

SONQUEST: THE OUTSIDER

YOUTH LEADER DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

We can't wait to see everyone in Orlando in a few days! The organizers of SonQuest have decided to try something again this year that we think will really help our weekend together. Each year, it is our prayer that our teens LEAVE SonQuest CHANGED . . .

. . . but what if they could ARRIVE at SonQuest changed . . . and ready to grow!

The following guide is designed for youth workers, class teachers, or volunteers to use on the Sunday and Wednesday youth group meetings **leading up to** SonQuest.

Here is what YOU as a Youth Minister, group leader or class teacher can do:

1. Use this guide this coming SUNDAY and use the other for this WEDNESDAY as you prepare your group for the weekend. Feel free to add to or edit this guide as it fits the needs of your group.
2. Download the TEEN guide that contains a daily devotional for teens to do on the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday leading up to the big event. You can refer to this on Wednesday as teens will have had a few days to work through the daily devotionals.
3. Encourage your TEENS in class this Sunday morning to download the individual daily devotional guide, OR you can print it off and pass them out in class. E-mail or Facebook your group (if you have this capability) especially if they miss class on Sunday to let them know about the Daily Devotionals. Remind them each day through your own youth groups Facebook pages, etc.
4. You might even find these daily devotional guides helpful to refer to in your Friday/Saturday night devotionals AT SonQuest.

We realize that not everyone will take advantage of this, but for those who do, we feel they will have their heart prepared for what God will say to them this weekend.

All teens will be given a follow up devotional guide (along with some other helpful and creative "tools") AT SonQuest that will help them to process what they have heard and learned AND will challenge them to SHARE it with others.

Bottom line: We want SonQuest to last beyond the few days we are together, and we hope that by providing these guides, we can jumpstart the personal devotional life of the teens (and adults!) who will make the journey to SonQuest 2011: The OUTSIDER!

See you next weekend!

On behalf of the SonQuest team,
David Skidmore

COUNTDOWN TO SONQUEST . . .

USE IN SUNDAY CLASS:

These first two activities should be used to loosen up the group and prepare them for the deeper discussion that follows:

OPENER #1: Begin by finding out who in the class will be making the trip to SonQuest. Have a few of them share the highlights of this event so that those who have never been can be introduced to the meaning that SonQuest has for those in your group.

- Have them share why events like these are so special.
- Have them explain why this helps them to deepen their youth group relationships.
- Have them share the TWO things about SonQuest that they look forward to the most.

OPENER #2: Explain that the theme of SonQuest 2011 is “The OUTSIDER.”

To loosen everyone up and to get them prepared for deeper discussion, go around the room and ask each teen to share an answer to the following questions.

Leaders Note: If you have a large group (or little time), you might let them divide up into smaller groups and share their answers so that everyone can participate.

“Name a favorite movie that is known for a big surprising PLOT TWIST. Make sure it is an appropriate move to mention in class, but describe what it was and how you felt when you saw it.”

Follow-up Ideas: As students name these movies, make sure you have several different ones mentioned. Use the following to explore more deeply and have fun with this:

- What are other movies with unexpected twists?
- How do you feel when a movie is predictable?
- Do you find it hard to keep it a secret from your friends who have not yet seen the movie?
- Has there ever been a time when someone has spoiled a movie for you BEFORE you got a chance to see it?

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Facilitate the discussion by using the following questions:

You might begin this section with this “Very Personal Note from SKID”:

“Dear Person Who is About to be at SonQuest Again, I am sending you this PERSONAL note . . . just to YOU. I can’t wait to see you again, Person Who is About to be at SonQuest Again! It has been so long since we last saw each other.

As a matter of fact, it might be that you did not come last year, and I have you confused with my good friend, Person Who Came to SonQuest Last Year. In that case, consider this a personal note to YOU, my NEW friend. Since we are close, I will call you Person Who is About to Attend SonQuest for the First Time.

As you might or might not know, our theme for SONQUEST this year is based on the study of the journey of Esther. Her story is one that is full of Hollywood like, jaw-dropping turns that are full of irony that rival ANY good movie. While, it's true that nothing explodes or turns into a robot (or a vampire), and there is an absence of boy wizards, cowboys, aliens, or sinking ocean-liners, the characters in this story are rich and intriguing. IT is easy to get caught up in this story, and it is one of the real "page-turners" in the Bible that always leaves the reader wondering 'What will happen next?'. . . and Esther never saw it coming.

. . . and unlike Twilight, THIS is a story that a guy does not have to be embarrassed to admit he likes. Yes, it is a story about a woman. Yes, it is often used to talk about true beauty, and yes, there are tons of bible studies for girls based on this woman who would be queen, but the other main character rivals Obi Wan Kenobi in his wisdom, guidance, and strength. Mordecai may not wield a lightsaber, but this man of integrity is a character study ANY guy of ANY age needs to dive into.

We will be spending the weekend up to our necks in this story. Okay, that MIGHT have been a poor choice of words based on how things turn out, but hang in there . . . because it's going to be awesome. SonQuest is full of teaching, praise, fellowship and the occasional opportunity to make a video of your youth group doing something crazy in the lobby of the hotel that you can post to YouTube, but THIS year, allow God to encounter those of you who see yourself on the OUTSIDE looking IN. I know that you might be saying, 'God can't use ME.' If that is you, then prepare for YOUR story to take an unimaginable turn . . . one that . . . right now . . . you don't see coming. See you soon!"

*Your Close and Personal (and maybe facebook) Friend,
Person Who is Speaking at SonQuest*

Leaders Note: NOW explore the following questions. As the leader, facilitate discussion and affirm those who share and encourage them to respond and give feedback to the comments of others.

1. "Can you think of a time when you found yourself in a place or situation in which you were clearly out of place or did not fit in?"

Follow-up: Have those who are willing share in detail how this felt. Some of these might be humorous like sitting in the student section of an opposing team while wearing the

colors of your favorite team; while some might be a bit more serious like being lost in a bad part of town. Others might describe times when they found themselves at a party where things were happening they knew were not right but did not know how to leave.

Encourage and explore a variety of responses and share one or two of your own AFTER a few of the teens have answered.

Follow-ups to this question: Use the following to explore more deeply, but just get a few answers for each one.

“What are some reasons people might give for not fitting in?”

“What are some things we do to others to keep them from fitting in?”

“What are some things that might happen to push someone from being an OUTSIDER to being involved?”

2. Group Activity: Have some volunteers line up who think they know something about the story of Esther. When they line up, have the first person begin telling the story even if they are summarizing and leaving out details. When you say “NEXT”, the next person picks up where they left off and continues. See how long this can go on and how much of the story they can cover.

Leader’s Note: Part of this exercise is to expose that we may not know the story like we think we do OR we may be surprised that our teens ARE able to outline this story effectively. Either way, it is bound to be a learning experience for everyone.

3. Group Activity #2 “Who can be the first person to find where God is mentioned in the Book of Esther? Go!”

Leader’s Note: As you might already know (bit many teens DO NOT), the name of God is NEVER mentioned directly in the book of Esther. Point out that it is the ONLY book in the Bible with no mention of God.

Follow-ups to this question: Use the following to explore more deeply:

“What is your reaction to finding out that GOD is never mentioned in this book?”

“Why do you think it is that it is NOT mentioned?”

“Just because He is not mentioned what evidence of His hand do we have in the events of this book?”

“How was your looking for it a moment ago kind of like looking for the presence of God in the events of our lives?”

READ: Esther 4:12-14

4. "This might be THE most well known passage from the book of Esther. Put in your own words what Mordecai was saying to Esther."

Leader's Note: You MIGHT consider having all of the teens WRITE down an answer to this question before having anyone share out loud. It would be interesting to see the variety of paraphrased responses they come up with.

5. "Does anyone get the idea that God has tried to get YOUR attention through the wisdom and encouragement of a 'Mordecai' in your own life this past year? What is one POSITIVE thing about you TODAY that was NOT TRUE of you this time LAST YEAR?"

In other words, what is ONE area of growth you have seen in yourself? To what or to whom do you attribute this growth? (Leaders Note: This is a great question for teens to use some self-evaluation. Really encourage them to share so that others in the class can hear some good stories of growth in their peers. Be prepared to share an answer yourself.)

6. "Can you identify an area where you really want to take the next step of growth? Where do you really want to see a change?"

Leaders Note: For those who feel comfortable sharing, have them explain to the group what this area is and how they might develop a plan for growth.

READ: Esther 4:15-16

Explain that this is a theme verse of Esther and that you will explore it more deeply on Wednesday night.

7. Encourage your teens to download the Daily Devotionals designed for teens available at www.SonQuest.com or you can have them printed off to pass out to them in class. Encourage them to visit the SonQuest Facebook page each day to share their thoughts and to read the thoughts of others as they work through the daily devotionals.

CLOSING:

8. Have the class split into groups of 2-3 and spend some time in prayer over those areas in which they want to grow. Encourage them to pray FOR each other after exchanging specific requests.

COUNTDOWN TO SONQUEST...

USE IN WEDNESDAY CLASS:

OPENER: If you have a whiteboard or chalkboard in your class, use it to play a little game of **SonQuest Pictionary** (or Win, Lose, or Draw if you are older and are wearing a really bad sweater). Since this is Wednesday night, and there is a chance that there is more energy in the room since SonQuest is around the corner, use this to harness that energy and have some fun.

If you don't have a board, then use a large flipchart pad, etc. Have students compete GUY vs. GIRL to see who can guess the most pictures. Give each artist a time limit to go down the list. Or have them draw one at a time. Feel free to make up your own rules. Here are some ideas of items you can draw. Feel free to make up your own. Perhaps you could print them on note cards and have contestants draw out of a hat and see how many they can draw in one minute.

ROUND ONE: Things you see at SonQuest

- Church van
- Bible
- Swimming Pool
- Elevator
- DisneyWorld
- Wiley Lowe
- Teen Couples
- Youth Minister
- Worship Leader
- Baptism
- College Football

ROUND TWO: Things you find in Esther

- Palace
- King
- Gallows
- Chariot
- Scepter
- Horse
- Crown
- Feast
- Soldier

Be creative and come up with others on your own, OR have the different groups come up with some for the other team to do!

(Continue on with the GROUP DISCUSSION)

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Facilitate the discussion by using the following questions:

1. "Name your favorite MOVIE VILLAIN? Who are some of the all-time great/classic movie villains? Can the class generate a TOP TEN list that most can agree on?"

Follow-ups to this question: Use the following to explore more deeply, but just get a few answers for each one.

"What makes them better (well . . . WORSE) than other movie villains?"

"What are some characteristics shared by almost all classic villains?"

"Who can choose one of these classic villains to imitate?"

READ: Esther 6:1-6

Leaders Note: You MAY want to review a bit of the story that gets to this point in the narrative.

2. "What does Haman's response tell us about his character?"

3. "None of us want to identify with Haman, but from what you know about him, what are THREE characteristics of Haman that we are so tempted to imitate in our own lives?"

4. "Think back to our opening game. If people were to DRAW a picture of YOU, what kinds of things might they draw? How would they draw your youth group or your church? What kinds of efforts are you involved in as a group that people would associate with your youth group/church?"

CLOSING:

5. Have the class split into groups of 2-3 and spend some time in prayer about the coming weekend! Be sure to remind them to continue in their daily devotionals and to check out the Facebook site and post their thoughts.

Leaders: Thanks for your investment of your lives in the lives of these teens. We hope these guides have been helpful in preparing the way for GOD to take hold of some hearts in the coming days! Be safe . . . and we will see YOU at SonQuest!