

# Challengers



What we've prepared for you in this starter pack . . .

- 1 An overview and background information about Challengers
- 2 Suggestions for getting your group organized:
  - How to begin Challengers
  - Resourcing Challengers
- 3 More opportunities for Challengers:
  - Missions trips, projects, and events
  - Who to contact for help and advice
- 4 Samples!  
Included is one month of the resource for leading Challengers: *Challengers Leader*.



## Thank you!

Thank you for your interest in beginning a missions education program specifically designed for teenage boys in your church! Our team at national WMU® is here to assist you as you reach out and implement this new way of being “on mission” on a regular basis. Please contact us if you have questions, concerns, suggestions, or just want someone to talk with as you begin.

Contact information can be found at the bottom of this page as well as on our website: [wmu.com/Challengers](http://wmu.com/Challengers).

### WHY DOES MY CHURCH NEED CHALLENGERS?

Experiences in Challengers® help students develop awareness of God’s love for all people and their part in sharing God’s love with others. Involvement in Challengers leads students to progress from a focus on self to a focus on others. Students learn the missions concepts of praying for, giving to, and doing missions. Through Challengers, a foundation is set for missions for a lifetime.

Through Challengers teenage boys will

- Discover God in their everyday experiences.
- Go beyond the ordinary in their relationships with God.
- Experience God for Who He is.
- Become witnesses to God’s faithfulness.
- Gain a greater understanding of missions and how God is at work in the world.
- Participate in God’s awesome work around the world.

### ONLINE RESOURCES



[facebook.com/WMUChallengers](https://facebook.com/WMUChallengers)



[instagram.com/NationalWMU](https://instagram.com/NationalWMU)





# THE BASICS OF Challengers

## WHAT IS CHALLENGERS?

Challengers® is the WMU® missions organization for boys in grades 7–12. Challengers seeks to engage students in missions awareness and involvement.

## WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

All boys ages 12–17 or in grades 7–12 who want to participate can be members of Challengers. Church membership is not required. Challengers can include students from the same church or from different churches in a community or across the country via the Internet.

## WHO LEADS CHALLENGERS?

Challengers is designed to be led by godly men who will use the opportunity to not only educate young men about missions but also mentor them in their day-to-day lives.

## HOW DO STUDENTS LEARN IN CHALLENGERS?

Each month Challengers focuses on the work of a missionary in North America or an international country. Students learn through age-appropriate Bible studies and hands-on activities. Many activities in Challengers help students learn about cultural aspects of the missionaries' work. Students learn by hearing mission stories and using Bible verses related to missions.

## WHAT ABOUT MEETINGS?

Typically, Challengers groups meet for one hour each week. In addition, most groups will meet at the same time as Acteens® groups. (Acteens is WMU's missions education organization for teen girls.) If it is not possible to meet during this time, find a time that is suitable for all of the students in the group. Be sure to publicize the meeting time and place well.

## WHERE DO LEADERS GET THEIR IDEAS?

*Challengers Leader* is the annual curriculum piece for Challengers. It contains curriculum for a full year and follows an annual emphasis to provide a new look each year. Themes and lesson plans change annually because youth need variety and adult leaders do too! More information on this and other resources can be found on page 4.



# HOW TO BEGIN Challengers

## EIGHT EASY STEPS TO GET STARTED

1. Pray about the possibility of starting Challengers®.
2. Review the Challengers basics on [wmu.com/Challengers](http://wmu.com/Challengers) and watch a brief Get Started with Challengers video at [wmu.com/getstarted](http://wmu.com/getstarted) for additional information.
3. Meet with your pastor and student minister to discuss the importance of missions education for teenage boys through Challengers. Gain their support and pray together about starting Challengers in your church.
4. Determine how many Challengers groups and leaders you will need based on the size of your church. For safety and security reasons, make sure two adults are in the meeting room at all times.
5. Order your Challengers materials for leaders. See page 4 for resources and ordering information.
6. Begin promoting Challengers six to eight weeks before you plan to get started. Use your church's bulletin, newsletter, bulletin boards, website, and social media to share information about Challengers.
7. Have a kickoff meeting to introduce parents and students to Challengers.
8. Start your first meeting with prayer, and get ready to teach young men all about missions!

## WAYS TO GENERATE INTEREST

Begin with a core group of teenage boys in your church to start a discussion about Challengers. Advertise your group to all of the young men in your church and community, and be sure to include the new seventh-graders as well!

## ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR STAYING CONNECTED

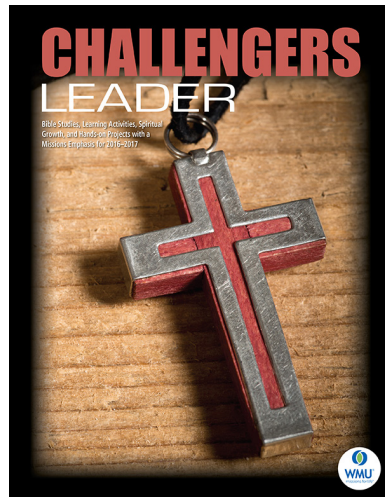
Create a Facebook page (or other social media page) and keep it updated so you can engage regularly with your group. If someone other than you is managing the page, provide them with regular updates to post. Send group emails or texts to your boys.

Personally invite teenage boys to attend!



Save 20% on these resources with promo code **PACK7**. Offer expires September 30, 2017.

# RESOURCING Challengers



## Challengers Leader

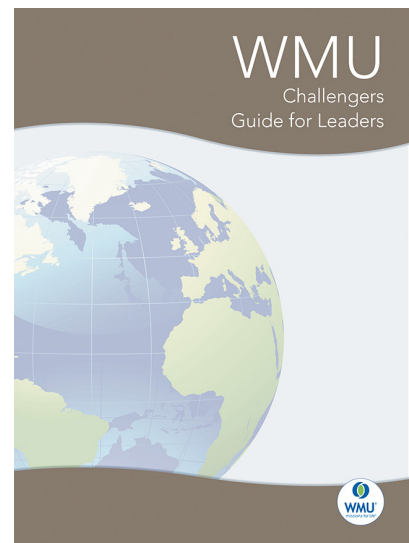
*Challengers Leader 2016–2017* plan book is a year’s worth of missions materials in one convenient resource. Designed for Challengers® leaders, this book provides easy-to-use, dated weekly lesson plans to lead this organization for young men. It also includes missions Bible studies, mission stories, spiritual growth activities, and missions activities.

M166104 • \$24.99

## Challengers Guide for Leaders

This is the most comprehensive resource for getting started. It includes guides for leading Challengers and how to organize a group at your church. It is a must-have for new missions leaders and for seasoned leaders who are looking for new ideas.

M127166 • \$5.99 (print)  
E126103 • \$4.99 (download)



Other materials for students such as ministry idea books and spiritual growth helps are available on [wmustore.com](http://wmustore.com).





# MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR Challengers

**More details on the following are at [wmu.com/Challengers](http://wmu.com/Challengers).**

Involvement in Challengers® leads students to progress from a focus on self to a focus on others. Students learn the missions concepts of praying for, giving to, and doing missions. In addition to classroom learning, the following opportunities are also available for Challengers.

## MISSIONS TRIPS

Challengers groups often participate in summer missions trips, both national and international. For more information or to explore possibilities, contact WMU's student ministry consultant at (205) 991-8100 or send an email to [challengers@wmu.org](mailto:challengers@wmu.org).

## MISSIONS EVENTS

Associational and state Challengers events allow teenage boys from several churches to meet together for camps, retreats, or other activities. Churches sometimes plan ministry projects that students can participate in together.

## MISSIONS PROJECTS

Find ideas for missions projects in *Challengers Leader*. Other projects may arise in response to needs in your community. Churchwide missions projects may call for help from Challengers groups. Often Challengers organizations like to work with Acteens® (WMU's missions organization for teenage girls) and the student minister to include all students in a missions project. Remember to include time for planning and training no matter the project.

## QUESTIONS?

**State WMU:** Contact your state student consultant. Links to websites of state offices may be found at [wmu.com/statecontacts](http://wmu.com/statecontacts).

**National WMU:** Email [challengers@wmu.org](mailto:challengers@wmu.org).

**To order resources:** Call WMU® Customer Service at 1-800-968-7301 or visit [wmu.com](http://wmu.com). Request a free WMU catalog when you place your order.

# CHALLENGERS LEADER

Bible Studies, Learning Activities, Spiritual  
Growth, and Hands-on Projects with a  
Missions Emphasis for 2016–2017



# **Challengers Leader**

**Bible Studies, Learning Activities,  
Spiritual Growth, and Hands-on Projects  
with a Missions Emphasis for 2016–2017**



Woman's Missionary Union®  
Birmingham, Alabama

Writer  
Judi Hayes

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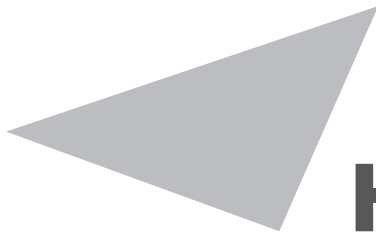
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# Challengers How-To

Missions is a big word! Missions encompasses so many meanings for us to live out. When you break it down, missions can be about praying, learning, giving, doing ministry, and witnessing. This is why Challengers® is an important part of your teenagers' lives. Through Challengers, teen boys

- ⇒ discover God in their everyday experiences.
- ⇒ go beyond the ordinary in their relationships with God.
- ⇒ experience God for Who He is.
- ⇒ become witnesses to God's faithfulness.
- ⇒ gain a greater understanding of missions and how God is at work in the world.
- ⇒ participate in God's awesome work in the world.

## Where Does Challengers Fit?

Challengers is the WMU® missions education organization for teenage boys, grades 7–12, that enables them to nurture a dynamic relationship with God, culminating in missions as a way of life for them. Challengers is a vital part of the total youth ministry program in a church.

Challengers is the place where young men learn to live missional lives every day. As young men plan and participate in missions activities like praying, giving, Bible study, ministry, and witnessing, they accept the challenge to be on mission with God and learn to live as Christ followers.

## Who Can Be a Challenger?

Any boy who is currently enrolled in grades 7–12 in school is eligible to be a part of Challengers. If your church has a Challengers organization, boys can join Challengers as their next step in missions discipleship from Royal Ambassadors® or simply by expressing an interest in belonging. Church membership is not required. In fact, Challengers can include youth

from the same church or from different churches in a community. The group can meet at the church, on a school campus, in a community center, or at a ministry site. You may even have multiple groups based on age, location, interests, or schedules.

If your church uses Challengers material interjected into an ongoing aspect of your youth ministry program, boys can participate by virtue of their place in your total program. They will learn as they are exposed to the material in the context of growing Christian discipleship.

## What About Sixth-Graders?

Since Challengers is geared for teenage boys, the materials are prepared for the abilities and characteristics of boys in grades 7–12 (ages 12–17). However, churches often have to decide whether sixth-graders are “children” or “youth,” especially if the school system in their community includes sixth-graders in middle school. WMU recommends keeping sixth-graders with Royal Ambassadors® (RA®) when possible. It's important not to rush sixth-graders into becoming youth before they are ready.

The final decision about placement is with the local church. Churches should take their time in deciding and choose carefully for themselves if sixth-graders should be part of Challengers.

## Who Leads Challengers?

Adult male leaders help make Challengers happen. Since Challengers is for young men, adult men are the ideal leaders for an organization. (For safety and security reasons, there should be at least two adult leaders per group.) Adult leaders form the Challengers planning team and are available to the young people to listen, gather input from them, coordinate member responsibilities, and guide the work of the group. Obviously, the planning team also

needs to work cooperatively and in a coordinated effort with the minister of youth or other youth leaders and the church's missions leaders.

But do adults do it all? Absolutely not! A good youth program has strong adult leadership. A great youth program includes youth in planning, coordinating, and organizing according to their interests, abilities, and skills. Delegate responsibility for specific projects, studies, or events to your Challengers members. They learn and grow by being actively and integrally involved.

## When Do Challengers Meet?

As you've probably already noted, one of the great things about Challengers is its flexibility. Challengers can be an organization, an emphasis within your total youth program, or your young men on mission!

If your church has a Challengers organization, you may want to meet weekly. Certainly there's more than enough material for your group in *Challengers Leader*. You might give time each week to a particular area, combining areas that seem to go naturally together. Or you may make the missions project your focus each month and structure the weekly meetings in such a way that everything you do informs the project.

For Challengers organizations, weekly meetings are a great idea, but Challengers can be a once-a-month group meeting as well. Over the course of the year, you'll want to give your teenagers different ways of looking at and being involved in missions.

Even greater flexibility is available when Challengers is integrated in the total youth ministry program of your church. Elements from *Challengers Leader* can be interspersed into regularly-scheduled youth meetings, Sunday School classes, Bible studies, or other programs, retreats, etc. With the number of learning opportunities provided, you can use one idea each week for the full year. You don't necessarily have to follow the plans in order. Choose the material that fits what your young people are studying in other areas of their lives and put a mission focus on the hot topic! In this way, you will make missions education relevant to the students.

## Where Are the Curriculum Plans?

*Challengers Leader*, published annually, is your curriculum piece. It contains the entire curriculum you need for a full year. *Challengers Leader* follows an annual emphasis to provide a new look each year. The themes and lesson plans change from year to year because youth need variety and adult leaders do too!

## How Do We Use Challengers Leader?

While the thematic approach to each year's curriculum will change, each issue of *Challengers Leader* will contain 12 units of study (one for each month). Each unit will contain the same four areas of focus: Bible Study session, Mission Story session, Spiritual Growth session, Missions Activity session.

Before starting, plan how you will use *Challengers Leader* throughout the year. The units are dated by month; however, you can use them in any order you wish. It is suggested that you start with the September unit because it is the introduction to the year.

Choose the sessions you will use each month. Each unit gives enough sessions for a Challengers meeting each week. Sometimes the sessions require planning a project to be done at another time. Be sure to check the church calendar and consult with other youth leaders before choosing a time for the project.

As you choose a session, check for any preparations that need to be made. Look ahead each month or quarter so you will be prepared with all supplies, guest speakers, etc. Be sure to work with your church to include Challengers supplies and materials in your church's budget. Use your imagination to adapt material to meet the spiritual needs of the youth with whom you work.

## How Important Is Planning?

Planning is vital! As you plan, it's important to know what the point is. What are your goals for the young men in your Challengers group? What is it you want to happen in their lives as a result of their involvement in Challengers?

Also, you'll want to consider at least three types

of planning to get the job done: yearly, monthly, and ongoing planning with other missions leaders in your church and your youth minister or other youth leaders. Yearly planning is the planning described in the previous section. Yearly planning involves sitting down with your adult planning team before the year gets started and taking a long view of the curriculum and projects for the year. You will want to coordinate planning with other missions leaders in your church. Chart where you are going and the steps you'll take along the way to get there.

Monthly planning involves the adult planning team and any youth who are taking specific responsibilities for the month. For this planning session, *Challengers Leader* has everything you need. Decide what you want to emphasize in the curriculum for the month and who will do what. Briefly evaluate the previous month, asking, "What worked?" and "What do we need to do differently?" Briefly evaluate goals for the year to this point too. Plan together how to make the current month the best yet!

If your church has a youth minister and/or a developed youth ministry program, keep in mind that *Challengers* is a vital part of that total ministry. It is absolutely critical that you plan with your youth minister or other youth leaders. Before the year begins, discuss where and when your group will meet or at what points *Challengers* activities will be included in the youth program. On an ongoing basis, clear all dates and plans for special events through the youth minister, youth council, and/or the church staff to ensure you have a place on the church calendar and are not in competition with any other component of the youth program. Work together toward an annual youth missions trip (at fall break, during spring break, or during the summer). Demonstrate how *Challengers* can assist in training for the missions project. Be willing to be involved in getting the boys ready to go!

## Working with Acteens

*Challengers* leaders will find it helpful to work with Acteens® leaders along the way. At times, missions activities and projects can best be accomplished by working together. A meeting between the *Challengers*

leaders and the Acteens leaders can be planned annually, quarterly, or monthly depending on the amount of coordination desired.

## How Do We Grow Our Group?

Commit your leadership and the group to prayer. Seek God and His purposes for you and for the group. Trust God to work.

When it comes to attracting teenagers to anything, enthusiasm can't be beat! Be an enthusiastic leader. Your excitement will be contagious.

Identify prospects. Within your church, youth Sunday School is a good place to look for prospects. Children's missions programs (RA®) are also great places to start. Be intentional about helping preteens transition into *Challengers*. Don't overlook youth in the school down the street or in your neighborhood. Your group may come from your community.

Contact prospects. Use space in the youth or church newsletter. Make a call, text, or write a note of invitation for the personal touch. Involve teens in contacting and inviting other teens.

Get the word out. Hang posters and distribute flyers throughout the church building or community. Produce a video of your teenagers doing missions and fellowshiping together. Then show the video at a youth event and post it on Facebook or other social media sites. Have a couple of young people share testimonies about being on mission—what they enjoyed and how it has influenced them and carried over into their everyday lives.

More importantly, develop relationships with teenagers. Listen to them. Value them. Invite them into your home. Attend their extra-curricular activities. Be available to them. Stay in touch with them. Your presence and attention communicates love and support.

Start with a core group of students in your church or community. Give them your full attention. Pray for them fervently. Pour your life into them.

Keep a document with information about each member. Note his address, phone number, email address, birthday, family information, school, extracurricular interests and involvements, and spiritual development. (See p. 124 for an information form.)

Plan activities to build community. Find ways to make fellowships and events into ministry projects.

From the beginning, include Challengers in planning, organizing, and coordinating activities. Give them responsibilities and permission to take the lead. Help them have ownership in what they are doing.

Always be willing to try fun, innovative ways of inviting and encouraging new members. Always be willing to try fun, innovative ways of getting your message across. Always be willing to try fun, innovative ways of being on mission!

## What Other Resources Do Challengers Leaders Need?

The WMU Year Book 2016–2017 is an essential annual resource that gives a preview of materials and special projects for the year, plus a complete list of resources for youth and information about other WMU missions organizations and ministries.

Go to [wmu.com/prayercalendar](http://wmu.com/prayercalendar) for the monthly missionary prayer calendar to be used during your meetings. (See p. 9 for information on why praying for all missionaries is important and how to use the missionary prayer calendar.)

Many other missions materials for youth, such as ministry idea books, spiritual growth helps, Bible studies, missionary biographies, and leisure reading materials are available. Order a free WMU Catalog from WMU Customer Service by calling 1-800-968-7301 or view these products online at [wmu.com](http://wmu.com).

## What Else Do Challengers Do?

**Ministry projects:** Find ideas for ministry projects in *Challengers Leader*. Other projects may arise in response to needs in your community. Churchwide ministry projects may call for help from Challengers groups.

Often Challengers organizations like to work with Acteens (WMU's missions education organization for teen girls) and the youth minister to include all youth in a ministry project. Remember to include time for planning and training no matter what the project.

**Missions trips:** Challengers groups often participate in summer missions trips, both national and international. For more information or to explore possibilities, visit [wmu.com/trips](http://wmu.com/trips) or call (205) 991-8100.

**Special events:** Associational and state Challengers events can provide opportunities for youth from several churches to meet together for camps, retreats, or other activities. Churches often plan ministry projects, activities, and events that youth can participate in together.

## Missions Is All About Life

When you break it down, missions can be about praying, learning, giving money, doing ministry, and witnessing. But it starts with the joy of God's presence in a person's life. May it be so in your life as you lead your youth to be on mission. God bless you!





# Objectives for WMU in the Church: Foundations for Students

No matter where you go, you will never find two churches that are exactly the same. In the same way, you won't find two student missions organizations that are exactly the same.

WMU® provides a framework for how missions education should look and operate within the church. Currently, we do this through six areas of missions focus. These six important objectives shape WMU's holistic approach to missions learning and involvement:

- ⇒ Pray for missions
- ⇒ Engage in mission action and witnessing
- ⇒ Learn about missions
- ⇒ Support missions
- ⇒ Develop spiritually toward a missions lifestyle
- ⇒ Participate in the work of the church and denomination

As you seek to lead Challengers® in your church, know that the foundation and the framework of this organization is firmly based upon the objectives for WMU in the church. Be sure to read these objectives carefully. Throughout the year look for how these objectives are incorporated into the Challengers curriculum each week. You won't find each objective present in every lesson, but throughout the year you will see all of them addressed.

## Pray for Missions

Praying for missions is communication with God on behalf of missions work, the people involved in doing it, and the people who need to know and accept God's redeeming love.

All students can pray for missions. Christians in the early church prayed when they commissioned people for the work of the church (Acts 14:23). Paul, the first Christian missionary, often requested prayer on his and others' behalf as they went from place to place telling people about Jesus (Eph. 6:19). And

Paul prayed for the people he met in his travels (Eph. 1:16). He prayed for people to be saved (Rom. 10:1).

Each week as Challengers learn about missions needs and Christian witness and ministry at home and around the world, they will also learn about specific needs and requests of missionaries. As they learn about these needs, they will learn about the power of prayer and experience prayer in different ways—private prayers, group prayers, written prayers, prayerwalking, etc.

One way we seek to accomplish the objective *pray for missions* is to encourage Challengers to pray for the work of missionaries serving in North America and internationally. The missionary prayer calendar is one tool that WMU uses to guide this prayer effort.

The missionary prayer calendar ([wmu.com/prayercalendar](http://wmu.com/prayercalendar)) lists Southern Baptist missionaries on their birthdays. Teenage boys can use the prayer calendar as a reminder to “pray continually” (1 Thess. 5:17) for missions work everywhere.

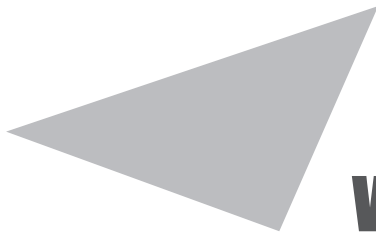
## Engage in Mission Action and Witnessing

To engage in *mission action* is to perform redemptive, loving service for people of special need or circumstance in the name and spirit of Christ, and sharing the gospel with them. Mission action is also responding to social and moral issues.

To *witness* is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with another person and giving that person an opportunity to confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

## Learn About Missions

Missions is the work of God through the church by which the gospel of Jesus Christ is extended in word and deed to all the people in the world.



# Using the WMU Emphasis with Teenagers

## **2016–2018 WMU Emphasis: By All Means**

“I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings”—1 Corinthians 9:22b–23

As adults, we make many commitments. We say yes to serving on committees at church and leading projects at work. We commit to new diets and exercise programs. We determine to save more and spend less. But how many of these commitments are we willing to fulfill by all means necessary?

We are tempted by a chocolate chip cookie and vow to cheat on our diets just this once. We play hard over the weekend, and when the church committee meeting is scheduled for Sunday evening we choose to miss just this once. We make exceptions to our commitments all the time.

But there are some exceptions—commitments we will keep no matter what, by all means necessary. We make a lifetime commitment to our spouse that is a commitment we will keep by all means. We commit to be good parents. We will stop at nothing to insure that our children have what they need, even if it means sacrificing something we want.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul describes becoming “all things to all people” so that “by all means” he might save some. By All Means is the WMU emphasis for 2016–2018. The focus of the student missions education materials will follow this theme as well.

Throughout the 2016–2017 church year, students involved in Acteens®, Challengers®, and Youth on Mission<sup>SM</sup> will be challenged as Christ followers to:

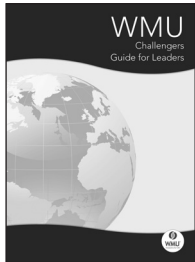
- ⇨ follow His example,
- ⇨ step into the world around them,
- ⇨ cultivate relationships, and
- ⇨ create opportunities to demonstrate the love of Christ.

As students focus on what it means to give their all in sharing the love of Christ with others—by all means available to them—they will be guided and encouraged to put into action the steps it will take for them to be fully committed as Christ followers. This year will be a challenging part of students’ faith journey as they continue to become missions disciples and seek to change their world on a daily basis.

For more information about By All Means, as well as student-related curriculum and products, visit [wmu.com](http://wmu.com) and [wmustore.com](http://wmustore.com).



# Challengers Essentials

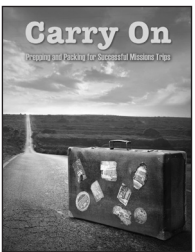


**Challengers Guide for Leaders**  
By encouraging missions education for teenage boys, WMU meets and anticipates the ever-changing needs of your missions efforts. With a comprehensive student focus, this guide is essential for missions leaders who are serious about

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Print: M127166 • \$5.99

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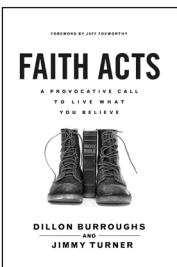


**Carry On**  
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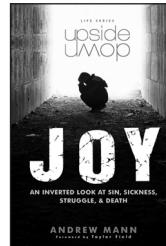


**Faith Acts**  
*A Provocative Call to Live What You Believe*  
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ANDREW MANN

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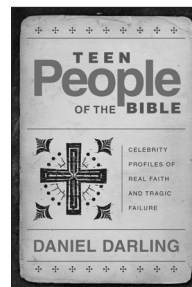


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*Truth for Teens in Today's Sexy Culture*  
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DANIEL DARLING

In *Teen People of the Bible*, you'll investigate stories of real people—young in age and in their faith—experiencing tough

situations with real consequences.

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September  
2016

# In the Beginning— God as Creator

## Month at a Glance

This is the beginning of a new church year. Most students are hopeful as they get started. They look forward to seeing friends and to having a better year than the last one. They are older, more mature, more experienced, more self-confident. They are ready to embrace their environment. You can help them make this year directed by God so that they are all He wants them to be just where they are.

It's a great time to begin at the beginning—in Genesis. In the first sentence of the Bible, we learn what the entire book is about. It's about God. The subject of the first sentence is the subject of the entire book. It is God's story from beginning to end. As we read these sacred words, we come to understand our own place in relationship to Him.

Teenagers may need a new perspective on their relationship with God. Some may have seen Jesus as their friend Who rescues them when they need Him. When they need help on a test, they call on God to come to their aid. When they don't have a specific need, they may think little about God or Jesus. They may think God's entire purpose in the world and in sending Christ is to meet their needs. Coming to the realization that it's all about God instead of being all about them may be a shocker. Their worldview as Christ's followers can experience a fresh start as they grow in their relationship with God through Christ and as they grow in relationship to others.

Think about the most significant beginnings in your life. Which of those opportunities to start again took place during your teenage years? How can you relate to guys in your group who may be going through these transitions? How can being grounded in God's Word help them through life's changes? How can the experiences, knowledge, and activities

of Challengers® equip them for life? Make the most of this opportunity to begin again.

For each session, provide pens and paper, extra Bibles, a whiteboard or flipchart and markers or chalkboard and chalk. Other supplies for the sessions will be listed in that session.

For each session, enlist a different student to name and to lead in prayer for the missionaries listed on the missionary birthday calendar. You can find the missionary birthday calendar at [wmu.com/prayercalendar](http://wmu.com/prayercalendar). The student can do this for the missionaries with birthdays on the date of your meeting or for the week of your meeting. If for the week, he can list a few names from each of the days, being sure to include both North American Mission Board and International Mission Board missionaries.

Before each session, read the content, prepare to lead discussions, and adapt the suggestions to meet the needs of your Challengers. You also have the freedom to choose which week you lead each of these sessions. Some months, the sessions are best led each week in the order they are listed in this book, and other months the order is not as important.

## BIBLE STUDY

Challengers will consider the characteristics of God as Creator, contemplate how God created with intentionality, and think about their response to God's ongoing concern for His creation.

## MISSION STORY

Amos and Sharon Fenner serve an unreached people group in the Philippines. Boys will consider what it would be like to living in another country, learning a new language, and adapting to a culture different from their own.

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Challengers can invite boys from a church in your community that doesn't have a Challengers group. Work with this group and their church to begin a Challengers group in their congregation. This can be an ongoing relationship and project that continues through the year.

## MISSIONS ACTIVITY

Challengers can do yard work to help senior adults in the community who are no longer capable of doing these activities themselves. (Be sure to include sharing information about your church with those your group helps.) Or students can provide a free community-wide car wash. As cars are washed, some Challengers may talk with car owners and passengers and share their faith along with information about your church.

## Bible Study

### In the Beginning—God as Creator

Genesis 1–2; Psalm 139

Can you imagine nothingness? It's difficult to do. A story is told in the business world about executives of a particular corporation being called in for a retreat. They were told that their entire product and everything related to it had been destroyed. They were to start over with their work. In spite of opposition, the executives went along with the directive. In doing so, they created a new product with many enhancements. In the past, they had begun their work with what they had and tried to make it better. Often that meant trying to overcome the flaws in the existing product. Even in beginning again, those executives were starting with technology and products they understood well.

God alone creates from nothing. The vast universe was in the mind of God before He created it. Before the creation, recorded in the first chapters of Genesis, nothing existed except God. God existed. The Trinity existed. Notice the words in Genesis 1:26: "Then God said, 'Let *us* make mankind in *our* image, in *our* likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move

along the ground'" (emphasis added).

Then, God decided to create a world.

Genesis 1 and 2 contain two views of the story of creation—a day-by-day account and a story told more in a narrative form. It's easy to read the stories, especially the one in chapter 2, and think it's all about us—about humankind. God created everything else for people, His highest creation. Right? No! Not at all.

Genesis—indeed, the entire Bible—is God's story. Since the Bible tells God's story in relationship to people, it begins with their creation, with the creation of the world He put them in. And in the very first chapter, the Bible tells us that when God created the first male and the first female, He gave them work to do. They were to do what God instructed them to do, to care for the world He had created.

Genesis also introduces concepts we can think about as we read the rest of the Bible:

- We are created in God's image. What does that mean?
- We are God's stewards, responsible for the rest of God's creation. What does that mean today as people disagree about caring for the earth?
- God gave instructions for what Adam and Eve were to do and what they were not to do. That's a pattern that continues throughout the Bible. How do we continue to discern what God wants us to do today?
- Genesis 1:29 says that God provided food for the people and the animals to eat. How does God continue to supply our needs?

Challengers may be familiar with the creation story. Now it's time for them to go deeper—to learn that the creation story contains much more. But ultimately, it's all about God.

**Leader Tip:** The purpose of this study is not to learn the day-by-day sequence of creation. Students likely did that when they were children. The purpose is also not to debate with students who may want to do so about when creation took place, how it took place, or how long it took. The purpose is to point to God. All of creation does that, including human beings. The Bible begins with God. That's the focus.

## Before the Session

Make copies of “My Wonderful World” (p. 22) so that each student has a copy.

Make copies of “In the Beginning” (p. 22) for the students.

Encourage students to bring their Bibles or, if your meeting room has Wi-Fi, let students use their smartphones or tablets to read the text for this week. Always provide additional Bibles. Determine whether you want students to look at any particular translation(s). Make sure to have those available.

Provide paper and pens or pencils.

Secure a copy from the Internet of “The Creation,” by James Weldon Johnson ([poets.org/poetsorg/poem/creation](http://poets.org/poetsorg/poem/creation)) or plan to show the YouTube video ([youtube.com/watch?v=qQJU4HmE1HQ](http://youtube.com/watch?v=qQJU4HmE1HQ)). If you use the printed version, enlist someone in advance to read it dramatically. If you use the YouTube video, you may want to print the words anyway to ensure that students understand all the words or in case someone wants to see it.

## During the Session

As students arrive, give each a copy of “My Wonderful World” and a pen or pencil. Instruct them to complete the form individually and privately, not sharing what they write with anyone. Then they are to return the completed form to you.

When everyone has arrived, completed the form, and returned it to you, read the completed forms, one at a time. Let students guess who the person is, based on the “favorites.”

When you have shared the information and guessed who wrote the answers, ask: *What do all of these things have in common—places, activities, sounds, and other things we like?* Encourage guessing. Tell them that either God created each thing or equipped human beings to create the music or the building or other things mentioned. All things—if they are good—lead back to God. Give students a few minutes to think about and discuss this concept, relating specifically to the things they mentioned.

Explain: *We first know God as Creator. The story of God begins when nothing existed. Only God existed. God existed before anything else.*

Introduce James Weldon Johnson’s “The Creation,” by explaining: *Before we look at the creation story in Genesis, let’s listen to a poem that is one man’s interpretation of the creation story. It was written almost a century ago by an African-American man who was an author, educator, and lawyer, among other things. It is not the Bible. But it is a beautiful interpretation.*

If you are using the video, say: *Let’s watch and listen.* Or if you have enlisted someone to read the poem, say: *Close your eyes. Try to imagine nothingness. And listen.*

After the reading or video, invite students’ feedback. What did they hear or see? Did the poem help them think about or see the creation story in a new way?

Invite students to turn in their Bibles (or on their smartphones) to Genesis 1–2. Distribute “In the Beginning.” Give them paper and pencils, if needed, for notes as they are answering questions. You can assign questions to small groups or individuals or let Challengers work through the questions together as you read each one. If you assign them to individuals or groups, print the questions to give to students.

If students work on these questions individually or in small groups, call them back together to discuss each one. Be prepared to prompt them to think deeper and to share your own thoughts with them.

End with the discussion about God creating humankind in His image. Explain that the Bible doesn’t tell us exactly what that means, but as we read the Bible and learn more about God, we can see ways that we are created to be like Him. List some of those (loving, having emotions, creative, responsible, having a need for relationships with God and with others, desire to be productive, etc.)

Show the YouTube video based on Psalm 139 “You Carry Me” found at [youtube.com/watch?v=GhtvRkwTEM8](http://youtube.com/watch?v=GhtvRkwTEM8).

Invite students to turn now to Psalm 139. In this psalm, David talked to God about God’s intimate act of creating individuals. Assign the questions in “Psalm of David” (p. 16) to individuals or small groups, or lead the entire group in discussing them.

If students worked individually or in small groups, call everyone back together to discuss answers to the questions.

## Prayer time and Closing the Session

Ask this question for discussion: *When you think of the enormity of God's creation, His incredible power to envision and create a world from nothing—a world so vast we cannot yet comprehend the extent of it—how do you feel about God's intimate knowledge of you and His desire for a relationship with you and with all people?*

Distribute to students their original "My Wonderful World" papers. Give them pencils or pens.

Say: *The world God created is truly amazing. Yet we easily take it for granted and miss the wonders He gave us to enjoy.*

Tell them to write these five words in a list on the back of the paper you returned to them: *see, hear, taste, smell, touch*. They will quickly realize these are their senses. Say: *When He created us, God gave us all these ways to experience and interact with His world. Think about your day. What did you see, hear, taste, smell, and touch? List them here. For see, think of something in nature, something created directly by God (rather than something created by man with God-given resources).*

Give students time to complete this list. Then ask for volunteers to share their sensory experiences of the day.

Enlist someone to read the names of missionaries from the birthday list and to voice a prayer for them.

Invite students to voice prayers to praise and thank God for His creation.

Suggest that students end each day this week by reflecting on what they saw, heard, tasted, smelled, and touched and to thank God for those experiences.

### PSALM OF DAVID

- What does God know about David (and us), and when did God know these things?
- How does David respond to this understanding about God's creating individuals and His desire for relationship with them?
- What does David ask God to do?
- If God creates every person and knows every person, how should we treat all other people, knowing they are created in His image?

## Mission Story

### Amos and Sharon Fenner, Philippines

Amos and Sharon Fenner\* live and work in the Philippines. They have three children: Lucy\*, Jeff\*, and Jarod\*. Amos grew up in Louisiana, and Sharon was raised in Arkansas, but they have lived in Southeast Asia for 12 years where they conduct outreach among unreached people groups.

When they met in college, Amos asked Sharon what she wanted to do after graduation. She told him she wanted to be a missionary. He responded by saying, "We should get married!" This was the beginning of their love story, which has lasted 16 years and is still growing.

After college, they moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, where Amos went to seminary and Sharon taught elementary school. They prayed about where they wanted to go. They hoped for a place that was warm and unreached. Then they met a couple from Southeast Asia and felt drawn to that part of the world. They believe they are in the perfect spot. They love the beach, and that's pretty accessible since they live on an island.

Their children have additional interests. Jarod, the oldest, likes playing video games. Jeff, the middle child, likes sports and music. And Lucy, the youngest, likes playing with her dog and her two cats, Batcat and Mike the Tiger. They found the cats abandoned in a ditch. Amos also enjoys reading, biking, and swimming. And Sharon likes scrapbooking whenever she gets a chance to work on it.

### Favorite Scriptures

Amos likes Joel 2:32. It's a verse Paul quoted in Romans 10:13 to explain that God wants everyone to be saved.

Sharon's favorite verse is Matthew 17:20. Sharon often reflects on how they left a thriving ministry in another country to move to the Philippines. She saw that the move to the new job was a good match for Amos and his gifts, but she wasn't sure how she would fit in the new environment. When they finished language school and prepared to move, she read Matthew 17:20. God used that verse to remind her that her spiritual gift is faith. And even though

her gifts are different from her husband's, she, too, is gifted for the job they would do.

The boys have favorite verses too. Jarod likes John 3:16, the first verse he memorized, and Jeff likes Psalm 27:1. He says that he is sometimes afraid at night. When he feels afraid, he remembers that verse. It reminds him that God will take care of him.

### **Responsibilities**

Amos works to develop a strategy to reach the Tausug with the good news. That is a challenging job because the Tausug people live predominantly on the Sulu Archipelago in the Southern Philippines where it is too dangerous for the Fenners to go. So Amos is working with a group of Filipinos who will live there. Amos trains local believers and encourages the local church to send workers. Amos also is involved in mobilization through seminaries, associations, and churches.

One group Amos trained was a team of local college-age believers. They go into the area where the Tausug live and share the good news and pray with the people. While the team was there, they had to hide at a local church because some members of a terrorist group were looking for them. They were afraid they would be kidnapped. Yet the students returned, testified about God's faithfulness, and maintained a strong sense of calling to continue to share the good news.

Sharon maintains their prayer network and tells about their work as she has opportunity both where she lives and in the United States.

The boys go to an international school. Both boys were born in another Southeast Asian country, and they consider that country home. But the Philippines increasingly feels like home. They are learning that *home* can mean a lot of different things and can be more than one place.

### **Five Ways to Pray for the Fenners**

- Pray that God will raise up a team of Filipino missionaries who will take the good news to the Tausug people.
- Pray for local churches to join them in praying for the Tausug and in sending out believers to serve among them.
- Pray that they will be able to print the New

Testament in the Tausug language (no copies are currently available).

- Pray that they will be able to help foster networking among different ministries.
- Pray that they will have opportunities to meet and to share the good news with the Tausug people.

### **Daily Activities**

Amos and Sharon do not have routine days. Amos sometimes spends time training. On other days he teaches at a local seminary. Some days he travels to the edge of the Lasa territory. One day a week he plays basketball with friends. Often the entire family rides bikes in the evening.

Sharon feels that her life is a lot like it would be if she lived in the United States. That's hard for her sometimes. She felt called just as much as Amos did. But since they live far from the people with whom they work, and since they have three children, she spends much of her time being a mom. She tries to be faithful to the tasks God has given her now.

She gets up each morning for her quiet time, and then she gets the boys ready for school. She spends most of her day with Lucy. They play, have tea parties, and run errands. Before they moved to their present location, she taught reading and writing, but so far she hasn't found a ministry outside her home. She picks up the boys after school, prepares dinner, and helps the boys with their homework before putting them to bed.

### **Sources of Joy and Hardship**

Amos enjoys seeing the church mobilized to reach unreached people groups and seeing people who have never heard the good news come to faith. Sharon enjoys the opportunity to love people who are different from her.

The hardest thing for Amos is not living closer to the Tausug people. The hardest thing for Sharon is being so far away from her extended family in the US. Her parents, grandparents, and her brother's family live near one another. She misses having a closer relationship with all of them.

### **People's Needs**

One of the major needs of the people is peace. To alleviate this need, Amos and Sharon look for ways to

tell them about the Prince of Peace.

In the future they hope to be involved in helping refugees. Many of the Tausug people have escaped the violence and poverty of the southern Philippines and moved to other Southeast Asian countries where they can find jobs and live in safety. When they are caught by immigration, they are deported back to the Philippines, even though they may no longer have a place to go. They find themselves stuck in their own country as refugees.

The Fenners also train local believers to love their enemies and to share the good news. Amos recently met a believer who lives in the Tausug area. The man was a math teacher at a local high school. When he realized that so many of his students didn't know Who Jesus is, he began to share the good news with them. Several students have become believers, and the teacher and his wife have been discipling them. God is at work among these people!

### **Advice for Students**

The Fenners offer this advice: Step out in faith. Attempt things that will be possible only with God's help.

Sharon says that she used to think God had a specific plan for her life that was a great mystery she had to figure out. She was afraid she'd take one wrong step and miss God's will. But now she thinks that God's will for her life is to bring Him glory by becoming more like Christ and seeking Him. She refers to 1 Thessalonians 5:15–18, which says that God's will is for us to do good to one another, rejoice always, pray continually, and express gratitude. When we do those things, we are doing what He wants us to do.

\*Names changed

### **Before the Session**

Select a video about the Philippines to show your group as they arrive. Search "YouTube travel Philippines." Select one that fits the interests of your group and provides some information about the Philippines.

In advance enlist a Challenger to tell the story of the Fenners. Provide him a copy of the story. Tell him

to leave out the prayer requests.

Provide Bibles.

If your meeting room has Wi-Fi, plan for students to research the following topics about the Philippines: economy, religion, geography and weather, and education. If your room does not have Wi-Fi, have Challengers (in advance) research these topics and come prepared to share information. If you have Wi-Fi, notify students to bring hand-held electronic devices.

Create sentence strips of facts about the Philippines. Select these by searching "facts Philippines" on the Internet. Several interesting sites will be listed. From those select one or more facts for every boy in your group. Prepare the facts on separate strips of paper. Put them in a bag.

Display a world map and be ready to point out the Philippines in relation to the US and nearby countries.

### **During the Session**

Show the Philippines travel video as boys arrive.

When all have arrived and seen the video, invite someone to find the Philippines on the world map.

Pass around the bag with facts about the Philippines. Let students draw out a fact and read it. Have Challengers take turns reading facts until all of them have been read.

Assign individuals or groups of students to research the Philippines' geography and weather, economy, religion, and education. Add other topics that might be of particular interest to your group. If you do not have Wi-Fi in your meeting room, call for the reports assigned in advance.

Introduce the Fenners. Call for the report from the student you enlisted to share the mission story.

Ask questions from "Missions Focus Questions" (p. 19) to get students' responses to the story.

### **Prayertime and Closing the Session**

List on the board the favorite Scriptures the Fenners mentioned. Enlist boys to read aloud each Scripture. Lead a discussion about why each Scripture is important to them.

Invite volunteers to share favorite Scripture verses.

Distribute the five prayer concerns. Ask five boys

to voice a prayer about their assigned concern. After all five have prayed, close the prayertime by praying for all of the Fenners—Amos, Sharon, Jarod, Jeff, and Lucy.

Enlist someone to read the names of missionaries from the birthday list and to voice a prayer for them ([wmu.com/prayercalendar](http://wmu.com/prayercalendar)).

### MISSIONS FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What would you like about living in another country, particularly a country like the Philippines, in Southeast Asia?
- What do you think you would miss most about living in the United States?
- Most people in the Philippines speak three or more languages. Would learning a new language so well that you could communicate in that language be a challenge for you?
- How would you feel about living in a country where your Christianity was a threat to your security, and if you told people about Jesus their lives could be endangered as well?

## Spiritual Growth

### Before the Session

Locate a community church that does not have a Challengers group. Your Challengers can take the lead here. They can talk with friends who are involved in a church that doesn't have a missions education focus. They can describe your Challengers group to see if the other group is interested. One of the benefits is getting them to think about and put into words what they do in Challengers and telling about it in such a way that others will want to participate. This experience will give your students a greater ownership in their own Challengers ministry. When students find interested students, tell them to secure the name and contact information for an adult leader you can talk with about helping that group of teenagers start a Challengers group.

Contact the student leader to explain your group's interest in helping another church start a Challengers group. Direct that person to the Challengers website

to gain initial understanding ([wmu.com/Challengers](http://wmu.com/Challengers)).

Work with the other leader to plan a time to get together. Plan the initial event with your group. You may want to plan a fellowship time, as well as a time for boys from the other church to join you in one or more regular Challengers meetings.

### During the Session

Identify the group of students and the church that have expressed an interest in starting their own Challengers group.

Plan an event your group will host to introduce students in the new group to Challengers.

Before the event, as a refresher, lead students to review information on the Challengers website.

Plan ways to introduce the new students to the four areas covered in each unit/month of Challengers—Bible study, missionary story, spiritual growth, and missions activity. Plan ways to *show* some things previous Challengers groups have done rather than simply *tell* them. Use photographs and videos. Include testimonies from older students who are not new to the Challengers group. Plan time for refreshments and fellowship. Plan an icebreaker so the two groups can get to know one another. Let students plan as much of this as possible.

Work with student leaders from the other group to determine ways the two groups can work together in the future. Show the leader this resource and explain how to get it. Point out the opportunities for the two groups to work together. Look for ways the two groups can benefit from both groups' strengths.

### Prayertime and Closing the Session

Thank guests for coming and learning more about your Challengers group.

Invite them to return for a regular meeting.

Encourage boys from both groups to share prayer concerns.

Allow time for students to voice sentence prayers about concerns they've shared.

Enlist someone to read the names of missionaries from the birthday list and to voice a prayer for them.

Close the prayertime, thanking God for the young men in these two church groups.

# Missions Activity

## OPTION 1: YARD WORK

Depending on where you live, it may be time to rake leaves, prepare a yard for winter, or continue cutting grass and weeding. Some senior adults in your church or community can use your help. Even if they employ a lawn service, they likely need additional work done. Challengers can help.

### Before the Session

Find one or more senior adults who need help. Your pastor or senior adult minister can help you locate those who need this kind of ministry. Keep in mind that some seniors may be reluctant to accept your help. People who have spent their lives helping others may not easily make the transition to receiving help. You and your Challengers can help them see that allowing you to do this gives you joy.

Contact the people you will help. Find out what they need, and schedule a time to do the work. Be respectful and allow them to feel in control of the situation. Even though you are helping them, you are going onto their property.

Gather supplies needed for the jobs you are to do. Determine how many students are needed for each job and the approximate time needed. Enlist one or more adults to work with each team. Arrange transportation.

### During the Session

When a team arrives at a senior adult's home, talk with the senior adult before beginning to work. Clarify the tasks (they may have changed). Introduce all students to those who live there.

Lead students to work efficiently. Ensure the work is done well.

Clean up thoroughly when tasks are finished. If you have bags of leaves or trash, take them with you or ask the homeowner what to do with them.

Speak to the senior adults before leaving. Thank them for the privilege of serving them in Jesus' name. If they are not members of your church, share information with them about church services and

opportunities for senior adults. Either let students take the role in doing this or to see your example so they can take the lead in this role at the next home or on a future project. Ask the senior adults to approve the work you have done or ask them what else you can do.

### After the Session

Enlist a student to contact the senior adults for a follow-up call, again thanking them, asking if everything was done to their satisfaction, and again inviting them to church.

Send an email to the students who participated. Thank them for their work. Ask them to pray for the senior adults. If these senior adults are no longer able to get out and attend church, ask boys to stay in touch with them.

## OPTION 2: CAR WASH

Students can provide a free community-wide car wash. As cars are washed, some Challengers may talk with car owners and passengers and share their faith along with information about your church.

### Before the Session

Set a date when most of the students can work. Set times for the car wash.

Secure a location where people will see the activity and come to get their cars washed.

Gather supplies needed.

Use your own car as a demonstration to work with students about the process they will use to clean each car thoroughly and efficiently.

Gather any information you will share about your church.

Provide supplies for students to make large signs about the free car wash. Make a poster that has your church name in large letters. Use the signs to advertise the car wash in advance, if possible.

Train students to interact with those having their cars washed, talking with them about their own (the student's) faith and providing information about your church. Provide a way to record contact information for anyone needing follow-up.





## During the Session

Direct students to report early to prepare for the car wash.

Form teams. Plan for team members to rotate with one or more boys available to interact with those having their cars washed. Tell students to record contact information about anyone with a prayer request or who expressed an interest in the church.

Remind students that the car wash is free. Some people will want to give students a tip. They are not to accept tips. If anyone absolutely insists on giving money, tell them you will give the money to an upcoming missions project at church.

Take pictures or video to post on your church's website. Make sure all workers are included in the photographs.

Keep a record of the number of cars washed.

## After the Session

Evaluate this event with the Challengers. What went well? What could the group have done better? If they did it again, what would they change?

Did they meet people who seemed interested in the church? Is follow-up needed?

Enlist someone to read the names of missionaries from the birthday list and to voice a prayer for them.

Pray for students who cheerfully gave their time for this ministry. Send an email or text to affirm their good work. Encourage them to pray that God will use their contact as a seed to plant the gospel in someone's life.

## IN THE BEGINNING

- How many times does the word *God* appear in Genesis 1–2? Include pronouns and synonyms.

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- What phrase is repeated after every day of creation? \_\_\_\_\_

- What evidence do you see of the Trinity? (Hint: see verse 26.)

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- What is unique about the creation of people?

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- What instructions does God give the people He created?

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- What implications do you see in the creation story and in God's instructions to people about caring for His creation about caring for God's creation today?

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- What does being created in God's image mean?

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## MY WONDERFUL WORLD

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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My favorite place on earth is: \_\_\_\_\_

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My favorite food is: \_\_\_\_\_

---

My favorite music is: \_\_\_\_\_

---

My favorite animal is: \_\_\_\_\_

---

My favorite time of day is: \_\_\_\_\_

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My favorite activity is: \_\_\_\_\_

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