

# **NO STRINGS ATTACHED**

**AN ISSUE NIGHT ON  
MATERIALISM & DETACHMENT**

# QUICK GLANCE

## ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

In a world that worships material possessions, we're here to shine a light on the path of detachment. This Life Night guides teens to understand the pitfalls of materialism and the beauty of a life rooted in God, not possessions. **We aim to inspire a sense of detachment, cultivating an appreciation for what truly matters — our relationship with God, spiritual growth, and service to others.**

## MAIN POINTS

1. Material possessions are not bad in themselves, but when we become attached to them, they can distract us from our relationship with God and prevent us from living out our mission as Catholics.
2. Detachment is a virtue that fosters dependence on God, placing Him above all else and viewing our possessions as gifts intended for serving others.
3. Through prayer, reflection, and action, we can grow in detachment and in our appreciation for the things that truly matter: our relationship with God, our relationships with others, and our spiritual growth.

## SCRIPTURE

Matthew 16:24-25 | Mark 8:35-36 | John 6:35 | Philippians 4:11-13 | James 4:4

## CATECHISM

27 | 1718-1719 | 1723 | 1730

## KEY TERMS

Detachment | Materialism | Virtue

## SAINTS

St. Ignatius of Loyola | St. Therese of Lisieux | St. John of the Cross | St. Katharine Drexel

## RESOURCES

### Music

Spotify: “LS - Catchphrase”

### Videos

Ascension Presents: “Learning Detachment from Your Stuff” (youtube.com)

## GOAL

To inspire a sense of detachment, cultivating an appreciation for what truly matters — our relationship with God, spiritual growth, and service to others.

## ENVIRONMENT

A silhouette at the front of the room with strings attaching it to the crucifix represents our attachment to the Lord. The walls are filled with phones, money, and other material objects that are vying for our attention and trying to attach us to them.

## GATHER

### Full Hands Relay

Small groups compete to be the first team to get all the objects back to their starting area in this relay with a twist. Teens must race to a pile of objects, grab one, and return to their team. The next teammate has to take that object and grab another one from the pile, with subsequent members having to transport an additional item there and back with each consecutive run.

## PROCLAIM

### Talk: No Strings Attached

This Life Night dives into the danger of attachment to material goods. Though they are not bad in themselves, when held too tightly these goods can often distract us from our relationship with God and from being available to others. In the midst of a materialistic culture, Catholics need to practice detachment and learn its importance for the spiritual life. The talk closes with a few practical ways to grow in detachment.

## BREAK

### Start Somewhere

Teens have a brief period of time to reflect on the ways to grow in detachment shared during the Proclaim and choose one to implement in practical ways the coming week.

**Small Group Discussion**

Teens gather in their small groups for a discussion centered on materialism and how changing our perspective on material goods can change the way we relate to them.

**SEND****Fulfilled in God**

The group gathers for everyone to reflect on one material possession they feel particularly attached to. Using a method known as the five whys, teens dive into the deeper desires they are seeking and offer a prayer for those longings to be satisfied in God.

**NOTES**


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# GETTING READY

**LIFE NIGHT DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

## FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- Read through the entire Life Night.
  - Pray with the Scripture and Catechism references.
  - Read through the Resources suggestions.
  - Select a presenter for the Proclaim and contact them this week.
  - Send the Proclaim Teaching Guide to the presenter.
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## TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- Assign core members to the assignments on the Core Meeting Worksheet.
  - Check in with the Proclaim presenter and ask for an outline and slides, if applicable.
  - Schedule practice time with the presenter if needed.
  - Reach out to a music minister or worship leader to see if they can lead music for this Life Night.
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## ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Distribute the Life Night outline to the core members.
  - Pray with the core members over the Life Night.
  - Review the highlights for the Life Night.
  - Explain the core assignments.
  - Encourage the core members to review the discussion questions and pray for their small group.
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## THE WEEK OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Advertise the Life Night on the parish youth group’s social media channels.
  - Preschedule the Parent Letter email as a follow-up to the Life Night.
  - Make a plan for the Life Night Environment using the suggestions below.
  - Gather the supplies needed for the Life Night.
  - Inform core members of their roles during the session and provide them with the required materials and instructions.
  - Consider reaching out to parishioners and clergy to participate in the Discernment Panel for the Life Night “Go Figure.”
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## THE DAY OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Test all audio-video elements of the Life Night.
  - Decorate the youth room using the Environment instructions below.
  - Project an environment image found on the January 2024 Life Teen USB drive and online at lifeteen.com.
  - Set up for the Full Hands Relay.
  - Play the “LS - Catchphrase” Spotify playlist as teens gather.
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## ENVIRONMENT

Create a cardboard silhouette of a human being, draw a heart on the front of it, and place it at the front of the room. Place a crucifix at the front of the room as well, and run strings from the crucifix to the heart on the silhouette. Use cardboard or poster board to create large images of common items that we can get overly attached to (phone, laptop, dollar bill, etc.) and hang them around the room. Weave strings in and out of these cutouts and make it seem like the strings are creeping toward the front of the room and the cardboard silhouette.

## SUPPLIES

	Cardboard for silhouette and object cutouts
	Black paint
	String
	Objects for the Full Hands Relay
	Cones, one per small group
	Writing utensil, one per person
	Index card, one per person

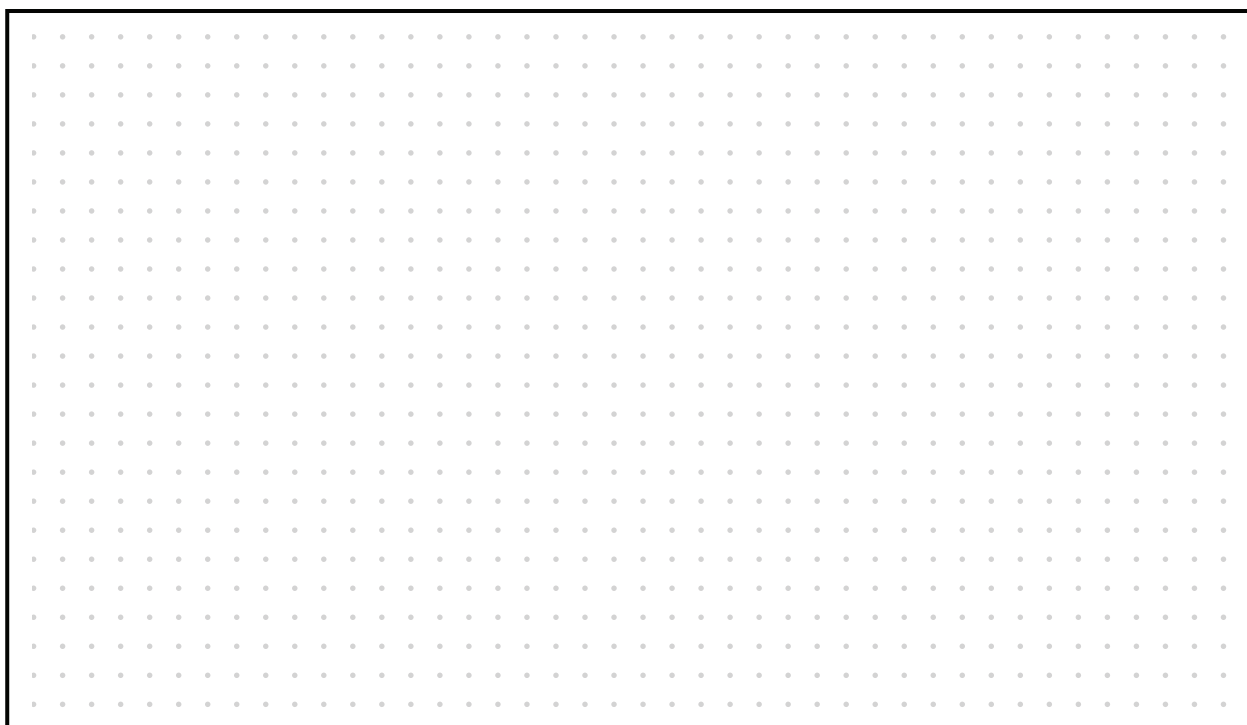


# LIFE NIGHT PLANNER

## SCHEDULE


## TO-DO


## ROOM LAYOUT



# CORE MEETING WORKSHEET

Use this outline for your core team meeting before the Youth Mass. The core meeting follows the Gather-Proclaim-Break-Send structure.

**CORE MEETING START TIME:** \_\_\_\_\_

## GATHER

- Begin with a brief social time and rapid high points/low points of the week report from each core member.
- Pray with your core team and include one of the Scripture passages from the Life Night.  
Scripture choice: \_\_\_\_\_

## PROCLAIM

- Review the Life Night outline.
- Assign core members to the assignments for this Life Night and write their names here.

<b>Setup</b>	1.	2.	3.
	4.	5.	6.

<b>Check-In</b>	1.	2.	3.
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<b>Audio-Visual</b>	
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<b>Opening Prayer</b>	
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<b>Proclaim Presenter</b>	
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<b>Closing Prayer</b>	
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**BREAK**

- Review the Life Night small group questions with a core member discussion. Spend about 15 minutes on this section.
- Take questions.

**SEND**

- Conclude the meeting with a Hail Mary.
- Set up final details for the Life Night.
- Arrive early to the Youth Mass to greet teens as they arrive.

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# GATHER

## WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER 5 min

Gather in the main meeting space and welcome the teens to the Life Night. Introduce any teens or core members attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

## FULL HANDS RELAY 15 min

Divide the teens into their small groups. Line teams up behind a cone or other object to designate a starting location. Pile up various material items on the ground a good distance away from the group's starting point. One at a time, teens must run and grab an object from the pile and bring it back to their team. The next person in line must carry that object as they go and acquire another from the pile, bringing back both the original and new item. The race gets increasingly difficult with each member bringing back an additional item that needs to be carried. Teams continue running relay style until no items are left in the pile.

Have core members stationed with each team to cheer them on and encourage full participation.

Example items:

- Designer t-shirt
- Phone
- Wallet
- Jacket
- Keys
- Makeup
- Book
- Hat
- Video game controller
- Football
- Sun glasses
- Shoes
- Headphones
- Musical instrument case

### SUGGESTION

The more items in the pile, the longer the relay will take but the more entertaining the final rounds will be as teens run back and forth trying to carry everything at once. If you have enough time and random objects, making a sizable pile will maximize the fun in this activity.

# PROCLAIM

## GETTING STARTED

This Teaching Guide is not just an outline; it's a tool to help you craft a powerful and personalized talk that will leave a lasting impact. You can make this topic relevant and engaging for your youth group, and this guide is here to assist you every step of the way.

Beyond these guidelines, the most important thing is to be yourself and let the Holy Spirit guide you. Practice your talk, pour your heart into it, and trust that your authenticity and humility have the power to make a difference in the lives of these teens. If possible, record yourself giving the Proclaim — making mental notes on what you can improve or avoid. This guide is just the beginning — the rest is up to you!

## MAIN POINTS

1. Material possessions are not bad in themselves, but when we become attached to them, they can distract us from our relationship with God and prevent us from living out our mission as Catholics.
2. Detachment is a virtue that fosters dependence on God, placing Him above all else and viewing our possessions as gifts intended for serving others.
3. Through prayer, reflection, and action, we can grow in detachment and in our appreciation for the things that truly matter: our relationship with God, our relationships with others, and our spiritual growth.

## KEY TERMS

**Detachment** - An attitude of the heart that withholds or properly orders one's appetites and affections toward created things for the purpose of serving God and others.

**Materialism** - A preoccupation with or stress upon material rather than intellectual or spiritual things.

**Virtue** - An habitual and firm disposition to do the good. The moral virtues are acquired through human effort aided by God's grace; the theological virtues are gifts of God. **(CCC 1803)**

## TEACHING GUIDE 15 min

- We live in a materialistic culture that tells us we must have the latest trends and gadgets to be happy. But does all that stuff really make us fulfilled? **(CCC 1723)**
- That’s what we’re going to dive into as we look at how possessions can distract us from what matters most — our relationship with God and others.
- We’ll also explore what the Catholic Church teaches about materialism and living simply.
- By the end, the hope is that we’ll feel empowered to live with open hands — not clinging to stuff, but clinging to God. We’ll discover how to stay focused on God’s kingdom rather than get distracted by the stuff of this world. **(Matthew 6:33)**

### Main Point 1:

**Material possessions are not bad in themselves, but when we become attached to them, they can distract us from our relationship with God and prevent us from living out our mission as Catholics.**

- To start, let’s define materialism — it’s valuing worldly possessions and success over spiritual matters. It’s basing your joy and sense of self on what you own. **(CCC 1723) (Going Deeper #1: “Materialism”)**
- There’s nothing inherently wrong with having nice things. Money and possessions can be used for good purposes. The problem comes when they start to control us.

Share a story about an item you became overly obsessed with (such as a new phone) and how time spent on that item adversely affected some of your relationships.

- Material things like phones are meant to serve us, not rule us. But when we make idols out of possessions, we become slaves to them. We start valuing them over relationships, prayer, and serving others. **(Matthew 6:24)**
- Research shows that the more materialistic people are, the less satisfied they are with life, because things don’t actually satisfy our deep spiritual longings. Only God’s love can do that! (Tim Kassar and Richard M. Ryan: “A dark side of the American dream,” American Psychological Association)
- Attaching ourselves to things of this world also makes it hard to share what we have generously. We grip tightly rather than live with open hands. This directly opposes Jesus’ call to serve the poor and vulnerable. **(Luke 12:33-34)**

- So, how can we tell if possessions are becoming too big of a priority in our lives? Ponder on the following questions:

Project the following:

- Do I spend more time shopping or playing with new gadgets than I do in prayer or service?
- Do I obsess over brands and compare my stuff to what other people own?
- Do I constantly desire newer, nicer possessions?
- Am I reluctant to lend things out or give donations?

## Main Point 2:

**Detachment is a virtue that fosters dependence on God, placing Him above all else and viewing our possessions as gifts intended for serving others.**

- If materialism is the problem, detachment is the solution. Detachment means freedom from attachment to worldly possessions and pleasures.
- It's closely linked to the virtues of generosity, humility, and trust in God. Detachment recognizes that since God created all things, we are simply stewards responsible for sharing what we've been given. **(CCC 2544)**
- Detachment does not mean we can't appreciate and enjoy the good things in life! It does mean, however, that we relate to them in a healthy way — as gifts from God rather than sources of meaning and identity.
- Detachment also does not require giving away everything you own! It's more an attitude of open hands — being ready and willing to share possessions for the sake of serving God and others. We recognize that our worth comes from being beloved children of God. **(Going Deeper #2: "Rich in This Life and the Next")**
- There are so many benefits when we stop clinging tightly to things and start clinging tightly to God instead. We become less selfish, less worried, and more generous.
- We stop chasing the lie that we need to acquire more to be content. We realize that living simply allows us to be freer and more attentive to the eternal. We should remember what Jesus said:

## SCRIPTURE

Project and read **Matthew 6:21** or ask a leadership teen to read it.

## SUGGESTION

When presenting in front of a group, **use a Bible** to read Scripture rather than a digital copy or a paper printout.

- Saints like Francis of Assisi can inspire us in detachment. Though he was wealthy, Francis renounced material comforts to live in poverty. He found immense joy in serving others and praising God with his life.
- We likely won't be called to give up everything, but small acts of generosity train our hearts in detachment. Donate clothes you no longer wear. Offer to share your favorite possession with a sibling or friend. Tithe a portion of any money gifts you receive.
- As we become less attached to stuff, we make more room for God to fill our hearts.

### Main Point 3:

**Through prayer, reflection, and action, we can grow in detachment and in our appreciation for the things that truly matter: our relationship with God, our relationships with others, and our spiritual growth.**

- Now that we've explored the problems of materialism and the power of detachment, let's talk about some practical tips for growing in this virtue.
- Take stock of your stuff and simplify — Go through your possessions and consider what you can give away. Make sure what you keep truly serves a purpose or brings joy. A cluttered space can clutter the soul.
- Practice gratitude — Remind yourself that everything is a gift on loan from God. Cultivate a heart of thanksgiving rather than entitlement.
- Be generous — Look for regular opportunities to share your time, talents, and possessions with others. Let go of the scarcity mindset.



- Tithe on any money you receive — Figure out a percentage you can consistently give away when gifted money for birthdays or holidays. Train your heart to hold possessions loosely.
- Limit impulse shopping — Ask yourself if a purchase is driven by true necessity, creativity, or peer pressure. For bigger purchases, give yourself one night of sleep between the impulse to buy and the time you actually make a purchase.
- Fast from technology — Set boundaries on screen time to train yourself that possessions don't control you. Make time for people and God instead.
- Prayerfully meditate on impermanence — Remind yourself that nothing in this world will last. Focus on storing up eternal treasure instead. **(Matthew 6:19-20)**
- Ask God for freedom — In prayer, bring Him your attachments and desires for stuff; ask for a detached heart that longs for Him alone.
- Study detachment role models — Learn from saints and others who live(d) simply, like St. Francis of Assisi.
- Trying these ideas may feel uncomfortable initially, but you'll experience new freedom as you cling less tightly to stuff. God will fill your hands with greater gifts if you offer them open to Him!
- When we let go of clinging to possessions, we can cling to God and experience joy and purpose that doesn't depend on stuff.
- This requires taking a courageous look at our priorities and making small daily choices to live more simply and generously.
- Imagine the difference we could make in the world if we didn't focus so much on accumulating things but instead on generously meeting needs.
- Let's choose to walk the path of detachment. Our hands may hold less stuff, but our hearts will hold more peace. And we'll stand out as radical witnesses of God's generous love!

# BREAK

## **START SOMEWHERE** 10 min

Project the list below of the ways to grow in detachment shared during the Proclaim. Invite the teens to quietly reflect on which one of these steps they want to try and the practical ways they can implement it in the coming week. Play soft, reflective music in the background.

- Take stock of your stuff and simplify
- Practice gratitude
- Be generous
- Tithe on any money you receive
- Limit impulse shopping
- Fast from technology
- Prayerfully meditate on impermanence
- Ask God for freedom
- Study detachment role models

## **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION** 20 min

After a few minutes of reflection, gather the teens in their small groups. Have them pair up and share which step they chose to reflect on and how they plan to implement it this week. Once they have shared, transition to a time of small group discussion. Use the following questions as a guide, but be aware of where the Holy Spirit is leading the discussion. Moreover, do not feel the need to rush through all of the discussion questions. Only move on to the next question when the conversation has organically ended.

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Whip Around Question: What is one item you own that other people could easily identify you by (e.g., water bottle decorated with stickers, specific type of shoes or shirt, backpack)?

1. Why do you think society places such a high value on material possessions? How can this distract us from our relationship with God?
2. Can you recall a time when a desire for material possessions caused you stress or distraction? How did you handle it?
3. What does detachment mean to you? How does this virtue help us to rely more on God and less on material possessions?
4. How can viewing our possessions as gifts to be used for serving others change our perspective and behaviors?
5. Why are our relationship with God, our relationships with others, and our spiritual growth more valuable than material possessions? Can you share a personal experience that illustrates this?

# SEND

## **FULFILLED IN GOD** 15 min

Gather everyone back into the main meeting space. Pass out index cards and writing utensils to everyone as they enter. Have them write the word “Why?” at the top of the card and then four more times underneath it with blank space in between each word. After that, open this activity with the following words or something similar.

*We all have things in our life that we are attached to. Our society makes it really easy to find our value and satisfaction in the things we own. Tonight, we are going to try to get to the root of why we hold on to some of the things in our lives so tightly. What are we really seeking in them? I encourage everyone to participate in this activity and be honest with yourself.*

*I want everyone to think of a material possession they feel particularly attached to. It could be your phone, a certain article of clothing, a gaming system, your car, etc.*

Give everyone a moment to think.

*We’re going to examine our attachment to that thing using a method known as the five whys.*

*With that material possession in mind, I want you to ask yourself the following question.*

*Why am I attached to this thing? (e.g., Why am I attached to my phone?)*

*When you have an answer, write it beneath the first “Why?” on your card.*

*(e.g., because it makes me feel connected)*

Give the teens a moment to think and write.

*Now, I want you to examine that answer by looking for the deeper why. Why is this the case? What am I looking for or seeking in this? (e.g., Why do I want to feel connected?)*

*When you have that answer, write it beneath the second “Why?” on your card.*

*(e.g., because it makes me feel like people care about me and that I’m valued)*

Give the teens a moment to think and write.

*We're going to repeat the same process three more times. Every time, look for the deeper why in your answer.*

Example:

Why am I attached to my phone?

Because it makes me feel connected

Why do I want to feel connected?

Because it makes me feel like people care about me and that I'm valued

Why do I want to feel like people care about me and that I'm valued?

Because it gives me self-esteem

Why am I looking for self-esteem from others?

Because aside from their opinion, I doubt my value

Why do I doubt my value?

Because I'm not confident in my own worth

Continue to walk the teens step by step through the five whys. Once they are done, invite the teens to think for a moment about what they are actually trying to fulfill by grasping at material possessions. Then, continue the activity with the following or similar words.

*God desires to satisfy us to the full. He is the answer to our deepest needs and longings. He wants to be the one who fulfills whatever need we're seeking in this material possession. When we try to find satisfaction in these things apart from Him, we will always be left feeling empty. Whatever void we are trying to fill in our lives can only be satisfied in Him. When we place our hope, trust, and desire in Him, we can be led to ultimate fulfillment.*

Invite the teens to quietly offer a simple, heartfelt prayer, asking God to fulfill whatever desire they are seeking. Offer the following as an example.

*God, You say that You love me. Help me to experience Your love in my life. I know that I am seeking/need \_\_\_\_\_. Give me the grace to seek that in You, who alone can satisfy the deepest longings of my heart. Help me to detach from material possessions to be available to You and others.*

After everyone has had time to offer their prayer, lead a closing prayer asking for God's guidance and grace to live a life of detachment, prioritizing what truly matters.

### **SUGGESTION**

For a more reflective environment, play some instrumental music softly in the background for the duration of this activity.

### **CLOSING PRAYER AND ANNOUNCEMENTS** 5 min

Invite the preselected core member to lead a closing prayer. Make announcements for your program, then dismiss the teens.

### **STEP IT UP**

A well-placed song increases energy and makes everyone feel great. Empower the core member tasked with audio-video support to prepare an upbeat song from the Life Teen Spotify playlist to play as the teens leave the Life Night and start their week.



# AFTER THE LIFE NIGHT

Most core members are tired at the end of the session, but be sure to do two things upon the completion of a Life Night.

## FIRST, CLEANUP

(aka, “Your maintenance team’s favorite ministry.”)

You can guide the core team to this time with the following prompt:

*Do not rush the teens out the door, but as relational ministry naturally wraps up, **let’s all work together** to clean up the main meeting space and put things away.*

Set a timer and work for ten minutes, ensuring everyone sticks around. The fastest way to a divided core team is for one or two members to neglect cleanup.

## SECOND, EVALUATE

After all the teens have left, appreciate what God has accomplished through the Life Night. **Share the praise reports. Identify who or what needs follow-up.** Set a timer and invite the group to share in these five categories of the Life Night: Pros, Cons, Questions, Comments, and Concerns. Remind the core team that evaluations are intended to improve the teens’ experiences at Life Teen and are not critical judgments of a youth minister’s or core member’s performance. As you discuss, encourage the core team to consider each of the Life Night movements of Gather, Proclaim, Break, and Send, or pass out/email the evaluation forms. Conclude your time together in prayer and praise to God.



# LIFE NIGHT EVALUATION

## GOAL

To inspire a sense of detachment, cultivating an appreciation for what truly matters — our relationship with God, spiritual growth, and service to others.

On a scale of 1-10, how well did this Life Night accomplish the goal we set?

Did not accomplish

Nailed it

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

What was the strongest aspect of this Life Night?

Gather

Proclaim

Break

Send

Environment

Optional: Please explain further.

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What kind of follow-up do we need to do after this Life Night?

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What can we improve for future Life Nights? How can we accomplish this?

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