

First Sunday in Lent

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.—Psalm 25:4 NRSV

Explore

Bible, road maps,
paper, pens or
pencils

Psalm 25:1–10
Mark 1:9–15
(Mark 1:7–13 IV)
Luke 11:1–4
Matthew 5 and 6

Many Roads, Best Paths

Cover the table with a variety of open road maps. Under the maps have copies of the Bible open to today's scripture. Ask the teens to look over the maps and identify any of the roads they've taken or would like to take. Let them share their experiences. Discuss how some roads take you in the wrong direction and others take you exactly where you want to go, sometimes with an alternate route but still arriving in the same place. Some routes are longer. Some are shorter. Some have curves, some are straight, and some have detours. Locate examples on the maps if possible. Ask: How do you know which are the best paths? Make a list of criteria. Lift the road maps on the table to discover maps to God's path.

Extract

He Call's Us into Desert Places

Bible

Psalm 25:1–10
Mark 1:9–15
(Mark 1:7–13 IV)

Ask one student to read Psalm 25:1–10 and Mark 1:9–15 (Mark 1:7–13 IV). The author of the psalm understands how difficult it is, how weak humanity is, when trying to walk on God's path. Yet the writer reminds us that God is forgiving and continues to lead humanity in right ways. After Jesus' baptism, he went into the wilderness where he was tempted. Just as it was for Jesus, baptism does not make us immune from temptation and sin. It is through God's love and forgiveness that we are continually set back on the path of redemption. Jesus was the master teacher who showed us how to return to the path each time we might take the wrong turn or be detoured from God's path. Jesus walked the human path, and we can all identify with that one.

Have a student read Mark 1:9–15/Mark 1:7–13 IV. Encourage the students to respond to the following questions:

1. Was it important for Christ to go into the wilderness right after his baptism? If so, why?
2. What was the purpose of the wilderness experience?
3. Did it have to be forty days or could it have been for a shorter time? Has forty days been mentioned before in the Bible?
4. What places of "wilderness" have you sought out? Why?
5. How did the angels minister to Jesus? Why would Jesus, of all people, need ministry?

After discussion, allow the students quiet time to think about and answer this question.

If I could ask God anything, what would it be?

Stepping Stones on the Path

Jesus' desert experience was just one of many moments on his spiritual journey. In a sense it was a stepping stone of faith. You can make your own stepping stones of faith with kits purchased from a craft store, or use a cement mix and plastic molds such as clear plastic dishes that go under flower pots. In each stone, write different words to live by with a pencil point or stick. Add decorations such as smooth glass stones that reflect the sunlight. Set them aside to dry until next week, unmold and make a stepping-stone path outside. Design an activity for younger students using the path, and make arrangements to do the activity in the future.

stepping-stone kit/
cement mix and
plastic molds, pen-
cils, decorations

Lent: A Time of Preparation

Many teenagers have heard friends excuse themselves from an activity because it had been given up for Lent. On the Christian calendar, today is considered to be the first Sunday in Lent. The religious season has been around since the early Christian movement. In this part of the liturgical year, all of the Gospel selections are taken from the events or journey to Jerusalem leading Jesus to the cross. During Lent, sacrifice was modeled by Jesus' sacrifice for us. Understanding this season enriches our lives and perhaps sets us on new paths. Use the following information to help the class better understand Lent.

The season of Lent is forty days prior to Easter Sunday, not counting Sundays. Its emphasis is soul searching and reflection, repentance and rededication, spiritual discipline and prayer, and preparation and new beginnings. People "fast" or give up something during the Lenten season because the sacrifice is an act of self-discipline that helps one see more clearly that they can remove things that are getting in the way of their relationship with God.

Build a Labyrinth

A labyrinth is a form of spiritual path designed to take you on a journey inside yourself and back out again. Walking in, you reflect on where you've been on your life journey; at the center is the opportunity to meet with God; and leaving, you make a new path for your life.

Do a labyrinth activity. At the Labyrinth Society's Web page, www.labyrinthociety.org, you can locate a labyrinth near you to visit. Or you can investigate different styles and build one of your own.



Expand

Sing or listen to "Lord, I Give You" from *Sing a New Song* 32, or from the *Sing a New Song* CD. On the paper provided, have the teens complete the phrase, "Take who I am and help me be..." and explain how this can be a response to God's forgiveness and love.

Sing a New Song
book, CD, CD
player, pens or
pencils

Lectionary scriptures—Genesis 9:15–25 IV/9:8–17; Psalm 25: 1–10; I Peter 3:18–22; Mark 1:7–13 IV/1:9–15