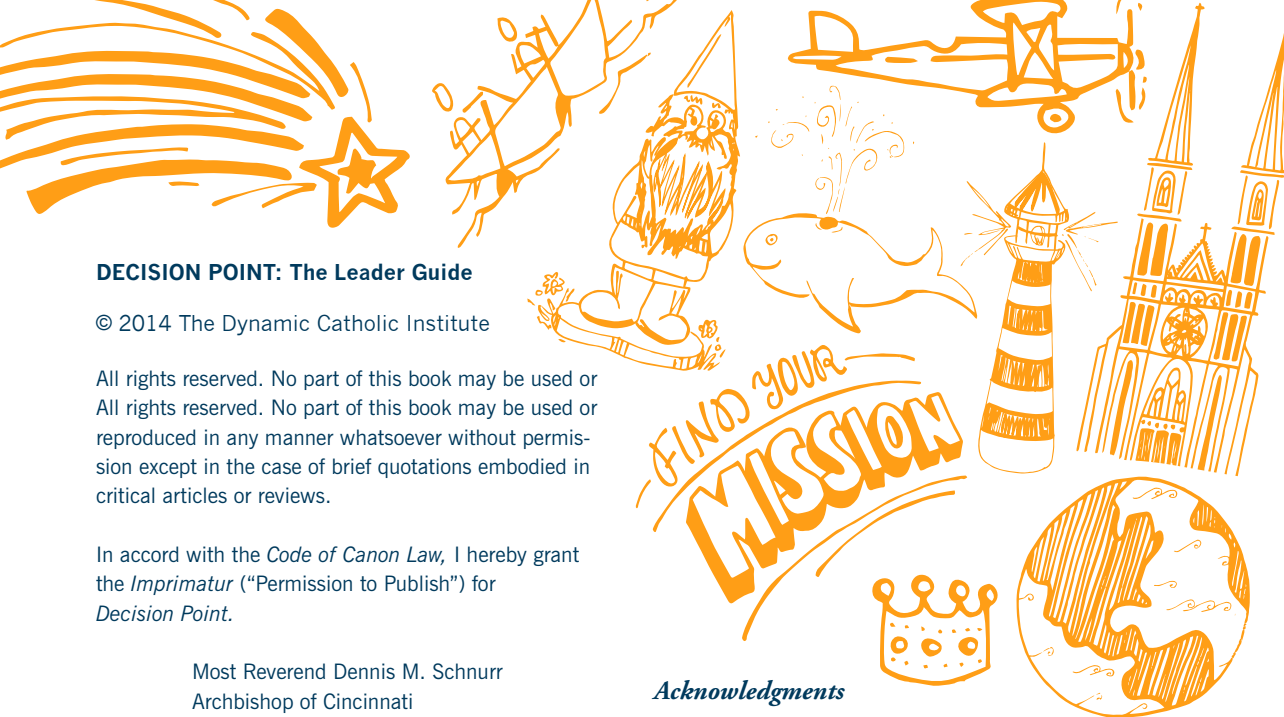




DECISION point



DECISION POINT: The Leader Guide

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In accord with the *Code of Canon Law*, I hereby grant the *Imprimatur* ("Permission to Publish") for *Decision Point*.

Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr
Archbishop of Cincinnati
Archdiocese of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio
April 4, 2014

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Illustration by: Jenny Miller & Hazel Mitchell

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FIRST EDITION

Acknowledgments

This project began with a dream.

More than a thousand people have poured their time, talent, and treasure into DECISION POINT. It is the result of years of research, development, and testing. To everyone involved in every stage of the process: Thank you! May God bless you and reward you richly for your generosity.

Now we offer it to the Church as a gift, hopeful that it will help millions of young people encounter Jesus and discover the genius of Catholicism.

Special thanks goes to: Matthew Kiernan, Margie Rapp, Allen Hunt, Anita Hunt, Fr. Robert Sherry, Tim Nowak, Penny Giunta, Beth Rainsford, Ashley Berger, and Fr. David Zink.

DECISION POINT was funded by a group of generous donors. It will now be made available at no cost to every parish in North America. This is one of the many ways that this program is unique.

Everything great in history has been accomplished by people who believed that the future could be better than the past. Thank you for believing!

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WELCOME

It began with a dream—to give catechists, youth ministers, sponsors, parents, pastors, and Directors of Religious Education (DREs) the tools they need to engage young Catholics in a meaningful conversation about the genius of Catholicism in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Catechesis is the Church's efforts to bring to life the teachings of Jesus Christ in the lives of ordinary men, women, and children. Religious education classes are one of the primary forms of catechesis.

But evangelization precedes catechesis.

Evangelization is first and foremost a dialogue. It is not a monologue. Evangelization is a personal and powerful conversation that leads to conversion of heart, mind, and soul.

And let's face it, our young people need to be evangelized. They need to hear the Gospel in a way that is fresh, intriguing, relevant, compelling, and attractive. Too often we make the mistake of assuming that they have made a choice for Christ and his Church, when the great majority of them have not. They need to be boldly invited to choose Christ and the Church.

The theology of Confirmation informs us that it is about God choosing us, but we are endowed with free will and so for God to do his best work in us and through us we need to respond and cooperate as Mary and the saints did.

It is our hope that this program will not only prepare young Catholics for the Sacrament of Confirmation in a dynamic way, but also teach and inspire them to respond and cooperate with God's grace in all the circumstances of their daily lives, long after their Confirmation has passed.

These materials are the result of thousands of hours of work. More than seven hundred people have been involved in the process. Never before has a Catholic program been developed with such rigorous research, development, and testing. Yes, testing. Over and over again, we have put these materials in front of teens and asked them to tell us what was working and what wasn't. Over and over, we refined our offering based on that feedback.

And we are not finished yet. For decades we have been using programs that were developed once and never changed, or changed every seven years. That is not the case with Decision Point. We hope you will provide feedback so that we can continue to improve this offering regularly.

Whatever role you play in preparing young Catholics for Confirmation, we realize it may be a thankless job—so we want to thank you. Thank you for all you are doing for the Church. It is our hope and prayer that this program will help make your experience with today's Catholic teens infinitely more fulfilling for you and for them.

There is a moment in each person's life when our eyes get wide and begin to sparkle. At Dynamic Catholic we call that the "I get it now" moment. We hope that our efforts combined with your dedication will produce more "I get it now" moments for Catholic teens.

May the grace of our abundantly generous God inspire you and give you courage, wisdom, and patience.

•————The Dynamic Catholic Team————•

THE DYNAMIC CATHOLIC APPROACH

This is different. One look at the materials for DECISION POINT and that is clear. It looks different because it is different. But it is not just different in how it looks and feels. The way we developed it was very different from how Catholic programs have been developed in the past.

And it's not just different for the sake of being different. It's different for a reason. Let's be honest—the old way isn't working. Eighty-five percent of young Catholics stop practicing their faith within ten years of their Confirmation. Different is needed.

DECISION POINT is different in a hundred ways.



THE PROCESS

Dynamic Catholic was founded on the idea of “meeting people where they are and leading them to where God is calling them to be.” Once Catholics are engaged in their spiritual journey, there is an abundance of materials that can feed them and draw them deeper into relationship with God and the Church. But there is a great shortage of materials that engage disengaged Catholics.

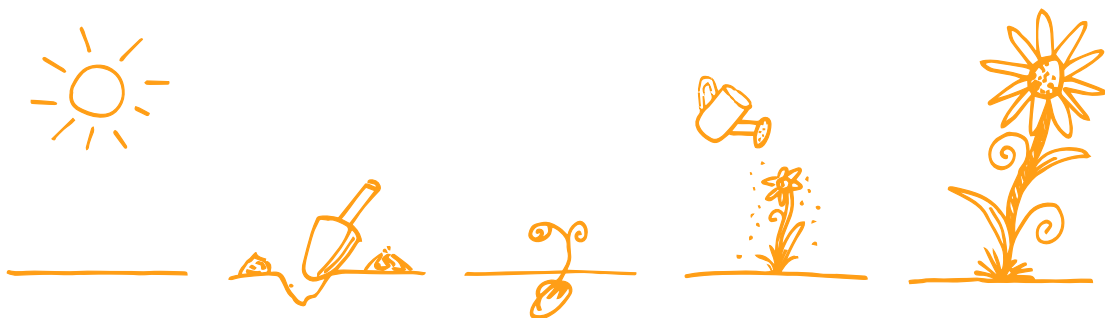
Most young Catholics are disengaged. Engaging them is therefore the first step. Until they are engaged it doesn’t matter how much information you download on them; they simply will not absorb it and make it their own.

There are many programs that faithfully present the teachings of the Church. But that alone is not enough. While presenting the Church’s teachings faithfully is essential, it is also critically important that they be presented in ways that are engaging, accessible, and relevant.

In setting out, our goal was to create the most dynamic program to prepare young Catholics for Confirmation. But we realized that in order to do this we had to get a real sense of what was working, what wasn’t working, and what experts on the front lines thought was needed.

DECISION POINT has taken more than four years to develop. The truth is, in many ways it is very different from what we originally envisioned. When we first set out we thought that the entire program would be online. But over and over again, you asked for physical workbooks, leader guides, and DVDs—so we adapted. Hundreds of people have spoken into this project, and it is better because of that.

This is the process we worked through to deliver what you now hold in your hands.





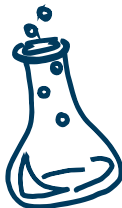
YEAR ONE: LISTEN

We spent the first year just listening. During that time we conducted more than seven hundred interviews with catechists, DREs, priests, youth ministers, youth group leaders, high school and middle school teachers, parents, candidates, current and former sponsors, and bishops.



YEAR TWO: EXPLORE

We spent the second year exploring every Confirmation preparation program that was currently available. We analyzed the differences and similarities between each program. We investigated which parts of each program were effective and which aspects simply weren't working. We also explored best practices among other Christian churches and groups to discover how they were engaging their teens. Then we spent a lot of time asking why. Over and over again, we asked why: Why does this work? Why doesn't this work? Why don't young people respond to this or that? What will it take to really engage them in a meaningful discussion about the genius of Catholicism?



YEAR THREE: DEVELOP AND TEST

By the third year we were developing our own program based on all that we had learned. This began a cycle of development and testing. We would develop snippets of material and then test them with Catholic teens. A lot of the material worked, but some didn't. And all of it was improved by the feedback we got during the testing.



YEAR FOUR: REFINE AND RETEST

In the fourth year we finalized the structure, layout, and content of DECISION POINT, all the time retesting and refining even the smallest details.

Now it's time to share it with the world. But we see the launch of DECISION POINT as just a larger pilot study. We know it isn't perfect; no program is. The difference is, we are not done yet. Many programs get launched and are never changed. But we are excited to continuously improve this program based on the feedback you and your students provide to us. So if you see a typo or a substantial way to improve this program, please let us know.

WHOM IS DECISION POINT FOR?

DECISION POINT is a Confirmation preparation program primarily designed for Catholics between the ages of twelve and eighteen. It has been designed to ignite a conversation about the genius of Catholicism between candidates and their parents, sponsors, catechists, teachers, peers, and priests. That conversation will be different if you're teaching this content to a group of middle school students than it would be if you were teaching it to a group of high school seniors. But the nature of the content and questions makes them flexible for a broad age group.

In fact, as you get into the materials, you may have the same reaction that many Confirmation leaders had in our focus groups when they said, "Every Catholic should experience this program—not just teens preparing for Confirmation!"

In response to this feedback we made two significant changes to the program. First, we abandoned the idea of having separate workbooks for parents and sponsors and decided that candidates, parents, and sponsors should all have the same workbook, and that we would make the content that's unique to parents and sponsors available online.

Next, we decided to develop a version of the program that would be available in the form of a weekly e-mail. In this way, parents and sponsors can have an incredible adult faith formation experience alongside the candidates as they prepare for Confirmation.

As you work through the program, ask yourself: How many Catholics do I know who don't need to experience this program?

In time we hope that whole parishes will go through the Confirmation preparation experience together via the online, app, or e-mail versions of DECISION POINT.



GETTING STARTED

Leading a Confirmation class can be overwhelming. Teens can be daunting. But never forget that this is one of the most important things you will do in your life. These young people are hungry to make sense of life—and nothing does that like the Gospel.

We are going to spend a lot of time exploring incredible content, but interestingly the most important part of your role can be completely covered in one sentence—eight words, actually:

Make sure they know you care about them.

Theodore Roosevelt, the twenty-sixth President of the United States, perfectly summed up the scenario you are about to find yourself in when he wrote, **“People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”**

Start praying for the teens in your class today. Make an effort to know their names. Let them know you are praying for them every day. Pay attention to what is happening in their lives; they will reveal this to you in a hundred ways throughout your time together.

It’s also important to realize that you cannot cover everything. You can’t teach them everything about the Catholic faith. You can’t combat every misconception they have about Catholicism. But if you give them a glimpse of the truth, beauty, and goodness that are at the core of our faith, they will get in touch with their appetite for these things—and that is no small thing. We have set you up with ideas and questions that will intrigue them and show them that Catholicism makes sense, that it works, that it is practical and joy filled, and that it is something that deep down they need and want. And remember, you don’t have to have all the answers. If you don’t know something, just say, “Good question. I don’t know. Let’s find out together.”

When young people have questions about the faith, the questions are beautiful, because they represent their deepest yearnings. It doesn’t matter how aggressively or disrespectfully the questions are asked. Never forget that every question comes from a yearning to know, love, and serve God. Young people may come at it in a very roundabout way, but don’t we all?

Most of all, never get discouraged, and don’t let what you can’t do interfere with what you can do. What you can do is love these teens, walk with them in their journey, pray that they open themselves up to God’s dream for their lives, and give them the most dynamic experience of Catholicism they have ever had.

13 Helpful Hints

FROM GREAT LEADERS

- 1 Greet your candidates at the door when they arrive for each class. Welcome them. Look them in the eye and thank them for coming.
- 2 Learn your candidates' names. This is the simplest way to demonstrate that they matter to you.
- 3 Start on time and end on time. Honoring time, honors people.
- 4 Speak up! Your voice is one of your best teaching tools. Be careful not to mumble or speak too quickly. A clear, slightly louder than normal voice is needed to lead a group. Say it like you mean it! You don't need to shout, but a firm voice says you're ready to lead.
- 5 Repeat yourself. Once is not enough. They need to hear important points over and over again. Make connections between what they learned and discussed last time you were together and what they are learning today. Keep repeating key phrases and themes. Repetition is a powerful force in educating and inspiring.
- 6 Look up! Whether you are sitting in a circle or in rows, make sure when you are speaking to look around the room. One temptation in leading a group is to speak only to those who are closest to you. Each class, make a conscious effort to make eye contact with everyone in the room.
- 7 Be prepared. Review the materials before class, mark the Scripture passages in your Bible, watch the videos, and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. Being prepared sends so many messages to these young people: "You matter." "This is important." "I want to make this a great experience for you."
- 8 Tell your candidates what's up. Leading a group means guiding them step by step through the time together. So let them know what's next. "Now we are going to pray." The more specific the better. Feel free to add to your directions: "Now we are going to pray. Please bow your heads and close your eyes." Being specific helps our brains to envision directions. Putting directions in the positive—"Keep your glass up"—helps us get it right. When we put them in the negative—"Don't spill that"—we envision spilling the glass and often do just that!

9 Don't be afraid of silence. After you ask someone a question, anticipate a pause of several seconds. Some people need longer than others to process. That's OK. You can always go back to someone who needs more time. "I can see that you are working on your answer. I'll give you a moment." OR "Would you like me to come back to you?"

10 Redirect behavior. Tell them to cut it out. If you find yourself yelling, you are losing control of the group. Being prepared on the front end will help you lead well, without yelling. Being specific lets them know what is needed. A firm voice, not angry, sets the tone. "We are not talking right now. We are listening." "I am waiting on everyone to close their eyes to begin." (Make sure you look at them when you have to redirect.) You can turn this to the positive as well. This should be the voice of an appreciative, encouraging leader: "I really appreciate the way this group is working together on the activity. You are all listening to each other and sharing your ideas. Well done." Last, standing up and stretching is a great redirection. Sometimes we all just need to move. So move. If you move, lead this activity too. "Everyone up and let's stretch our legs." You may want to encourage them to trade seats. Moving is a helpful way to redirect behavior.

11 Smile. Really. Smiling at someone is a gift and conveys a sincere warmth. It just feels good when someone smiles at you.

12 Tell your story. One of the most powerful tools you have to lead this group is your story. Know your story and share it—not necessarily all at once, but in bits and pieces as they relate to the content. To successfully lead, you have to see your candidates as real people and they have to see you as a real person, and as crazy as that may sound, getting to this place can be harder than you think.

13 Be you. If you like sports trivia, use that as an icebreaker. If you love chocolate, give candy for prizes. If you love music, play some as they enter or as a closer. Let them get to know you.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
is the biggest family
in the WORLD

THE EXPERIENCE.....

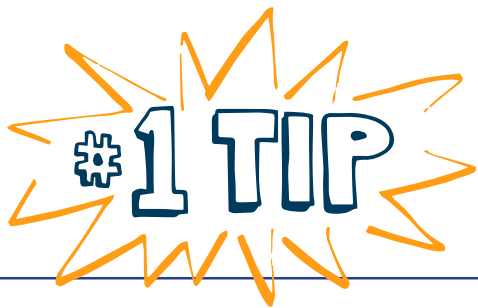
DECISION POINT is a Dynamic Catholic program designed to prepare young Catholics for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The various components of the program can be experienced online or in the traditional format of workbook, leader guide, and DVDs.

At the heart of the program are seventy-two short films, which range in length from three to fifteen minutes and feature Matthew Kelly.

Here is a quick look at the different ways DECISION POINT can be experienced:

- **Online:** The entire program will be available online to anyone at any time.
- **Hard copies:** The workbook, leader guide, and DVD series will also be available as hard copies for parishes and individuals who prefer them.
- **E-mail:** The program will also be available in an e-mail version, which will allow individuals to sign up and receive the program in bite-size portions each week. Perfect for parents and sponsors.
- **App:** The seventy-two short films and bonus content will also be available on an application for smart phones and tablets.
- To learn more, visit **DynamicCatholic.com/Confirmation**.

“PRAY that young people OPEN themselves up to GOD'S DREAM for their lives, and give them the most Dynamic experience of Catholicism they've EVER had.”



**WE ARE COMMITTED TO
HELPING YOU SUCCEED.**

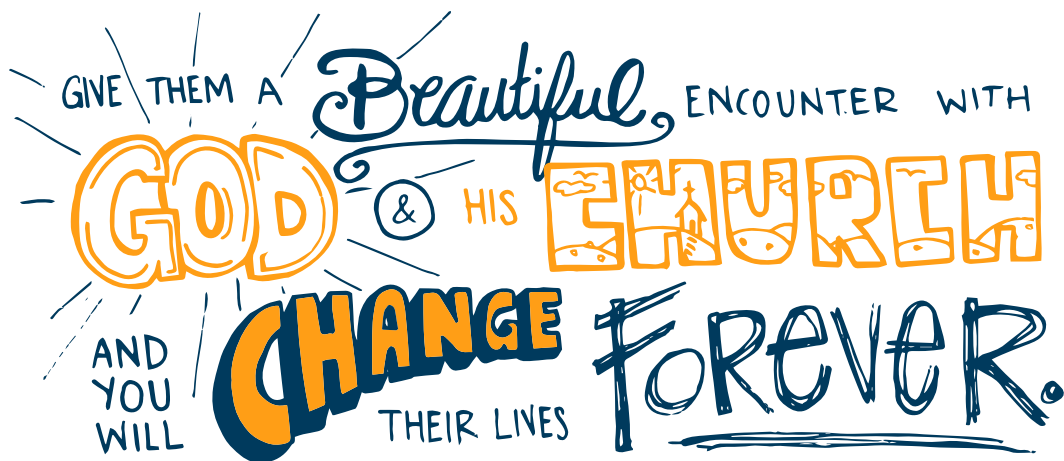


Every section has a little **TIP**.
These tips are usually just a sentence or two.

READ THROUGH ALL THE TIPS FROM START TO FINISH IN ONE SITTING. It will take you less than 30 minutes. This will give you a really good sense of how to engage these young Catholics in a dynamic experience. It will give you confidence. It will help you enjoy the process... and the more you enjoy it, the more they will enjoy it!

You are offering them something beautiful.

THEY NEED TO HEAR SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL, TO EXPERIENCE SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL. THERE IS SO MUCH TRASH OUT THERE AND THEY ARE ENCOUNTERING IT EVERY DAY.



You are about to change
THESE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES.
DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF THAT.

THE FORMAT

One of the great challenges in developing Confirmation materials is that each diocese prepares candidates in different ways for different periods of time, with different class formats. With this in mind, DECISION POINT has been developed with a suggested format, but in a way that makes it infinitely flexible.

SUGGESTED FORMAT:

We suggest that the program be experienced through twelve one-hundred twenty minute classes. These can take place once a month for twelve months, twice a month for six months, or once a week for three months.

If this is not how you currently structure your Confirmation preparation, we invite you to consider trying something new. Just because you have always done it a certain way doesn't mean you need to continue to do it a certain way—especially if that way is not producing results.

But if your parish or diocese requires a different format, there are plenty of options.

OTHER FORMAT OPTIONS:

The core of the program is seventy-two short films. In the suggested format the candidates would experience six of these short films in each class. But you could use one per class for seventy-two sessions, or two per class for thirty-six sessions, or three per class for twenty-four sessions.

The program was specifically designed to have this flexibility. Each short film is content and concept rich. This leads to great opportunities for class or small group discussions.

There is also plenty of extra material and exercises in the workbook that are not used in the twelve-session format, for those parishes that have longer programs and need more material.



Life is _____

SESSION ONE

CHOICES

MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself... But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost... I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

• ————— Thomas Merton ————— •

QUICK SESSION OVERVIEW

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| STEP 1 | WELCOME |
| STEP 2 | OPENING PRAYER |
| STEP 3 | ENGAGE – WATCH & DISCUSS |
| STEP 4 | JOURNAL |
| STEP 5 | ANNOUNCEMENTS |
| STEP 6 | CLOSING PRAYER |



SESSION ONE: LIFE IS CHOICES

Objectives:

- To remind candidates that they make hundreds of choices every day and that every choice has consequences.
- To help candidates become better decision makers.
- To demonstrate that God's way and the way of the world are very different, and invite candidates to choose to walk with God.

STEP 1 WELCOME

WELCOME



From day one it is important to convey two things: that you care about the candidates and that you are excited.

Introduce yourself. Tell them a few things about you and your life—where you grew up, what football team you support, your hobbies, your favorite flavor of ice cream, and why you decided to be here with them right now.

Tell them this is going to be different from anything they have experienced before in a religious education class.

Take a few minutes and go around the class, asking each person to introduce him– or herself and share something just like you did.

Let them know you are praying for them. Encourage them to start praying for each other.

And remember what Theodore Roosevelt wrote: “People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”



TIME-ICON: This icon serves as a guide to help you plan approximately how long each activity will take.

[WB5]

This code serves as a reference to point you to the page in the Workbook where you can find the related activity/content.

Example: [WB5] points you to page 5 in the Workbook



The flag icon is the halfway mark and suggests a good breaking point if your program runs twenty-four classes (or approximately 60 minutes) instead of twelve 120 minute classes.



STEP 2 OPENING PRAYER

Tip

Get them quiet. Don't rush this. Begin with the sign of the cross. Make it with reverence; they are always watching you.

Allow them a moment of quiet before you start reading the prayer. You could say something like, "Let's just take a moment in silence to be still and quiet and open ourselves up to whatever God wants to lead us to today."

After thirty to forty seconds of silence—which will seem like an eternity for them, and maybe for you—read the prayer slowly and reflectively.



3 MIN

MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself... But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost... I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

..... Thomas Merton

STEP 3 ENGAGE: WATCH & DISCUSS

SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION

WATCH VIDEO



8 MIN



This is the first short film they are going to experience in the program. Make sure everyone can see the screen. Encourage them to turn off their phones. You may want to consider establishing cell phone rules now. Otherwise they may become the bane of your existence.

DISCUSSION QUESTION



6 MIN

1) What is the one idea in this short film that you found most helpful?



Did you notice the kid in the film talking on his cell phone? Use this opportunity to talk to the class about how dangerous that can be.