

00:00 – Students arrive (5-10min)

- Name tags and mingle
 - *Hint: It's a great idea to have some snacks available at this time, and a couple of adults around to pass them out!*

00:10 – **Gather and Opening** (5-10min)

- M.C. introduces him/herself and the rest of the team follows. (*It helps to make it goofy by saying favorite ice cream or deodorant or something silly along those lines.*)
- Briefly introduce the retreat.
 - ***"Today we are going to learn and talk about freedom and sacrifice! I encourage you guys to really pay attention to the talks, let go and have fun during the activities, and really share and get involved in your small groups. This will be a really fun day if you let it be!"***

00:20 – **Small groups** (5-10min)

- Say, *"We are going to do a quick small group, just so you can get to know each other before we really get into the retreat."*
- Refer to **"Guidelines for Small Group Leaders"**
 - Remember, the main point is to just get them comfortable with one another and you.
 - This should "break the ice"!

00:30 – **Game Time** (10-15min)

- ***Two Truths and a Lie***
 - Refer to game sheet for instructions

00:45 – **First Talk** (10min)

- Refer to Talk Sheet **"Conscience and Freedom"**
- Make sure you are interactive and engaging. *Do not read directly off the talk sheet for the whole time.*

00:55 – **Saint Story or Testimony** (3-5min)

- Refer to **"Saint Stories"** or use a *personal testimony*

1:00 – Bathroom Break (3-5min)

1:05 – **Small Groups** (15min)

- Refer to **"Small Group Questions"** for assistance.
- It may still be a lot of getting to know one another. Don't worry if it is still not very deep. The last one should be the deepest.

1:20 – **Game Time** (10-15min)

- ***Ships and Sailors***
 - Refer to game sheet for instructions

1:35 – **Second Talk** (20-25min)

- Refer to talk sheet “**Sacrifice**”
- Make sure you are interactive and engaging. *Do not read directly off the talk sheet for the whole time.*
- Draw on previous things that have happened that day!

2:00 – **Saint Story** or **Testimony** (3-5min)

- Refer to “**Saint Stories**” or use a *personal testimony*

2:05 – **Small Groups** (15-20min)

- Refer to “**Small Group Questions**” for assistance.
- Engage students in discussion and try to draw them deeper into the call to take **Courage in Christ**.

2:25 – LUNCH (45 min)

- **Have the boys let the girls go first and bring it back to the idea of sacrifice.**
- Interact with them and continue that bond! *In other words, don't hide out during lunch....eat lunch **with** your small group.*
- Have them use the restroom

3:00 – Fun Activity (15min)

- Students may need some free time to walk around and talk with each other. Some groups may need “regulated recreation” to get them moving. Do whatever your group needs.

3:15 – **Brief Sharing on Importance of Prayer** (5 min)

- Refer to talk sheet “**Importance of Prayer**”
- Keep it simple.

3:20 – **Prayer Time** (20 min)

- Have them pray though and follow along with the **Prayer Sheet**
- Write down times in their life where they needed courage and strength from the Lord to carry on, and ways to build up that strength for future struggles

3:40 – **Encouragement Talk** (3-5 min)

- Refer to talk sheet “**Encouragement Talk**”

3:45 – Large group discussion/questions (10 min)

- Engage the large group in dialogue about what people learned and liked about this experience.

3:55 – Closing Prayer

- Hand out “**Prayer for Future Spouse**” prayer and pray it with them.
- Close with a **Glory Be**.

Conscience and Freedom

Objective:

This talk is to help the young people become aware of their conscience and the important role it plays in the development of who we are and who we will become. It also is to help distinguish the difference between the societal view of freedom as “freedom to do whatever I want” contrasted to true freedom, “freedom to do what is right.”

Main Idea:

True freedom is the ability to follow our conscience, guided by the Holy Spirit, to do what is right.

Introducing this talk: Use a similar story to build up to the concept...

“I am free at last, free at last! Thank God Almighty I am free at last!”

Who has heard that song of joy before? This was a victory song, a song of praise sung by the emancipated slaves. They were no longer under the oppression of an earthly master, but were free! But what is freedom? We will talk about that in a few minutes, but let’s take a look at something St. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans.

*“What then shall we say? Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound? **Of course not!** How can we who died to sin yet live in it?”*

Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.

For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God.

Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as [being] dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, sin must not reign over your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires. And do not present the parts of your bodies to sin as weapons for wickedness, but present yourselves to God as raised from the dead to life and the parts of your bodies to God as weapons for righteousness.

For sin is not to have any power over you, since you are not under the law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Of course not! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads

to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, although you were once slaves of sin, you have become obedient from the heart to the pattern of teaching to which you were entrusted. Freed from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your nature. For just as you presented the parts of your bodies as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness for lawlessness, so now present them as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. But what profit did you get then from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit that you have leads to sanctification, and its end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6).

“Freed from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness.” Before we talk about freedom though, let’s talk about something called our conscience.

Key Points:

1. What is your conscience?

- This is not the same thing as being conscious, this is that “little voice in the back of your head” that tells you when you are about to do something wrong.
- Part of it is built into our human nature, natural law. But a conscience must be developed and molded so that it can guide you down the path of holiness.
- A healthy and developed conscience helps us not to become slaves to anything of this world, so we are truly free to choose Christ in every moment.

2. What is freedom? (according to society)

- Freedom is the ability to do whatever I want, whenever I want, without and consequences.
 - o Does that even sound realistic?
 - No, it is extremely immature and childish
- If we buy into that notion of freedom, then where does my freedom end and yours begin?
 - o Can I steal your stuff because I want it?
 - o Can I kill because someone is in the way?
 - o What about taking an innocent life through abortion because I wanted the “freedom” to have sex outside of the designs God had for it, and have no consequences?
- **Freedom cannot impede on another person’s freedom;** therefore with style of freedom will always fall short, because someone is always lessened and loses freedom as a result.

3. What is true freedom?

- True freedom is the ability to do what is right!
- We read that chapter from Romans earlier and it talks about how we are now slaves to righteousness.
- We are free because we are able to be how God created us to be and to choose Him.
- This decision also encourages others to be free and allows that instead of encroaching on their freedom.

4. Conclusion

Just like Martin Luther King, I too have a dream! A dream for true freedom, not only from a slave owner, but rather from sin and death! Discipline and practicing virtue help form our conscience so that we do not easily become slaves to things of this world. We want to keep ourselves free so we can follow the path of righteousness laid out before us. A path that may not always be easy, but at the end is the prize; a prize to which nothing else could ever compare in the slightest. A place where nothing else matters.

Sacrifice

Objective:

This talk is to challenge the young people to think about sacrifice as having a purpose. There are so many hard times and roadblocks in life, but if we unite that suffering with Christ's suffering, it can be used for good instead of just an annoyance.

Main Idea:

Sacrifice is a gift from God for us to be able to love a little bit more like Him by putting others before ourselves.

Introducing this talk: Use a similar story to build up to the concept...

How many of you in here have a brother or sister?

How many of you ever get annoyed at your brother or sister?

We all have annoyances stressed in our lives every day. They are frustrating and can ruin your whole day if you let it. Or you can decide that you are not going to let it ruin your day and offer it up. Now I'm sure most of you have heard that phrase before "offer it up." People often use it as an excuse to avoid talking about a situation or something like that, however I truly mean it, offer it up. Give that stress away and stay in the joy of the Lord.

Here is a quote from St Claude de la Colombiere, and it is a little heavy at times, but try to follow. *"There is no one who does not experience a hundred small annoyances every day...our whole lives are made up of incidents of this kind, occurring ceaselessly from one minute to another, and producing a host of involuntary feelings of dislike and aversion, envy, fear and impatiences to trouble the serenity of our minds. We let an incautious word slip out and wish we had not said it; someone says something we find offensive...our work is not going as well as we would wish...these are not occasions for practicing heroic virtue but they can be a means of acquiring it if we wish. If we were careful to offer all these petty annoyances to God and accept them as being ordered by his providence, we would soon be in a position to support the greatest misfortunes that can happen to us, besides at the same time insensibly drawing close to intimate union with God."* Offering those annoyances up not only bring us closer to God, (our ultimate goal) but it helps us let go and take that yoke off our shoulders; as Christ said *"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."*(Matthew 11:28-30)

Key Points:

1. Short Catechesis on suffering and the Passion.

- Reflect through Christ's passion somehow
 - o Stations of the Cross
 - o Reading the Passion
- John 15:13 *"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."*
- **Remember that our Catholic Vision of Love is Love Hung on a Cross...**
- It is a huge sacrifice for us to die for one another, but for GOD to die for us is ineffable; indescribable.

2. True love requires sacrifice

- I can't remember who said it, but someone used to share this quote with me: *"Sacrifice without love is unbearable, but love without sacrifice is impossible."*
 - o Sacrifice is not easy, and in and of itself, there is no joy or happiness.
 - Only when it is done out of love and united to Christ's sacrifice in one way or another does it have true purpose and merit.
- Love requires you to put others first.
 - o To put the beloved first...
 - o This is why you see a lot of men letting their wives or their girlfriends go to receive the Eucharist before them, because they are honoring her and putting her before themselves.
 - o This is obvious in parental love as well

3. Chastity preserves real love

- "chastity": **Chastity is a state of heart, mind, and action which reflects appropriate expressions of affection for a relationship.** Chastity protects and preserves real love from a fractured world, from an attack on love, and an attack on humanity.
- Chastity is about real love, patient, kind, unselfish love that requires a strong heart, a heart of service, a heart that is disciplined, a heart that knows God.
- Chastity is what we are called to live in all of our relationships!
- Being chaste allows us to concentrate on what is important and avoid using other people. **Chastity says, "I will be patient, I will be pure, and I respect you."**
- Chastity is the ability to choose to live as people of integrity and freedom, in all of our relationships, and to never settle for the standard of a fallen world.
- And Love, as a sincere gift of self, is what gives the life and freedom of the person their truest meaning.

When St. Paul wrote, "Love is patient, love is kind..." did he realize how hard that would be? When he wrote, "And these three remain, Faith, Hope, and Love, the greatest of these is love" did he know how it would speak to my heart, even today? When St. Paul spoke of Faith, he meant setting my mind on God. When he spoke of Hope, he meant setting my sight on God. And when He spoke of Love, he meant setting my heart on God. Those theological virtues are for everyone—not just for saints or books!

- The truth is: When a couple is unchaste, it reduces a relationship to the physical expressions of affection only, a physical gratification, and can confuse the emotions and actually prevent the couple from being free to enter in, more deeply, to real love.

4. The Eucharist

- We have the amazing opportunity to participate in the greatest sacrifice, the greatest expression of love, every time we go to mass.
- Not only did Christ lay down His life for us, but he makes Himself available to us physically in the Eucharist, to receive Him and be filled with His love and grace.

5. Conclusion

Sacrifice is not easy and a lot of times it is hard to see the reward. It is a truly selfless act, not seeking recognition or reward. It is simply an act of love for the sake of love. An act of Charity... "the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God."(CCC 1822).

Chastity is counter-cultural. When we practice and live out the virtues, we have control of our passions and desires, and we are truly free to choose the good.

The more we accept chastity as our way of life, the more people around us will know that the Holy Spirit dwells within us and that we are free!

Come on, we don't have to settle for counterfeits any more, we don't have to live beneath our dignity. We can really be free.

I really encourage you all to embrace sacrifice and use it as a tool to love others better and grow closer to Christ.

The Importance of Prayer

Objective:

This talk is brief and clear—before sending youth into prayer, they need some guidelines on “the what and how to”.

Main Idea:

Prayer sustains us and is our communication with God.

Key Points:

1. If you made a list of ways to build a good friendship, what would it include?

- *Making time for each other, aka “doing stuff”*
- *Sharing similar interests*
- *Talking to each other AND listening to each other*

2. A classic definition of prayer is:

“Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God” (CCC 2590)

In other words, it’s more than just what we say or do—it’s about what we think and feel. It’s like a good friendship.

3. Just as friendship is more about affection than about knowing everything, prayer is a matter of the heart—when we allow ourselves to open up our hearts in friendship to God, we can hear God’s voice within us saying “I love you!”

4. JUST DO IT....when you really want to get to know someone, it is easy to get caught up in worrying about saying the right words and doing the right things. You can’t “mess up” prayer...God knows you and loves you too much! So here’s a simple way to start:

(Pass out the Prayer Sheets and briefly go over the following)

- **Acknowledge:** *Take some time to acknowledge what is going on in your heart and mind right now. There is nothing going on in your heart that God is not interested in, so just take some time to quiet down.*
- **Relate:** *Now share what’s going on in your heart and mind with God. This is the ‘you talk to God’ part. You can do this by writing it down, or speaking to God in the silence of your heart. If you are thankful, thank Him...if you are scared, tell Him about it...if you are happy, tell Him why. The most important part of this is that you are honest with Him; don’t just tell Him what you think He wants to hear...be authentic and share with Him like you would with a friend.*
- **Receive:** *Now is the time to listen and receive whatever God desires to give you in response to what you have shared with Him. If you have fully shared your heart, you are in a place to listen and receive. This can be difficult because it requires us to wait and sometimes learn to hear His voice! Try sitting for a few moments and then read this passage: Matthew 11:28*
“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”
- **Jesus invites us to come to Him with everything!** *The yoke that Jesus is talking about actually went over the animals, connecting them together, and giving them the power of **more than one** to pull something heavy (like a plow) through the field....Why would Jesus invite us to this? What would Jesus’ prayer time have been like? Did He totally trust the Father with everything? What types of things would He have prayed for? What do you think the Father told Jesus in His prayer time? What do you think the Father and Jesus want to say to you right now?*
- **Respond:** *This is a time to respond to what you have just received. Responding in this way should be natural, just as it’s natural to say thank you when someone gives you a gift....you may also want to respond in other ways:*

Encouragement Talk

Objective:

This talk is short and upbeat—the final encouragement in living this Catholic Vision of Love.

Main Idea:

Young people can make all the difference in the world.

Key Points:

Today was great, right?

1. What is true freedom?

- Freedom isn't the ability to do whatever we want, whenever we want. It's being able to choose the good, in all things, at all times, without our passions, emotions, feelings dictating our actions.
- True freedom is the ability to do what is right!
- We read that chapter from Romans earlier and it talks about how we are now slaves to righteousness. We are free because we are able to be how God created us to be and to choose Him.
- This decision also encourages others to be free and allows that instead of encroaching on their freedom.

2. Conclusion

Just like Martin Luther King, I too have a dream! A dream for true freedom, not only from a slave owner, but rather from sin and death! Discipline and practicing virtue help form our conscience so that we do not easily become slaves to things of this world. We want to keep ourselves free so we can follow the path of righteousness laid out before us. A path that may not always be easy, but at the end is the prize; a prize to which nothing else could ever compare in the slightest. A place where nothing else matters.

Young people can make all the difference in the world.

Let no one have contempt for your youth,

but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity

1 Timothy 4:12

God has something particular in mind for you and for every person you meet, are friends with, go to school with, and will date. So let's pray for them together with the Catholic Vision of Love prayer for spouses...

Guidelines for Facilitating Small Groups

The facilitator's role is to help a group to its best thinking and sharing. A good facilitator is helpful when a group is trying to deal with new or difficult issues. If you accept the role of facilitator you must be neutral. You should also use the following techniques.

Begin with Prayer & Ice breaker

Introduce yourself as the facilitator and lay the groundwork for sharing by saying ***"We are here tonight to share, not to judge or gossip. Please respect yourself and the other people in this group by not sharing what other people say outside of the group. What you say is important—so we will all listen to you."*** Ask the other members of the group to go around and share their name and something about themselves (like favorite ice cream flavor, or deodorant brand, etc). Begin with a simple prayer--as simple as ***"Lord, we invite you to join us today in this group and guide our words and thoughts to help us grow closer to you."***

Watch group vibes: If people seem bored or inattentive, you may have to speed up the pace of the meeting. If people seem tense because of unvoiced disagreements, you may have to bring concerns out into the open.

Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak: Invite quiet people to speak. If necessary, use the clock: ***"We have ten minutes left. I think we should hear from people who haven't spoken for a while."***

Another way to get quiet people to speak is to initiate a round, in which you move around the table, with everyone getting a few minutes to present their views.

Encourage open discussion: Try to encourage people to speak up if they seem reluctant to disagree with a speaker: ***"On difficult issues, people disagree. Does anyone have a different point of view?"***

Another way to encourage open discussion is to ask participants to avoid using critical language for a period of time.

Draw people out with open-ended questions: Open-ended questions require more than a yes / no answer. Some examples: ***"We seem to be having trouble here. What do you think we should do?"***
"Could you say more about that?" ***"What do you mean when you say . . . ?"***

Inject humor: Humor is one of the best ways of improving the tone of meetings. It makes meetings seem like friendly get-togethers. It's ok for small group time to be light and fun too!

Paraphrase: When you paraphrase, you try to restate briefly the point that someone has just made: ***"Let me see if I'm understanding you . . ."*** If paraphrasing doesn't convince a person that he or she has been heard, you may have to repeat what was said verbatim.



8th Grade Retreat
Small Group Questions

Please note that these questions are simply a guideline if you are having trouble coming up with questions within your small group.

Feel free to use them or come up with your own questions especially in the first small group meeting.

Remember that if a student says something that indicates that they or someone else is in danger, it is your responsibility to report it to someone in authority.

Opening small group

1. What is your name and if you could be any animal which one would you be and why?
2. What are your expectations for today? Any fears/worries, or joys/excitements?
3. How would you describe your relationship with God? Using a scale of 1-10 and explain why. Where would you like it to be, and how can you get there?

Small group after talk #1

1. What stuck out to you most in the talk and why?
2. What is your conscience? How can you still be forming it today? (both negatively and positively)
3. What does society say about freedom and how can that be so dangerous?
4. What is true freedom? Have you ever had to stand up for true freedom? Explain.

Small group after talk #2

1. What stuck out to you most in the talk and why?
2. What does sacrifice mean?
3. Name a time someone has sacrificed for you and how you felt that they cared enough to make that sacrifice for you.
4. Name a time when you made a sacrifice for someone and how you felt.
5. What are some ways you can love others through sacrifice? How can you sacrifice and love better? (i.e. not complaining or looking for attention or a reward)

St. Augustine

Feast Day: August 28

Born: 354 :: **Died:** 430

St. Augustine was born in Tagaste in modern Algeria. This famous son of St. Monica spent many years living a wicked life and in false beliefs. He was one of the most intelligent persons who ever lived.

Augustine was brought up in a Christian atmosphere by his mother. But he became so proud and bad that in the end he could not see or understand holy truths anymore.

His mother Monica prayed daily for her son's conversion. The marvelous sermons of St. Ambrose made their impact too. Finally, Augustine became convinced that Christianity was the true religion.

Yet he did not become a Christian then, because he thought he could never live a pure life. Then one day, he heard about two men who had suddenly changed and became good Christians after reading the life of St. Anthony of the Desert.

Augustine felt ashamed. "What are we doing?" he cried to his friend Alipius. "Unlearned people are taking heaven by force. Yet we, with all our knowledge, are so weak that we keep rolling around in the mud of our sins!"

Full of bitter sorrow, Augustine went into the garden and prayed, "How much longer, Lord? Why don't I stop committing sins now?" Just then he heard a child singing, "Take up and read!"

Thinking that God wanted him to hear those words, he picked up the Bible and opened it. His eyes fell on St. Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 13. It was just what Augustine needed. Paul says to stop living bad lives and to live like Jesus. That did it! From then on, Augustine began a new life.

He was baptized and ordained a priest and later became a bishop. He was a famous Catholic writer and started the Augustinian order. He became one of the greatest saints who ever lived.

On the wall of his room, he had the following sentence written in large letters: "Here we do not speak evil of anyone." St. Augustine corrected strong false teachings, lived a simple life and cared for the poor.

He preached very often, and prayed with great feeling right up until his death. "Too late have I loved you," he once cried to God. But Augustine spent the rest of his life in loving God and leading others to love him, too. ¹

Note: Bring it back to freedom being our ability to do what is right and how his conscience helped his see the right path, even after he had been doing wrong things for so long.

¹ http://www.holyspiritinteractive.net/kids/saints/0828_augustine.asp

St. Maximilian Kolbe

Feast Day: August 14
Born: 1894 :: **Died:** 1941

Raymond Kolbe was born in Poland. When he was just a teenager, he joined the Franciscan order and took the name Maximilian. Maximilian loved his work and enjoyed studying to become a priest, and he especially loved the Blessed Mother.

Before he became a priest, he started the Militia of Mary Immaculate or the Immaculata Movement devoted to Our Lady.

Then when he took his vows to become a priest he added "Mary" to his name. Father Maximilian Mary knew that the world which was so full of sin, needed their Heavenly Mother to guide and protect them.

He started a magazine called "The Knight of the Immaculata" so that more people would know about Mother Mary. He and his Franciscan priests published two monthly newsletters that were sent to people around the world.

The Mother of God blessed Father Maximilian's work. He built a large center in Poland. This center was called "City of the Immaculate."

In about fifteen years, a large community of eight hundred Franciscans lived there and worked hard to make the love of Mary known. Father Kolbe also started another City of the Immaculate in Nagasaki, Japan and yet another one in India.

In 1938, the Nazis invaded the Polish City of the Immaculate. They stopped the wonderful work going on there. In 1941, the Nazis arrested Father Kolbe. They sentenced him to hard manual labor at Auschwitz.

Three months after he arrived at Auschwitz a prisoner managed to escape. The Nazis became very angry and decided to punish the rest of the prisoners.

They decided to choose ten prisoners and put them in a bunker without food or water so that they would starve to death. All the prisoners stood straight, while ten men were pulled out of line.

One prisoner they chose was a married man with a family. He begged and pleaded to be spared for the sake of his children. Father Kolbe, who was listening, felt deeply moved and decided to help that suffering prisoner. He stepped forward and asked the commander if he could take the man's place. The commander agreed.

Father Kolbe and the other prisoners were sent into the bunker and they remained alive without food or water for many days. One by one, as they died, Father Kolbe helped and comforted them. He was the last to die on August 14, 1941.²

Note: St. Maximilian Kolbe sacrificed his life so that that man could be with his family. His sacrifice kept that family together, at least for a little while longer. True selfless love.

² http://www.holyspiritinteractive.net/kids/saints/0814_kolbe.asp

Two Truths and a Lie

Instructions:

- Ask all players to arrange themselves in a circle.
- Instruct each player to think of three statements about themselves.
- **Two must be true statements, and one must be false.**
- For each person, he or she shares the three statements (in any order) to the group.

The goal of the icebreaker game is to determine which statement is false.

The group votes on which one they feel is a lie, and at the end of each round, the person reveals which one was the lie.

Variations:

“Two Truths and a Dream Wish.” –

Instead of telling a lie, a person says a wish.

That is, something that is not true — yet something that the person wishes to be true. For example, someone that has never been to Europe might say: “I often travel to Europe for vacation.” This interesting spin on the icebreaker can often lead to unexpected, fascinating results, as people often share touching wishes about themselves.¹

¹ <http://www.icebreakers.ws/get-to-know-you/two-truths-and-a-lie.html>

Ships and Sailors

**Note: You can use whatever commands you like best, or come up with some on your own*

Instructions:

- Assign one person to be the "Captain."
- The role of the Captain is call out the actions and dismiss the players who don't do the actions quick enough or who break from character.
- Once the captain calls an action, each player has 3-4 seconds to start performing the action. If they don't find a group fast enough or perform the right action, they are out of the game.

Here is an explanation of each of the actions...

- **"Captain's Coming!":** *Everyone stands at "attention" (in a salute), and they can't move from this position until the caller says, "At Ease!"* If they laugh or break from the attention, they are dismissed.
- **"To the ship!":** *Players run to the right.*
- **"To the shore!":** *Players run to the left.*

(for an added bonus be sure to point the right direction the first few times and then begin to point the opposite occasionally. You will be surprised how many go the way you point instead of the right direction)

- **Man Overboard!:** One person drops to one knee the other stands behind them, puts a hand on their shoulder. Both scan the ocean for the overboard man
- **Crows Nest!:** Three players stand backs to each other and lock arms at the elbows to form the crows nest.
- **Mess Table!:** Four players squat in a circle like sitting at table and pretend to eat like they haven't eaten in days. Tell them to make really loud eating sounds like "YUM YUM YUM YUM YUM!"
- **Walk the Plank!:** Five people stand in a single file row hands on the shoulders of person in front of them
- **3 men rowing:** 3 players. Get in a line and pretend to row a boat while singing "row row row your boat".
- **4 men pointing north:** 4 players. All get into a circle and point up.
- **Sea Sick:** 1 player. Pretend to throw up.
- **Beached Whale:** 1 player. Lays on the ground while acting like a beached whale and making weird sounds.
- **Hit the deck!:** fall to the floor on your stomach²

² http://www.teampedia.net/wiki/index.php?title=Captain%27s_Coming!

Let no one have contempt for your youth,

but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity

1 Timothy 4:12

Acknowledge: Take some time to acknowledge what is going on in your heart and mind right now. There is nothing going on in your heart that God is not interested in, so just take some time to quiet down.

Relate: Now share what's going on in your heart and mind with God. This is the 'you talk to God' part. You can do this by writing it down, or speaking to God in the silence of your heart. If you are thankful, thank Him...if you are scared, tell Him about it...if you are happy, tell Him why. The most important part of this is that you are honest with Him; don't just tell Him what you think He wants to hear...be authentic and share with Him like you would with a friend.

Receive: Now is the time to listen and receive whatever God desires to give you in response to what you have shared with Him. If you have fully shared your heart, you are in a place to listen and receive. This can be difficult because it requires us to wait and sometimes learn to hear His voice! Try sitting for a few moments and then read this passage: **Matthew 11:28**

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

Jesus invites us to come to Him with everything! The yoke that Jesus is talking about actually went over the animals, connecting them together, and giving them the power of **more than one** to pull something heavy (like a plow) through the field...Why would Jesus invite us to this? What would Jesus' prayer time have been like? Did He totally trust the Father with everything? What types of things would He have prayed for? What do you think the Father told Jesus in His prayer time? What do you think the Father and Jesus want to say to you right now?

You might want to read other scriptures at this time as well...

Respond: This is a time to respond to what you have just received. Responding in this way should be natural, just as it's natural to say thank you when someone gives you a gift....you may also want to respond in other ways:

What are some practical ways that you can sacrifice for the glory of God?



My Prayer for Future Spouse

My prayer for you is this: That you would wait upon the Lord.
That you wouldn't give out premature emotion and you wouldn't get so
caught up in the chase that you forget who's at the finish line.

I pray that you would keep yourself pure...
in action, mind, and word...
that when you stumble you would get back up and
make sure to watch out for the block that tripped you up.

I pray that your heart would be protected and
yet you would live with everything you have...
that you would understand the true love that
Jesus means for us ALL to have.

I pray for wisdom on choices that will affect us both in the future.

I pray for strength to not fall for the standard of a fallen world,
but to set your standard on God's perfect creation.
I pray for discernment to know the difference.

I pray that your passion for the Lord increases,
while your hunger for the world decreases.
I pray that you would know love before you try to give it out.
I pray that you will wait for me.