

A SOUL IN DISREPAIR

On April 15, 2019, much of the world mourned as it watched Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris burn uncontrollably for eight hours into the night. Constructed over 860 years ago and having weathered such turmoil as the French Revolution and two world wars, the cathedral symbolized for many Christians a place of hope and heritage. Yet beyond its religious connotation, Notre Dame was known as the greatest example of French Gothic architecture and attracted over 12 million visitors annually. So while no deaths or serious injuries were reported, many wept and mourned as if a living being had been taken from them in the most ghastly and tragic of circumstances.

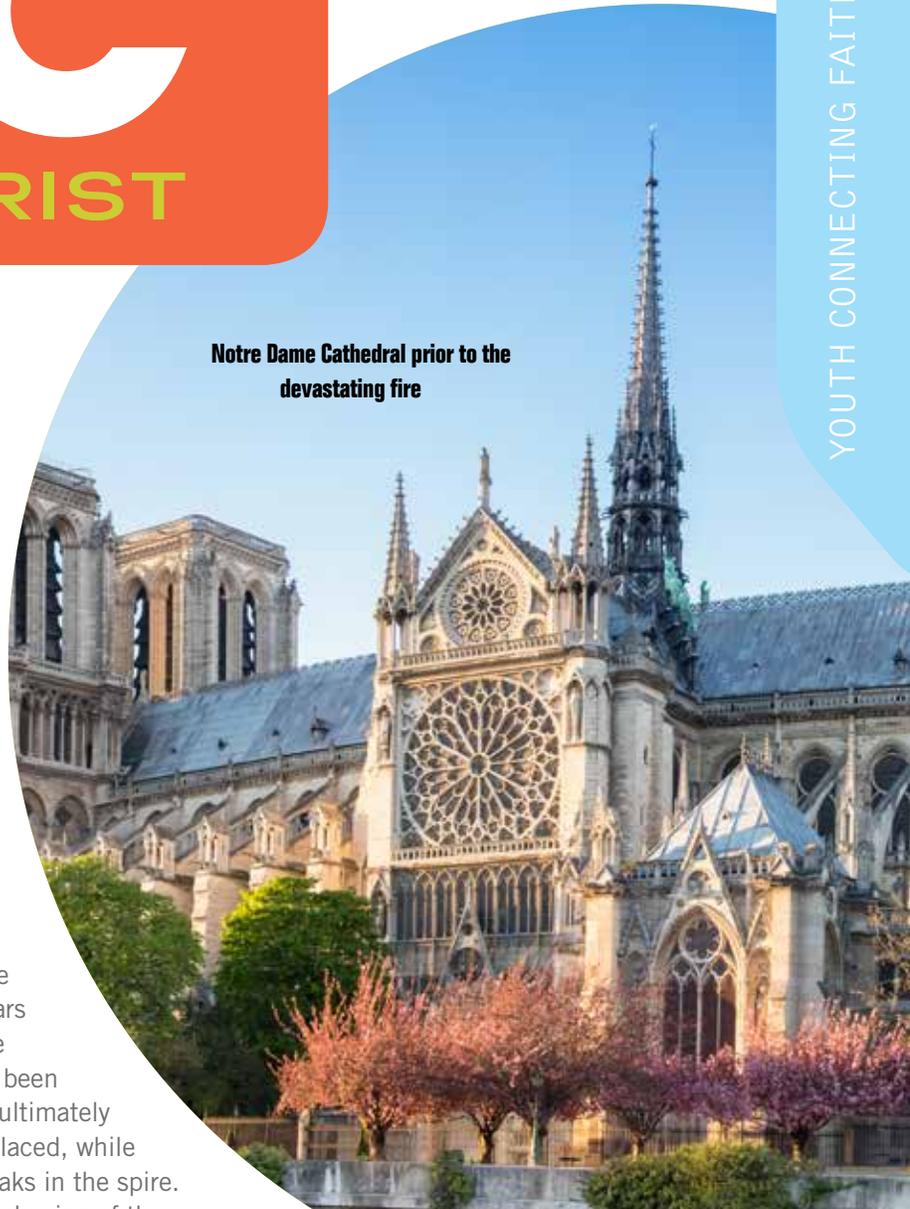
A Church in Disrepair

In the days following the devastating fire, some of the richest people in Europe vowed to give millions of dollars toward the church's restoration. Yet, as *TIME* magazine alluded to in a recent article, extensive renovation had been needed long before to prevent the type of tragedy that ultimately occurred. Much of the stone building needed to be replaced, while natural erosion along with pollution had led to water leaks in the spire. Other compounding issues had inevitably led to the weakening of the beams of five hundred oak trees that created the cathedral's roof. As a whole, the people closest to the cathedral knew it was in desperate need of attention and care.

Tending to the Soul

God takes rest and restoration of the human body and spirit very seriously. He went so far to command his people to take sabbath in the Ten Commandments. Jesus reflected perfect rest while traveling in his ministry, and he was quick to remind his followers that sabbath was created for humanity (and not the other way around). We have a tendency to view rest as an unnecessary burden but, in order to do God's will, we must be willing to allow God and others to care for us.

Notre Dame Cathedral prior to the devastating fire



TIP FOR THIS ISSUE

While we know rest is necessary, it truly can be difficult to prioritize. For many, rest and restoration is not something typically written into a schedule or planner. Before teaching this lesson, challenge yourself to do something during the week that will bring you restoration. It might come through prayer or devotional time, or it might come through spending time with an old friend. Or, it might come simply through taking a nap! As the leader, give God time to restore your spirit so that you are then prepared to pour out your spirit into the lives of your students.



RESTING IN GOD

Question of the Day: What are the ways you experience true rest?

Purpose: To encourage teens to practice self-care.

Cultural Connection: Notre Dame Cathedral Fire

Topic: Self-care

CARE FOR THE BODY

Mark 6:7-13, 30-32

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught. Many people were coming and going, so there was no time to eat. He said to the apostles, "Come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while." They departed in a boat by themselves for a deserted place.

—Mark 6:30-32

Commentary:

At this particular moment, the disciples had just returned from their first mission trip of preaching, teaching, and healing through the power Jesus had bestowed upon them. Yet, instead of maintaining the momentum, Jesus unexpectedly ushered the disciples away to a secluded place for rest. Although the disciples must have been filled with great joy from their travels, Jesus surely saw the physical toll this trip had taken on them. As Christ's followers, we are called to pour out ourselves for others through our time, resources, and energy. But we also must be willing to provide our bodies the physical rest it requires.

Questions to think about:

- ▶ What do you do that truly rests and relaxes your physical self?
- ▶ Do you struggle to find time to rest? If so, why?

CARE FOR THE MIND

Exodus 18:13-24

Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing isn't good. You will end up totally wearing yourself out, both you and these people who are with you. The work is too difficult for you. You can't do it alone." —Exodus 18:17-18

Commentary:

Moses was the overseer of the Israelites and the chosen mediator between God and God's people. His job description must have seemed daunting. Not only was he God's messenger of the law and ultimate leader as they journeyed toward the Promised Land, but also he was in charge of the day-to-day judgments of the people. Yet, in the midst of his burden of power and authority, Moses failed to remember that God places wisdom and discernment in the hearts of more than just one man. It took his father-in-law, Jethro, to point out that no one is called to lead alone. Effective leaders depend on others. Still, we would rather drain ourselves than ask others for help. God gives us people to help fill us up so that we may pour back into them.

Questions to think about:

- ▶ In what settings of your life can you relate to Moses' overwhelming work?
- ▶ What makes it so difficult to ask others for help?

CARE FOR THE SPIRIT

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I'm gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light.

—Matthew 11:28-30

Commentary:

In the context of this passage, Jesus was speaking to Jews who found themselves burdened by the rules and regulations

TEACHER BIBLE PREP

What occupies your mind today? Find peace in the simplicity of God's presence!

placed upon them daily by the religious leaders. The Jews defined their spiritual identity by how well they could keep the law, and thus were yoked to the joyless weight of working toward the impossible goal of salvation. Jesus came to set the record straight. He came to remove the heavy burden of law and replace it with the light yoke of faith. Our spirits can find rest only when we let go of the burden of trying to earn God's love and instead embrace the gift of grace from God through faith.

Questions to think about:

- ▶ What burdens are currently weighing heavy upon you?
- ▶ What makes choosing faith over works such a difficult choice?



DEVOTION: LIKE A WEANED CHILD

Take a moment to read the three short verses below that comprise Psalm 131:

LORD, my heart isn't proud;
my eyes aren't conceited.
I don't get involved with things too great or
wonderful for me.
No. But I have calmed and quieted myself
like a weaned child on its mother;
I'm like the weaned child that is with me.
Israel, wait for the LORD—
from now until forever from now!

Throughout the Psalms, we read the words of writers who are consumed in a range of emotions. Sometimes they are absorbed with anger towards a friend. Other times they are preoccupied in doubts or worries about life and direction. Still other times they are focused on what they need from God.

Yet, in this brief psalm, we read the reflections of David who has discovered the secret to quiet contentment in his soul. Like a weaned child, David has found peace simply being in God's presence. His joy is no longer dependent on his reputation. His peace is no longer determined by answering the greatest questions in life.

What occupies your mind today? Are you thinking of grand dreams and plans? Are you inundated with worries



and fears? Are you distracted by electronics and other unnecessary diversions? Take time to meditate on David's wise words. Listen for the whispers of God in the silence. Find peace in the simplicity of God's presence!

NEXT WEEK: Recently most of the comic superheroes came together to fight for good and stamp out the dark forces of Box-Office Record, the mighty super-villain of—we're kidding. *Avengers: Endgame* opened recently and blew away the records set by the last Avengers movie. Join us next week in LINC for a spoiler-free look at hope in both the Avengers' world and our own.

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Getting Ready: You will need copies of Youth Page 6, pens or pencils, small slips of paper, a small bowl or basket, Bibles, and prizes.

OPEN

No Rest for the Best (10 minutes)

When everyone has arrived, explain that teens will play a game called “No Rest for the Best.” Similar to “Simon Says,” choose one person to be the rule-maker and ask everyone else to stand together. The rule-maker may call out any of the following types of rules:

- Repeatable actions/motions
- Repeatable sayings/phrases/choruses (such as Pledge of Allegiance, Itsy-Bitsy Spider)

The rule-maker begins by saying, “(their name) says (whatever rule he or she chooses).” The rule-maker may try to fool listening teens by acting out opposite motions from the stated rule or by saying a rule without first stating her or his name.

The game ends when only one person remains. Hand out prizes accordingly.

Following the game, ask, “When is a time you recently felt physically and mentally overworked?” After some discussion of the question, read aloud or summarize the Page 1 article.

EXPLORE

Talk Topic 1: Care for the Body (10 minutes)

Middle School Option

Hand out copies of Youth Page 6 to all teens and direct their attention to the “My Monday Schedule” activity. With as much or as little detail as they choose, ask students to

describe their normal Monday schedule of activities. After two minutes, ask students to share their schedules with one or two other students around them. Then ask and talk about the following:

- ▶ What’s one thing you wish you could decrease or remove from your everyday schedule?
- ▶ What’s one thing you wish you could increase or add to your everyday schedule?

Call on two volunteers to read aloud Mark 6:7-13, 30-32. Explain that Jesus is about to send out his disciples for the first time to preach repentance and the coming of the Messiah. Following the disciples’ return, notice what Jesus calls on them to do. After the Scripture reading, ask:

- ▶ What does Jesus call on the disciples to do upon their return?
- ▶ What had the disciples neglected to do while on their preaching trip?
- ▶ Would you say you regularly get enough rest?
- ▶ Why do you think the Bible places such an emphasis on sabbath and rest?

High School Option

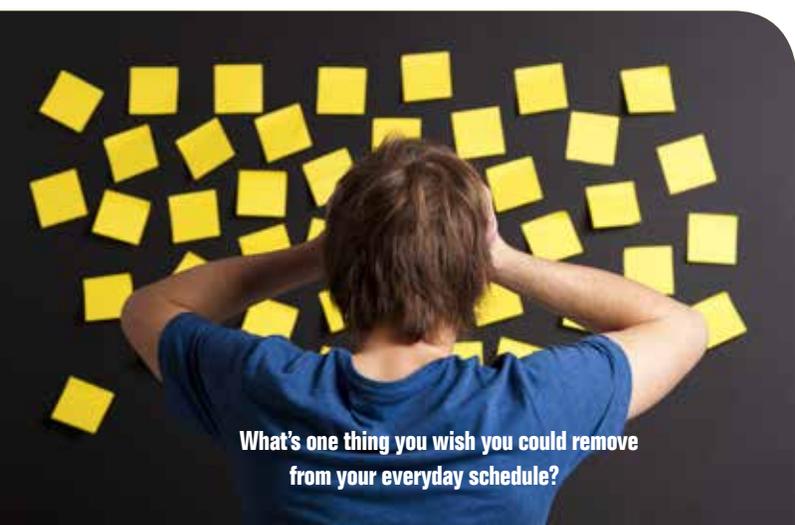
Ask, “If you were to spend twenty-four hours alone on a secluded island, what are three things you would bring with you?”

Share the Scripture context from the Middle School Option, then ask students to follow along as you read aloud Mark 6:7-13, 30-32. Ask and talk about the following:

- ▶ What does Jesus call on the disciples to do after returning?
- ▶ Why is it somewhat surprising Jesus would call his disciples to rest after such a successful mission?
- ▶ When you were younger, where was your favorite hiding place or secluded spot?
- ▶ Where do you currently like to go to get away from reality?
- ▶ Would you say you struggle to be alone? If so, why?
- ▶ Why do you think Jesus placed such an emphasis on spending time secluded from others?

BONUS SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

While many people feel right at home within the Christian church, others feel neglected, overlooked, hurt, or outright rejected. The quick response of the super-wealthy to the cathedral fire seemed to underscore those type feelings in the days following the fire. Take a few moments to explore some of the other reactions. Don’t try to respond to other opinions; instead simply listen to their feelings.



What’s one thing you wish you could remove from your everyday schedule?

- ▶ How might someone who feels rejected by the church feel about the cathedral? someone who feels abused by the church?
- ▶ What can the church do to heal where it has hurt?

Talk Topic 2: Care for the Mind (10–15 minutes)

Middle School Option

Explain that teens will play a memory game called “What Goes Where?”—after which only one prize will be awarded to the winning group. Teens may form teams of 2 to 3 or they may play individually.

After team decisions have been made, hand out pencils or pens and instruct youth to draw on the backside of Youth Page 6. Explain that you (or another leader) will give drawing instructions only once; emphasize they may not begin drawing until the instructions have been read. Ask students to close their eyes while listening to the drawing instructions:

Draw a square house with a circular door. The doorknob should be on the right side. The roof should be a triangle with the chimney on the left side. To the left of the house, you will draw three stick people standing in a row. The one on the far left is smiling, but the other two are frowning. The middle one is shortest. The one on the far right is holding a balloon in the left hand.

After calling time, ask teams to share drawings, decide which team or person has the most accurate drawing and award a prize! Then ask:

- ▶ What were the advantages to playing this game with a team?
- ▶ What were the advantages to playing this game alone?

Before reading aloud Exodus 18:13-24 or asking a teen to do so, explain that Moses was in the midst of leading the Israelites to the Promised Land when his father-in-law, Jethro, visited him.

After the Scripture reading, ask and talk about the following:

- ▶ What was Jethro advising Moses to do? Why?
- ▶ Like Moses, have you ever felt overwhelmed working alone? If so, when?
- ▶ What are we admitting about ourselves when we ask for help?

High School Option

Point out the “On My Mind” bracket on Youth Page 6. Considering the pairs of subjects provided, explain that students should determine which receives most of their time, energy, and concentration. Talk about answers as a large group and as time allows.

- ▶ Would you say you struggle to turn off your mind from everyday life?
- ▶ What sorts of things make calming our minds so difficult these days?

Explain that Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, has come to visit him while the Israelites travel toward the Promised Land. As you read aloud or ask a teen to read Exodus 18:13-24, ask youth to consider how Moses and the advice given to him by Jethro relates to them. Then ask the following:

- ▶ What exactly was Jethro advising Moses to do?
- ▶ Why are we so tempted to fill our minds with other peoples’ drama and business?

Talk Topic 3: Care for the Spirit (10 minutes)

Combined Middle School and High School Option

Ask students to turn to Matthew 11 and choose one person to read aloud verses 28-30. Before reading, explain that Jesus is speaking to a Jewish audience burdened by the rules of the religious leaders. After the Scripture reading, ask:

- ▶ What exactly does Jesus mean by these words?
- ▶ How do you personally experience spiritual rest with Jesus?

Hand out small slips of paper to teens. On the papers, encourage them to write personal burdens or situations in life that leave them tired and weary. Then collect the slips of paper in a small basket or bowl. Explain that you will use them in the closing prayer activity, but they will remain private.

TAKE AWAY

In closing, ask youth to pray by raising their hands above with palms facing up, as if lifting up a burden. In the same way, hold up the basket of burdens from the previous activity and pray these words:

“God, We know your Word tells us this life will be filled with burdens and weariness. But your Word also tells us to throw our anxiety upon you, because you care for us. Today, God, we lift up our many burdens to you. We pray that we may pursue true rest and restoration by simply spending time in your presence. And in our own weariness, we are thankful that your yoke is light, that your love is never-ending, and that your love never has to be earned. Amen.”

