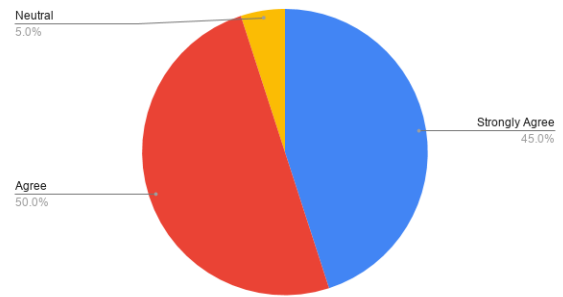


Question 9: I know what mental health is.

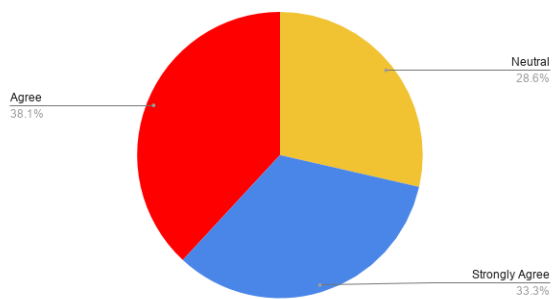
8th Grade Pretest: I know what mental health is.



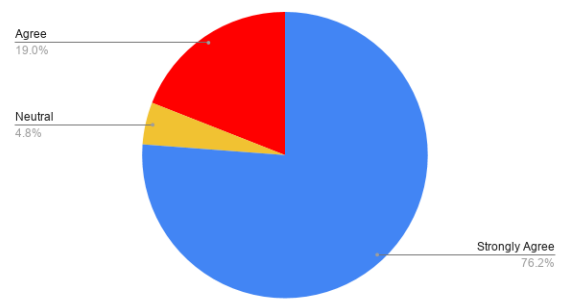
8th Grade Posttest: I know what mental health is.



7th Grade Pretest: I know what mental health is.

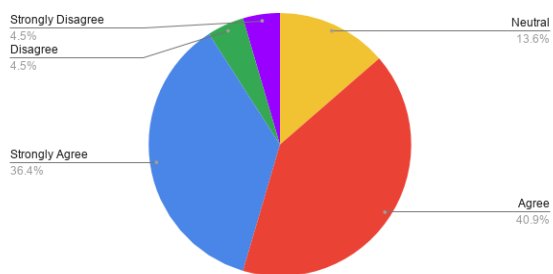


7th Grade Posttest: I know what mental health is.

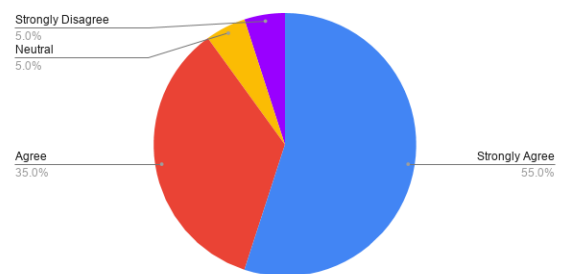


Question 10: I can differ between God's view of sex and the world's view of sex.

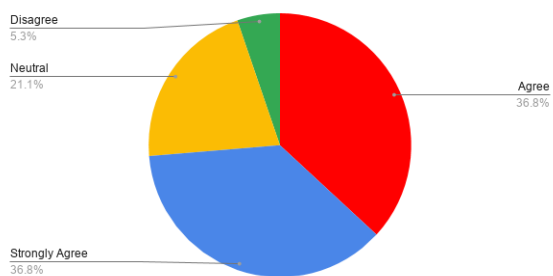
8th Grade Pretest: I can differ between God's view of sex and the world's view of sex.



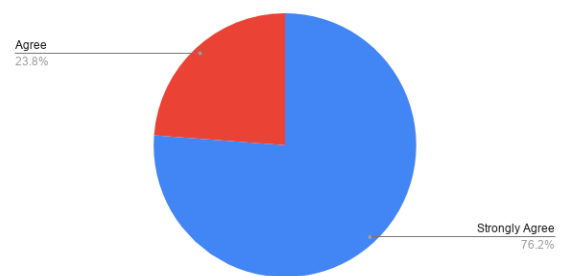
8th Grade Posttest: I can differ between God's view of sex and the world's view of sex.



7th Grade Pretest: I can differ between God's view of sex and the world's view of sex.



7th Grade Posttest: I can differ between God's view of sex and the world's view of sex.



Appendix G: Mid-Unit Check Conversations

Group 1:

1. *What have you learned so far that you think has (or will have) the biggest impact on your faith?*

I think social media will have the biggest impact on my faith because when you are in our age you like to be on your phone a lot and look at things that could be good or not good. It could also affect our time in God's word and homework. Social media can also put dopamine in your brain that makes you want to keep doing something either good or bad.

I agree with that but I think that social media can be used for good sometimes like when Pastor Mike posts on Grace Talks. I think that role models will affect my faith the most because your words and actions could come from who you look up to and follow.

I agree with both of those but I also think that our self esteem can affect our faith a lot because if we think we're ugly and we don't like the way we look than we could think why would God want me.

I agree with all of the above but would also like to add that Peer Pressure can lead to us stopping our faith in God because we can make fun of our question us about why we believe in God and can cause us to question our own faith.

Group 2:

1. *What is the most interesting thing you have learned so far during the first six chapters of our religion unit?*

I found the unit on time management and priorities was really interesting because I thought those things were just basic things we knew we needed to do in order to succeed in any task. I really learned a lot about how your time management and priorities affect the outcome of what you're working on because if you don't plan ahead or do you work first, you might not get everything you need to be done.

I found the lesson on peer pressure interesting, it was interesting to see the amount of peer pressure there is and how it can affect how people act and what they say.

I found both of these interesting, but I also found that the lesson on role models interesting. I didn't realize how much it could affect you in your teenage years. I know now why it is important to have a good role model.

I agree with (Name was taken out) the role model unit was interesting because I have thought about the other aware of how the role model you choose can change your life and it is important to have a role model who you can go to for help that is able to give a good answer right away.

I agree with (Name was taken out) on the peer pressure chapter. It is very interesting to see what a big role in the approval of others play into what we do and how we act. But I also agree with the others when they talk about role models. Like (name was taken out)

said, role models, play such a huge part in our lives by the way we act and the decisions we make.

I would also like to point out that all of these topics interlock, in a way that you can encounter one through the other. An example could be from social media because you have low self-esteem. They are all important.

I agree with (name was taken out) very much, it is very hard to pick just one thing I find so interesting because they all are so insightful. They all cross each other in many ways, while in the body image chapter, we talked about how peer pressure to be like others may happen.

Group 3:

1. *Which of the topics we studied so far do you think teens struggle the most with?*

I think that it would be time management because there are so many fun things to do instead of sitting in your room doing your homework.

Time management is one of the hardest things that teens struggle with because they all are on their phones and talking with people when they can be doing more important things.

I think the biggest problem teens struggle with is probably peer pressure because of FOMO.

I also agree with (name was taken out) because time is a hard thing for lots of people to manage.

I think people struggle with social media the most, because they get caught up in their body image.

I agree with (name was taken out) because I have met many people that have trouble with this daily, and in fact most of my friends back in California had trouble with this issue.

I also agree with (name was taken out) because you might want to do suicide when you start to think about the way that your body looks and how it does not look as good as the other people you look at on social media.

I think people care too much about too many things. If you are trying to do everything, because you care about everything, then you might get overwhelmed.

Appendix H: Final Paper Samples

Sample 1:

When you think about sin in the Bible a few stories might pop into your head. Creation, King David and Bathsheba, maybe even Jonah and the big fish. I decided on Jonah, but instead of his sin of running from God, I'm going to focus on what happened after the city was forgiven.

So we all probably know the story of Jonah, but if you don't here's a recap. Jonah was a prophet for God, he went to towns preaching God's word. One day God went to Jonah and told him to go to the city of Nineveh, and tell them to repent of their sins. Well, you could say Nineveh was the worst city in the country, so instead of doing what God wanted Jonah ran away. Eventually God sent a fish to swallow Jonah, Jonah repented, God forgave him, And Jonah went to Nineveh and preached God's word. Nineveh did repent and were then forgiven by God, but because of this Jonah was angry.

After Nineveh repented and God forgave them, Jonah walked out to the east of the city to see what would happen to it. Nothing happened though, God had forgiven the city and did not destroy them. Jonah 4 verse one says "ut to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry." Jonah became angry at God because he thought that Nineveh deserved to be punished. This sin still shows itself in our world today. We often see people mad because someone was treated in a way we thought they shouldn't be. For example a child will get mad at their parents when their parents forgive their sibling instead of punishing them. Or when their parents punish them when they don't think they did anything wrong.

In this part of the story there is both Law and Gospel, but there is mostly Law. I will start with the very small amount of Gospel. As Jonah was sitting in the desert, God made a leafy plant grow and provide shade for Jonah. Even though he was complaining about God's mercy, God still provided for him. Jonah reacts to this with thankfulness, but once God takes it away, he complains to God that it is better for him to die than to live. The Law in this story is God rebuking Jonah for being angry at his compassion. Jonah does not react well to the Law, he continues to say how it is better for him to die, and how Nineveh should have been punished.

There are a few major takeaways from this part of the story. God knows what's best for people, God can always forgive you if you repent, and God will always provide for his children. There are quite a few ways this could relate to a seventh or eighth grader today, but I think a main one is God's mercy. As an eighth grader myself, I know that there are times when you do stuff that feels unforgivable. This story reminds you twice that God can forgive anything. It shows first when the city of Nineveh was spared from destruction, and second when God still provided for Jonah in the desert. One thing to remember, even if you forget this whole paper, I want you to remember that God always knows best for everyone. God knew that by sending Jonah to Nineveh, he could bring a whole city to faith in him.

In conclusion, no matter what happens, God knows all and forgives all.

Sample 2:

How does pressure from society about belief in Jesus affect us? Do the stories in the bible really demonstrate an example of what we face today? In the story of Peter denying Jesus three times, it shows us the real consequences of guilt and the effects of what society can do to our belief. Everyday we feel pressure to fit in, and the fearful pressure to not be persecuted. Sometimes, we may conform to peer pressure, and give in to it. But we need to learn that we must go to God, and he will help us to go through all of the struggles that peer pressure can do to us.

After that last supper, Jesus told the disciples that they would all betray him during his death and trial. Peter denied this, and told Jesus that he would never betray him, and would be loyal to Jesus through everything. Jesus then said before the rooster crowed, Peter would deny him three times. Later when a crowd came to arrest Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter followed the mob who had Jesus. A servant girl saw Peter and accused him of being with Jesus, but Peter very quickly denied it. Later, he was once again accused of being with Jesus, but denied it. Lastly, someone said that they saw Peter with Jesus, but Peter once again denied it. At that moment, a rooster crowed, and Peter wept. Once Jesus rose from the dead, Peter went out to meet him. Jesus asked Peter if he loved him three times, and each time Peter said yes. Finally, Jesus told Peter to follow him, and that Peter would be in heaven with him one day.

Peter's sin was that he gave into the peer pressure of the world. He did not want to be persecuted, so he denied that he was a follower of Jesus. This sin can still be seen in the world today. Some examples are people do not want to be made fun of, others because they are scared of what the world will think of them. It can be related to any form of peer pressure, in the fact that they are scared of what people will think of them. Peer pressure has evolved into a much larger form. We have so many more opportunities that it can be shown in social media, television, and your friends. We think more of what people are going to think about us.

The law in the story is that Jesus told Peter that he will deny him three times. Furthermore, it was the look that Jesus gave Peter. Jesus knew that Peter would betray him, but Peter thought that he would never do that. The gospel in the story, is that Jesus forgave Peter and reassured him that he would be in heaven. Peter reacted to the law by weeping. He was so saddened by the sin he committed, that he wept. Peter reacted to the gospel by living out his life the way God intended it to be, he spread the word to many nations and became a great disciple and preacher.

The main takeaway from Peter denying Jesus, is that despite all of the sins we have committed, Jesus still loves us. Jesus died on the cross to forgive all of our sins, and now we are forgiven and will be in heaven with him. This lesson can be useful to 7th and 8th graders in the fact that if we are being peer pressured into doing anything, we can know that Jesus loves us no matter what. If we have sinned, and given into peer pressure we can repent and be confident that we will be forgiven. If there is one thing to know, it is that Jesus loves us, and that because he loves us, we are forgiven. When we commit a sin, we are forgiven and we can know that we will be in heaven with Jesus one day.

In conclusion, when we are facing peer pressure, just as Peter did, we should know that God loves us. He loves us so much that he sent his son to die for us, and take away our sins. Now we are forgiven, and we can be sure that we will be in heaven with

Jesus one day. Now we can be sure that we do not have to be afraid of the society and what they think, because we have reassurance in Jesus.

Appendix I: Devotion Project Graded Rubrics

*Devotion Project*4 **DEVOTION ONE (6)**

Topic and the message are consistent throughout the devotions

Law and Gospel are both present within the devotions

Introduction and conclusion offer a hook to the devotion and close the devotion

we can show forgiveness as well

we receive heaven

Jesus said we cause he loved us.

4 **DEVOTION TWO (6)**

Topic and the message are consistent throughout the devotions

Law and Gospel are both present within the devotions

Introduction and conclusion offer a hook to the devotion and close the devotion

God forgives our sins

great reminder that we should forgive others

ended w/prayer

gave personal example of forgiveness tied in the Lord's prayer

5 **DEVOTION RECORDINGS (6)**

Message is clearly articulated in the recording

The recording is able to be watched and listened to

The recording is done in a professional manner

Lights were distracting in the background

video recording was a bit off of the speaker

stuttered a few times in the video

spoke softly into the camera

2 **MECHANICALLY SOUND (2)**

The devotions have been checked to be free from grammatical and mechanical errors.

15 TOTAL POINTS EARNED / 20 POINTS

The two were about forgiveness, but didn't really tie together as a devotion series

gave the passage John 3:16

Jacob stole birthrite from Esau

how to show forgiveness

closed with prayer

Topic of forgiveness

had gospel

missing the law aspect

and some law & gospel

Matthew 18:21-25

how many times to forgive

forgiveness

Devotion Project

6 DEVOTION ONE (6)

Topic and the message are consistent throughout the devotions

Law and Gospel are both present within the devotions

Introduction and conclusion offer a hook to the devotion and close the devotion

5 DEVOTION TWO (6)

Topic and the message are consistent throughout the devotions

Law and Gospel are both present within the devotions

Introduction and conclusion offer a hook to the devotion and close the devotion

6 DEVOTION RECORDINGS (6)

Message is clearly articulated in the recording

The recording is able to be watched and listened to

The recording is done in a professional manner

2 MECHANICALLY SOUND (2)

The devotions have been checked to be free from grammatical and mechanical errors.

Devotions were
well written

0 POINTS

Armor of God

Great ending/discussion question.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob examples

→ set up the next video

Adam + Eve sin → Romans 6:23

the promise of the Son of God

encouragement to spread the gospel message

Paul example

Armor of God

Good review of the day before

Awsome gospel message. Add a little Law as well.

talks about Peter's faith, Joshua's faith

Jesus' temptations

Ephesians 2:8-9

saved by grace

Jesus destroyed sin, death, devil

Could clearly understand the speakers

very clear and audible videos

Great Intro pages

Awsome video editing!

Nice closing music

Devotions connected well around a theme to create that devotion series feel.