

# Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

*Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.*

*I am about to do a new thing.*

—Isaiah 43:18–19 NRSV

## Explore

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### Speak Your Mind

Read the following statements about youth, and then together discuss the following questions:

**We are seeking our niche in time, a place in the world, and, whether we know it or not, we are seeking a Jewish carpenter named Jesus Christ.**

Do you think all youth seek Christ? Why or why not?

Do you think some teenagers are seeking Christ and don't know it?

**In this world plagued with loneliness, depression, violence, and darkness, teens are forever struggling to search for love, peace, hope, joy, and light. Some people search and explore the wrong places and the wrong things, providing only temporary relief from their ailments. Others will find what they are searching for. People have a thirst that cannot be quenched by sex, drugs, alcohol, lies, or abuse. It is a thirst that Christ alone can quench. This is why we must bring them to Christ.**

Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Where can youth find the solutions to their problems?

What kind of relationship do you have with Christ?

Can you share how you came to know Christ?

How do you feel about discussing your relationship with Christ with church friends? with friends outside church?

## Extract

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### So that You May Know

Read and act out Mark 2:1–12 (Mark 2:1–9 IV). These people brought their friends to Jesus and Jesus healed them. For whom in this scripture was this event a new way? What were their questions/emotions? What was their reaction?

Bible, paper, pens or pencils

Mark 2:1–12 (Mark 2:1–9 IV)

How can this story relate to your life? As a class, write a futuristic version based on the story in Mark 2:1–12. Use class members as characters and set it fifty years in the future. Who needs help? Who needs healing? Who can be healed by Jesus? Whose life is directed in a new way because of their experience with Jesus.

### The Role of Faith

When Jesus saw the faith and determination of this man's friends to help him, he told him to stand up, take his mat, and go home—which the man did, healed of his affliction. Ask the students the following questions: Did you ever wonder why these friends were so persistent? How does friendship affect your life? Does this make you wonder if you could be a dedicated friend like that? Do you have friendships that are just as strong? Do you have friendships that are lukewarm? Do you have friends that you would like to introduce to Jesus?

## Bring Them to Jesus

Read the following scenarios. After each one, discuss what responsibilities and opportunities you might have as friends of the people involved and as Christians. How could you bring them to Jesus? How could they bring you closer to Jesus?

*1. Emily is a girl you met at work. She is sixteen years old, abandoned by her family, and lives with an abusive boyfriend. She is an alcoholic and drug addict. Emily denies that God exists. You can tell by listening and watching that she has no one to love her, and her heart is bruised and broken.*

*2. Jeff is a seventeen year old. He and his family attend church every Sunday at a congregation thirty miles from his home. Jeff has been taught well. He can quote the Bible forward and backward. He sings in the choir and takes part frequently in services. However, during the week when he is with social friends, Jeff denies having anything to do with church—through words and actions Jeff is a Sunday Christian only.*

*3. Sasha is a fourteen-year-old cheerleader. Her family is supportive, but her parents' jobs require that both of them travel for long periods of time. When they are gone, Sasha stays with her married sister and her two-year-old twins. Mom and Dad make sure Sasha attends church at Christmas and Easter. She is popular and well respected at school, but Sasha has a problem. You know that beneath her perky exterior, Sasha does not even love herself.*

*4. At the age of eighteen, George has lived the seemingly perfect life. He always seems to make the "right" choices and has never caused his parents or teachers any trouble. He has a very close family who loves to spend time together. Their home is always open for kids needing a place to talk, work on a project, or just hang out. When George is not at work or school, he volunteers at the local homeless shelter. George's family has never been associated with a religious tradition of any kind.*

**Expand**

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## Inviting Others

In closing have the youth respond to the following questions:

1. Are there friendships you would like to strengthen?  
If you responded yes, with one specific person in mind, say a silent prayer asking for guidance on how to strength that relationship.
2. Is there a friend (or friends) you would like to introduce to the Jesus you know?  
If you responded yes, say a silent prayer for courage to know how to begin, what to say, and how to do it.

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**Lectionary scriptures**—Isaiah 43:18–25; Psalm 41; II Corinthians 1:18–22; Mark 2:1–9 IV/2:1–12