

THE CREED SESSION 1



The CONNECT section of the Parent Sheet connects you with the information that was presented to your teen in our last small discipleship group. The DISCUSS section contains questions that you can use to start meaningful discussion on the topic covered and how it relates to your teen's life. The COMMIT section explains to you the commitment or challenge that your teen committed to as a way to grow in his/her faith.

An old proverb says the longest journey begins with a single step. This week your teen entered into a journey of faith development that will last for a lifetime and will, hopefully, end in heaven.

CONNECT

Like all journeys, this one begins with a single step—the step of faith. Without that first step, the journey would simply be an intellectual exercise into the teachings of the Catholic religion. With faith, the journey becomes the foundation for deepening a loving relationship with God.

In this session the following topics were discussed:

- The God who is Love—the mystery of the Holy Trinity
- Why God made us, and the relationship He wants to have with us
- How faith is our response to God's invitation
- How to live our relationship with God: three practical tips for prayer



"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

—Hebrews 11:1

DISCUSS

In this session the teens shared details of the longest journey they had ever been on.

Here are some conversation starters for this week. Remember to share your perspectives as well.

- What journey have you been on with our family? What are your memories from that journey?
- Why do you think God wants to be with us on our journey?
- How is faith our response to God's invitation?

COMMIT

This week the teens' commitment is to choose a time each day to reflect on the quote below from the *Catechism*. They were each challenged to sit quietly, asking for the grace to receive God's loving gaze and to speak to Him as a friend, sharing their thoughts, feelings, and desires. Afterward, they are to share what they experienced in this prayer with someone who is close to them.



"God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange."

—CCC 221

THE CREED SESSION 2



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Today, many people tend to think they can decide for themselves what is true and what is morally right or wrong, and ultimately decide on their own what God wants for their lives. But in this week's lesson, we see that God loves us too much to leave us to our own devices.



CONNECT

In this session the teens were reminded that the love the Father has for them is so great that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as the fullness of His divine disclosure. This divine Revelation has been passed down through the centuries by means of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The teens discussed the importance of understanding that Scripture and Tradition have been entrusted to the teaching authority (Magisterium) of the Catholic Church—the Church established by Christ Himself.

The leaders walked with the teens to a deeper understanding of Revelation and how the Church lives with this reality. The teens were given the analogy of God's Revelation, as handed on by the Church, as a sort of sacred compass comprised of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. When we submit our lives to the compass of God's Revelation, we are led out of the confusing currents and fads of the modern world and liberated from our own selfish desires. As that happens, we are pointed to the true path for human happiness, for God's Revelation leads us into a relationship with the One who is our true North Star—Jesus, the Christ.



"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."
—John 3:16

DISCUSS

Here are some discussion starters you can use to follow up on this session with your teen. Remember to share your perspectives as well.

- » How is faith more than believing?
- » What are some characteristics of Jesus that you want to emulate?
- » Is it possible to look for Jesus in others? How is this done?

COMMIT

This week the teens were challenged to pick up the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (or read it online) and scan the subject index in the back. Then they were asked to pick a topic that they would like to understand more deeply and read about that topic in the *Catechism* and the Scripture references that are the foundation of that teaching.



"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."

—Philippians 2:5–8

THE CREED SESSION 3



The CONNECT section of the Parent Sheet connects you with the information that was presented to your teen in our last small discipleship group. The DISCUSS section contains questions that you can use to start meaningful discussion on the topic covered and how it relates to your teen's life. The COMMIT section explains to you the commitment or challenge that your teen committed to as a way to grow in his/her faith.

Basically everyone knows what a Bible is, even those who have never read a word of it. If you ask those people what the Bible contains, they might say that it is full of a lot of rules and moral teaching, and maybe some stories they learned as children, like Adam and Eve and Noah's Ark. In this session the teens learned that the Bible is much more than that. The Bible is God's love letter to humanity.



CONNECT

In the Sacred Scriptures, our Father in heaven reaches out to lovingly talk to His children. Today, teens came to the understanding that through the words of the Bible, God speaks to us in a deeply personal and intimate way. Within its 73 books, the Bible outlines God's plan for salvation, starting with Creation; moving through his interaction with his chosen people, Israel; and finally culminating with the story of how his Son, Jesus, entered into time and put a human face on the Divine.

The teens looked at references from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that explain that in the Bible "God speaks to man in a human way" (CCC 109) through the work of human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In the words of Sacred Scripture, God wants to guide our daily lives so that we can come to know and love Him on earth and be with Him in heaven for eternity.

In this session the group discussed God's love letter to humanity—the Bible—and how it was inspired by the Holy Spirit to initiate conversation with us.



"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

—Psalm 119:105



PARENT TIP

Want to dive deeper in this topic? You have access to the same videos that your teens see during each session through your parish's YDisciple subscription!



DISCUSS

Here are some conversation starters to help you talk with your teen about this week's session. Remember to share your perspective as well.

- » What is your favorite Scripture passage, and why?
- » How is it possible that we can say "it was like God was speaking directly to me when I read this Scripture passage"?
- » What is true about the statement "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ"?
- » How can more time spent with Scripture help you out in your daily life? In what ways are you going to spend more time in Scripture?



COMMIT

The teens' commitment for this week is to look up the Scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday Mass, available at uscgb.org/bible/readings. They were encouraged to spend some time reflecting on how God, through Scripture readings, is speaking to their head, heart, and hands. They should reflect on these questions: "What is the Scripture telling you intellectually? What is it conveying to you personally? What action is it prompting you toward?"

THE CREED SESSION 4



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Humans are natural-born storytellers. From the nights when primitive peoples gathered around a flickering campfire to discuss the tribe's mammoth hunt, to today's blogs about our cats and dinners, we share the stories of our lives with almost anyone who will listen. We do so for many reasons, but one of the most important is that we want to know that our lives have meaning and significance. We tell our stories so that we can feel like our existence is not in vain.



CONNECT

In this session the teens discussed how the story of salvation, which we profess in the Creed, is, as the famous movie title says, "The Greatest Story Ever Told." That great story assures us that there is a purpose to life and a reason for our own lives. It tells us that we aren't merely spectators to the passage of time. From the beginning of history when our first parents rebelled against God, through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus, God has been writing His plan of salvation. The teens discussed the reality that we each have God-given roles to play in that story and if we refuse God's loving invitation, the entire world is poorer. The reality is that God's story of love isn't complete without each one of us.

In this session the teens discussed:

- The three major parts in the story of salvation: Creation, the Fall, and Redemption
- How originally we were united with God and experienced harmony within the human family
- How sin broke our unity and left us with an inclination toward sin, called concupiscence
- How Jesus came to restore us to the Father, but also to establish the Catholic Church to gather the broken family of humanity into the united family of God



"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

—Ephesians 1:3–10



PARENT TIP

Want to dive deeper in this topic? You have access to the same videos that your teens watch during their small group session through your parish's YDisciple subscription!



DISCUSS

Here are some discussion starters you can use to follow up on this session with your teen:

- » Why is it important for us to feel a part of salvation history? Why is it important for us to have a story, or mission, in life?
- » How is it that God's plan of salvation can give us confidence about His mercy and His own plan for our lives?
- » If you were a character in the Bible, what would we say about your story up to this point? Do you play the role of a great follower of God? Or do you play a small role? Are you an opponent of God's plan?



COMMIT

This week the teens are encouraged to pray with the "Meditation on Two Standards" by St. Ignatius of Loyola. During their meditations on this prayer, teens are asked to honestly consider these questions: What side attracts you the most? In what ways are you pursuing the standard of Christ? In what ways do you find yourself lured by the standard of the devil? How can you live more for Christ's kingdom and not Satan's?

THE CREED SESSION 5



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Today most people agree that Jesus was a historical figure, a first-century Jew who was crucified by the Romans in the city of Jerusalem. Many would even agree that He offered some good moral teachings such as "love your neighbor," "turn the other cheek," and "don't judge." However, the idea that Jesus is not just a moral or spiritual teacher, but God Himself, is as controversial now as it was in Jesus' own time. It's much easier to put Jesus into the same category as Buddha, or Mohammed, or Confucius—a spiritual messenger, a prophet, a philosopher, but certainly not divine.



CONNECT

The teens discussed that there is no need for confusion of who Jesus is because as Christians we profess exactly who He is in the Creed: "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages." Jesus is not just someone sent from God; He Himself is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father."

This is not something the early Christians invented. Jesus Himself made the claim to divinity. If Jesus is not God, then, as C.S. Lewis famously noted, He is either a liar or a madman. But the fact that He did say that He is God, the I AM of the Old Testament, means that each of us is challenged to make a decision about what we believe. The teens were asked the same question that Jesus asked the Apostles: "But who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29) How we answer His question makes all the difference for our lives. It is the fundamental decision each one of us must make—a decision that will last throughout eternity.

In this session the following topics were discussed:

- How, in the fullness of time, God has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus
- How Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, took on human nature without losing His divine nature
- That Jesus is the one and only mediator between God and man

- That Jesus is one Divine Person who possesses two natures
- Why Jesus became man: so that we can be reconciled to God and know God's love



"Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.'"

—John 6:68–69



PARENT TIP

Want to dive deeper in this topic? You have access to the same videos that the teens watch through your parish's YDisciple subscription!



DISCUSS

Here are some conversation starters for this week. Remember to share your perspectives as well.

- » What are some arguments you've heard at school or amongst your friends about Jesus that goes against who He is?
- » If Jesus is in fact God, what kind of things would you expect Him to do?
- » In what ways do you need to make Jesus the Lord of your life, instead of making yourself the lord of your life?



COMMIT

The teens' commitment for this week is to take 15 minutes to read C.S. Lewis' famous quote about whether we could consider Jesus simply a "great moral teacher."

They were encouraged to prayerfully imagine Jesus standing before them and asking them the question He asked His Apostles: "Who do you say that I am?"

THE CREED SESSION 6



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Perhaps the Cross of Jesus has become almost too familiar. Some of us might see images of crosses and crucifixes so often that we may not realize that in the ancient world, the cross was a horrifying image—a little like an electric chair is today. Yet, the cross is the primary symbol of our faith, through which Jesus has given us the gift of salvation and eternal life.



CONNECT

This week the teens discussed Jesus' work of redemption, accomplished principally through His passion, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven—the Paschal Mystery. The word *paschal* refers to Jesus' offering of His life as the new Passover (or Paschal) Lamb for our salvation. We express this in the Mass when we say, "We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess Your Resurrection until You come again." Underlying the Paschal Mystery is one fundamental reality: Jesus gives Himself completely in love to the Father on our behalf to restore our relationship with God. And Jesus, through His death on the cross, also reveals to us that we are all called to the sacrificial love that leads to true happiness here on earth and eternal joy in the next life.

Throughout this session the teens discussed:

- How the Cross "works"—how it brings about our salvation
- How Christ, being fully human and fully divine, was able to heal our relationship with God through His sacrificial death
- The meaning of Jesus going to the realm of the dead and opening heaven's gates
- That by His death, Jesus liberates us from sin
- That by His resurrection, He opens us to new life
- How Jesus invites us to unite our entire lives with His self-giving love on the cross



"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."

—Philippians 2:5–8



DISCUSS

Here are some conversation starters to help you start a dialogue with your teen. Remember to share your perspectives as well.

- » In what ways do you experience sacrificial love in your life?
- » How does Jesus' suffering on the Cross become a great gift?
- » How can our suffering become a great gift?



COMMIT

For this session, your teen's commitment is to turn to God for help the next time suffering enters into his/her life, and to think of someone who is suffering and offer a prayer for that person to unite his or her suffering to that of Christ on the cross.



PARENT TIP

This week your teen's commitment is to pray for a personal acquaintance (friend or relative) who is suffering. Try as a family to pray with your teen for that person, too!

THE CREED SESSION 7



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A little boy who is said to have died and gone to heaven was asked to describe the Holy Spirit. He paused for a moment and then said, "Hmmm, that's kind of a hard one. He is hard to describe, but you know He is there." We all have mental images of Jesus and God the Father, but the Holy Spirit can be more challenging to describe.



CONNECT

We all have different depictions of the Holy Spirit. Maybe you picture a dove, as the Spirit appeared at Jesus' baptism. Or tongues of fire or a rushing wind, as at the first Pentecost. In this session we discussed the reality that occasionally the Holy Spirit can be more mysterious than the other Two Persons of the Trinity. The teens were affirmed that even lifelong Christians can sometimes have trouble relating and praying to the Holy Spirit.

With that in perspective, the teens were reminded that it is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity—the bond of love between the Father and the Son—who dwells in our hearts and enables us to become sons and daughters of the Living God.

In this week's session, our discipleship group took a closer look at who the Holy Spirit is, how the Spirit operates in our lives and in the life of the Church, and why it is absolutely essential that we come to know and love the Spirit if we are to enter into full relationship with the Trinity. In short, we learned, in the words of the traditional prayer, why we need the Holy Spirit in our lives to "renew the face of the earth."



"In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

—Ephesians 1:13-14



PARENT TIP

- » Want to learn more about the power and miracles of the Holy Spirit? Throughout the centuries the Spirit has been doing many amazing works—healing, mighty deeds, prophecy, and much more. Do a search online for these miracle stories from the last several centuries:
- Lenciano Eucharistic Miracle
 - Rosary Hiroshima Miracle
 - St. Padre Pio miracles
 - St. Joseph Cupertino miracles
 - St. Vincent Ferrer miracles



DISCUSS

Here are some conversation starters to help you talk with your teen about this week's session. Remember to share your perspectives as well.

- » Why do you think the Holy Spirit is so mysterious and sometimes known as the “forgotten God”?
- » How will a relationship with the Holy Spirit transform your faith?
- » Have you ever prayed to the Holy Spirit and heard or seen Him respond in your life? If not, what has kept you from praying to the Holy Spirit?



COMMIT

This week your teen was challenged to focus on someone who needs to experience the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their life. They were asked to consider:

- Who is someone that God can love through you this week?
- What is the opportunity this week might bring for you to connect with this person?

THE CREED SESSION 8



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"I'm spiritual, but I'm not religious." How many times have you heard someone say something along those lines? In our day and age that stance is popular, especially among people who have stopped attending church but who continue to believe in God (or at least a "higher power"). We talked about what our response should be when someone says that they just don't want to be tied to rules and regulations, or that they prefer to have a "personal relationship" with Jesus but that they don't need the Church.



CONNECT

Throughout this session the teens came to the understanding that merely telling those people who "don't believe in a religion" that they are wrong isn't going to be convincing, but that they have to take the time to explain how religion and spirituality are intricately interwoven, as well as how Jesus never expected us to follow a spiritual path without a community: the Church. The teens discussed the need to point out that the truly spiritual life is, as Jesus Himself said, like a vine in which He is the trunk and we are the branches. The session touched on the interconnectedness we have through our beliefs, our worship, and our desire to know and understand the truth. And once we understand the truth, we realize that it is as impossible to be spiritual without being religious as it is to swim without getting into the water.

In this session the following topics were discussed:

- The mystery of the Church and what it means in our lives
- How the Church has two dimensions: human and divine
- The three ways the unity of the Church is made manifest
- The four marks (or chief characteristics) of the Church
- Why Jesus established only one Church
- How the Church can be holy while it is filled with sinners

- What it means when we say the Church is apostolic
- Why we call the Church “Catholic”



“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

—Ephesians 2:19–22



PARENT TIP

- » Check out two videos that bring up opposing views on the subject of why we need the Church. To find the first video search for “Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus-Spoken Word” by Jefferson Bethke. The second video is a Catholic response to the first video. Search for it under “Why I Love Religion And Love Jesus-Spoken Word” by Spirit Juice Studios.



DISCUSS

Here are some conversation starters for this week. Remember to share your perspectives as well.

- » What is the problem with the statement, “I am spiritual but not religious”?
- » In what ways is the Church a family?
- » What is your response for someone who says, “I am not into the whole Church thing; I can just have a personal relationship with Christ”?
- » How does embracing the Church’s authority challenge us to deeper conversion?



COMMIT

This session’s commitment for participants is to take some time to formulate a response, using what they have learned in this session, to someone who says to them, “I am not into the whole Church thing; I can just have a personal relationship with Christ.”

THE CREED SESSION 9



The *CONNECT* section of the Parent Sheet connects you with the information that was presented to your teen in our last small discipleship group. The *DISCUSS* section contains questions you can use to start meaningful discussion on the topic covered and how it relates to your teen's life. The *COMMIT* section explains to you the commitment or challenge that your teen committed to as a way to grow in his/her faith.

"What's all the fuss about Mary and the saints?" many wonder. "Why do Catholics pray to her? Do they think she's a goddess? Doesn't all this attention to Mary take away from a relationship with Jesus?" For Catholics who know and love Mary, such questions may sound strange. In this session the teens walked through why, as Catholics, Mary is so important in both theological considerations and popular devotions.



CONNECT

Mary's presence in the life of a Catholic can seem second nature. Despite what the Church actually teaches about Mary, there can still be a bit of confusion—or even misunderstanding. If we are to truly understand and appreciate the one whom the poet William Wordsworth called "Our tainted nature's solitary boast," we need to learn who Mary really is and the essential role she plays in the life of every Christian.

Devotion to Mary and the saints is one way that Catholics come to know and love God and more deeply appreciate the great gift of salvation. Christians acknowledge that Jesus was "born of the Virgin Mary," but for many, Mary is little more than a statue in a nativity scene. Not for Catholics. For Catholics, Mary is the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, and the first and most perfect disciple of the Lord. In this session the teens learned just who Mary of Nazareth is, and why loving Mary brings us closer to her son, Jesus.



"And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.'"

—John 1:41–45



DISCUSS

Here are some conversation starters to help you engage your teen in discussion about this week's session. Be sure to share your perspectives, as well.

- » What are some common errors or misconceptions you've heard about Catholics' devotion to Mary?
- » How would you respond to someone who says you should only pray to God and not to Mary and the saints?
- » In what ways can you improve your devotion to Mary?
- » How is Jesus' command to St. John to "Behold your mother" a challenge to us in our own prayer life and journey with Jesus?



COMMIT

The commitment for this week is for the teens to pray the Prayer of Mary called the Magnificat each day and ask Mary to take them by the hand and lead them closer to her son, Jesus.

The Magnificat

*"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts,
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his posterity forever."* —Luke 1:46–55

THE CREED SESSION 10



The CONNECT section of the Parent Sheet connects you with the information that was presented to your teen in our last small discipleship group. The DISCUSS section contains questions you can use to start meaningful discussion on the topic covered and how it relates to your teen's life. The COMMIT section explains to you the commitment or challenge that your teen committed to as a way to grow in his/her faith.

What happens after we die? That's a question we all wonder about at some point. Death, and what happens afterward, is the last great mystery of life. While we all have questions, as Christians we have some answers as well, because Jesus has gone before us and through His resurrection has given us insight into what awaits us after the moment of our death. In this session we are going to explore what the Church calls the Four Last Things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell.



CONNECT

People have been asking the question about what happens when we die since the dawn of time. We have archaeological evidence that the earliest humans buried their dead with items indicating a hope for an afterlife. In modern times, a Google search for "life after death" comes up with nearly two BILLION results! Books that discuss "near death" experiences proliferate on Amazon.com. With a mixture of curiosity, fear, and hope, all of us long to know what happens after death.

Of course, no human knows the exact details of what happens when the curtain of life on this earth draws shut, but as Christians we have One who has gone before us in the person of Jesus, whose death and resurrection shed light on what awaits us.

The teens discussed that the Church has long taught that prayerful consideration of the Four Last Things—death, judgment, heaven, and hell—are an essential part of our growth and maturation as Christians. They also discussed that unless we take these things seriously, our life here on earth will lack meaning and focus, and that it is only when we consider the decisions we make in the light of eternity that our entire lives begin to make sense and our relationship with God can come to full maturity.



PARENT TIP

Want to go deeper with this topic? Check out Lighthouse Catholic Media's talk "The Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell" by Father Mike Schmitz.



DISCUSS

Here are some conversation starters to help you engage your teen in discussion about this week's session. Be sure to share your perspectives, as well.

- » What was the most interesting thing you learned about the Last Things that you didn't know before your small group session?
- » What is it that you would like God to say about your life and how it fits into His plan for the world?
- » How does living with eternity in mind change the way you view your everyday life?
- » What is your biggest fear about death? How can we work on that fear as a family?



COMMIT

The week's commitment for teens is for each to take some time to look over their life, their priorities, the way they spend their days. Your teen was challenged to reflect on these questions, "Is your life moving toward Jesus or away from Him? How would your life be different if you were truly making all your decisions in the light of your eternal destiny?"



"All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

—John 10:8-10