

Danger: Stealing Your Identity

By Deborah McDonald

Purpose

This session encourages young people to explore the dangers of teen identity theft—legal and spiritual. How, what, and why teen identity theft is on the rise and the hidden dangers within the Internet and commercial society. It will explore identity theft and its ramifications legally, emotionally, and spiritually. This session is designed for senior high youth and can accommodate any size group. This session also works well with youth and their parents.

Session at a Glance

7:00 p.m. Gathering and Welcome

7:05 p.m. “Who do you say that I am?” Game and Process

7:40 p.m. Losing and Finding My Identity

Extend the Session: The Devil Wears Prada (add 15 minutes)

8:10 p.m. Closing Prayer

8:20 p.m. Snacks and Social

8:30 p.m. Good Night!

Note to Leader: The session really benefits from using the movie clips from *The Devil Wears Prada*. If you are able to add 15 minutes to your gathering, this would be worth it!

Extend the Session: The Devil Wears Prada (15 minutes)

Midway through the ‘Losing and Finding My Identity’ portion of the session, the movie, *The Devil Wears Prada*, is introduced. To assist the participants in completing

Handout 1, Losing and Finding My Identity, show these scenes:

Chapter 13 “The New Andy” (34:39 to 37:00)

Chapter 22 “Miranda’s Choice” (begin at 1:06:41) to Chapter 23 “Telling Emily” (end at 1:12:35)

Chapter 24 “One of Them” (1:12:48 to 1:17:23)

Materials Needed

- Nametags
- Small table, colored cloth, pillar candle, and matches (or lightstick)
- Newsprint and markers
- Index cards, one per participant
- Paper shredder
- Bag of candy to serve as a prize
- Bibles, one per six participants
- DVD, *The Devil Wears Prada* (20th Century Fox, rated PG-13, 2006)
- TV or large screen projector

Prepare in Advance

1. Using **Resource 1**, create a flyer and make copies for every participant.
2. Prior to the session, put names of the pastor, parish staff, youth leaders, and participating youth on index cards, one name per card. Write the person's name on the front of the index card, and write key personal information on the back, such as individual's job, family members, names of friends, hobbies, etc. You need one index card per participant.
3. Invite a young person to read at the closing prayer, and invite a peer or adult leader to lead closing prayer.
5. Read **Handout 1, Losing and Finding My Identity**, rent and watch the movie, *The Devil Wears Prada*.
6. Set up meeting room with chairs in a circle. In the center of the circle set up a prayer table. Place a tablecloth, Bible on a bookstand, and a pillar candle on the prayer table. Open Bible to Romans 6.

Gathering and Welcome (5 minutes)

Create a welcoming environment for youth (and their parents) as they enter. Invite youth and team members to make and wear a nametag. As participants enter, adult leaders pass out a flyer based on **Resource 1**. Explain that the parish has a great opportunity for free tickets! Request that teens complete the sheet and turn it in prior to the beginning of the session. Keep a mental note of participants who ask clarifying questions regarding the type of information requested. If someone questions the information requested, just state **"Don't worry about it - it's OK."**

After youth arrive welcome participants, and introduce yourself and any other team members. Provide a brief overview of tonight's session. Say something like:

In 2004, the "National and State Trends in Fraud and Identify Theft Survey" found that ten million people were victims of identity fraud. It also found that teen and young adults are the #1 target of identity thieves. What is identity theft? Why target teens? Is the problem of teen identity theft limited to crime? In this session, we will explore personal identity theft and its ramifications socially and spiritually.

"Who did you say that I am?" Game and Process (35 minutes)

Step 1: (5 minutes) Give these instructions:

Tonight all your hidden acting skills will emerge! Each person will be given an index card. On the card is the name of the person whose identity you will assume. Once the game begins, if someone guesses who you are, give them your index card. The person with the most index cards wins!

Distribute the index cards and invite participants to stand.

The object of this game is to figure out the identity of each person by asking yes or no questions. Once your identity is revealed, you are to sit in the circle.

Step 2: (10 minutes) Play the game. Call time after ten minutes.

Step 4: (10 minutes) At the end of the game, announce the winner and award a prize. Connect the game to the evening topic by saying something like:

Was it fun pretending to be someone else? Was it strange pretending to be someone you knew? Did you realize that someone in the room was pretending to be you?

Allow the participants to respond. Following their response share the following:

Each year on October 31 in the United States children dress up and pretend to be someone else. It's fun, and by pretending to be someone else children are rewarded with a treat. But did you know that every day, every minute, every second, criminals are pretending to be someone else? Their object is to use a person's identity to commit crime. They open false bank accounts, obtain loans, and buy autos, etc. and believe it or not—hide out from the law.

These criminals obtain the information through the Internet, calling people on the phone, sending false advertisements through the U. S. Mail and going through our trash! Hacking into our private online information is a major industry. They create false pop-ups that tell you "You've Just Won! Just click and complete the requested information so that you can get your prize!" It's easy—people give up personal information and don't even think twice. People turn over their names, social security numbers, addresses, birthdates, etc. You did it tonight!

Hold up the sheets that teens completed as they came in the room. Share with the group if you were asked clarifying questions or questions about providing confidential information. Say something like:

When you came in, I told you we had a great opportunity to get a discount on tickets and in order to collect and distribute tickets I needed the following information. Only <insert number> teens question and <insert number> teens completed the form. This information we will shred to keep your personal information safe.

Shred the sheets in front of the participants.

Every day teens turn over this kind of information, and they never think about it!

Step 4: (10 minutes) Invite the participants to form small groups of six. Give each group a marker and a sheet of newsprint. Once the groups are formed, invite participants to brainstorm a list of when, where, what, and to whom do they submit personal information.

Losing and Finding My Identity (30 minutes)

Step 1: (10 minutes) When the small groups have completed their task, share the following definition:

"Identity Theft is a crime in which an imposter obtains by pieces of information such as social security number, drivers license number in order to obtain credit cards or merchandise and services in the name of the victim." (2004 Summit on Protecting Teens from Identity Theft, November 16.)

Ask the small groups to share their list of when, where, what, whom. As the groups share, insert the following into the conversation:

Every time you open "MySpace" or "Face Book," buy tickets to an upcoming concert, download a new software, song, or movie—you provide personal information. When applying for a driving permit, movie rental card, credit card, etc. personal information is turned over.

Why are thieves targeting teens? Get a few responses, then continue:

"Teens have little or no knowledge of financial transactions or credit reports . . . identity theft can occur before a teenager even reaches the age of 18, the time when most minors are eligible to enter into contracts and apply for credit cards. Many teenagers discover they are a victim of identity theft when they first apply for a driver's license and find that one has already been issued to someone else under the same Social Security number." (Summit on Protecting Teens from Identity Theft, p. 1.)

Because of the delay between the crime and discovery by the teen, criminals have a much higher chance of not being arrested and prosecuted by law enforcement. As a result, the teen is forced to spend hours working with their parents, police, credit advisors, and lawyers to clear their credit history in order to apply for college loans, credit cards, or even to obtain new cell phone.

How can we avoid identity theft? Only give out your Social Security number when necessary and to a secure source. Protect your cell phone and laptop with a password. Do not give it out. Watch the mail for unsolicited credit card offers, which as a teen, you should not receive. (How to Protect Against Identity Theft, www.csmonitor.com.)

But beyond a ruined credit history, identity theft impacts the person. Can identity theft impact a person emotionally? How?

Lead the large group in a brief discussion on the emotional impact of identity theft. Inject into the conversation that:

"It is not uncommon for a person experiencing identity theft to feel a sense of insecurity—a violation of privacy. Victims report feelings of depression, anger, victimization, and lack of trust. Experts recommend that victims seek support through family, friends, professional counselors, and religious organizations." (Identity Theft First Aid Kit, Identity Rehab Corporation, 2006.)

Step 2: (10 minutes)

Is it possible for someone's identity to be lost or stolen and not involve crime? How many of you have seen the movie, *The Devil Wears Prada*?

Ask a volunteer to share the movie's plot with the group. Add to the explanation:

A young woman moves to New York wanting to become a journalist. She cannot find a job in her field and is hired by a fashion magazine. She states that she is just taking the job for work and that she will not change her identity and beliefs just for this job—but something happens. She makes a decision to change herself and decides how to get ahead—at the expense of a friend.

Distribute **Handout 1**, and invite the groups to answer the questions and to select a member of the group to serve as a reporter.

Step 4: (10 minutes) Lead a discussion based on the handout. Invite small groups to share their selected Scripture passage and responses to the questions. During the discussion, say something like:

Did you know that when you were baptized your identity was forever connected to Christ? In baptism, we “put on Christ”—we become a new creature in him. Throughout St. Paul's writings he says that he never knew his true self until he knew himself in Jesus. What do you think he meant?

Baptism: Identity in Christ Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Gather

Prayer Leader: (*light the prayer candle*)

Light and peace in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Sing “The Summons,” John Bell (*Spirit & Song*, OCP).

Listen

Invite the volunteer to proclaim Romans 6:3-11. Allow a few moments of quiet.

Respond

Renewal of Baptismal Promises

Dear friends,

through the paschal mystery

we have been buried with Christ in baptism,

so that we may rise with him to a new life.

Now that we have completed our Lenten observance,

let us renew the promises we made at baptism

when we rejected Satan and his works.

And so:

Do you reject sin,

so as to live in the freedom of God's children?

I do.

Do you reject the glamour of evil,

and refuse to be mastered by sin?

I do.

Do you reject Satan,
father of sin and prince of darkness?

I do.

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth?

I do.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord,
who was born of the Virgin Mary,
was crucified, died, and was buried,
rose from the dead,
and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

I do.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting?
God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
has given us a new birth
by water and the Holy Spirit,
and forgiven our sins.
May God also keep us faithful
to our Lord Jesus Christ
for ever and ever.

Amen.

(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Liturgy Training Publication, p. 348.)

Intercessions

Prayer Leader:

Our response is "**Lord, hear our prayer.**"

For our church, for our leaders, and for all young men and women of faith that we may find our identity in Christ we pray ...

For our world, for our nation, and for our community that our principles and practice be derived from our identity in God we pray...

For those who are victims of identity theft that they find support in their faith, family and friends we pray...

For what else shall we pray this evening? We pray...

Go Forth

Prayer Leader:

Let us pray together the prayer that our Lord taught us to pray. Our Father...
Let us share with each other a sign of Christ peace.

Announcements and Social Time (10 minutes)

Thank the young people for their participation, make any needed announcements, and invite them to enjoy some refreshments.

Websites mentioned in this session were successfully accessed on March 1, 2008.

This session was written by Deborah A. McDonald, Executive Director, Office of Youth Ministry/Catholic Youth Organization, Archdiocese of Washington.

Resource 1

Instructions on Making the Flyer "Get Your Tickets Today!"

Create a flyer based on the following information:

- ☒ The youth of your parish have an incredible opportunity to buy tickets to an upcoming event a significant discount.
- ☒ A popular rock or country star is coming to your town and the group has an **in** for this upcoming event. *Pick a performer or event that is popular in your community.*
- ☒ On the flyer state that the group is part of a pre-public announcement/sale—meaning the best seats in the house! Tickets will be discounted 25%.
- ☒ Just by filling out this form the group can obtain tickets and free backstage passes for youth! But because of high security, reservations must taken tonight.
- ☒ Indicate that permission slips will be available soon and will be distributed with the tickets.
- ☒ On the flyer ask for the following:
 1. Legal Name
 2. Date of Birth
 3. Address
 4. Social Security Number

Resource 2

Resources and Websites for Teens and Parents

Identity Theft First Aid Kit
www.idtheftfirstaid.com

Teens may be at added risk of ID theft
www.dallasnews.com/s/business/yip2/103105ccdrBizYip.152a18f3.html

Don't Get Ripped Off! Identity Theft Tips for Teens
www.qwest.com/teenidentitytheft/

2004 Summit on Protecting Teens from Identity Theft
www.qwest.com/about/protection/pdfs/QwestSummitReport.pdf

Incredible Internet - Tips for Teens
www.incredibleinternet.com

Growing target for identity thieves: kids
www.csmonitor.com/2006/0130/p13s01-wmgn.html

Preventing Identity Theft for Dummies by Michael J. Arata, Jr.

Handout 1

Losing and Finding My Identity

1. In *The Devil Wears Prada*, Andrea's boyfriend accuses her of allowing her identity to be change – of selling her soul. Is it possible for someone's identity to be lost or stolen? If yes, how? Give examples.

2. At the end of the movie, Andrea has to make a choice. She makes a choice to get ahead that betrays a friend. In the end, she has to make a choice on her true identity. Select a Scripture story in which Jesus challenges someone to be true to their true identity and make a choice.

3. Teens make choices everyday that involve identity. What challenges, obstacles, and dangers complicate these choices?

4. Is faith a factor in identity? What difference does being a follower Jesus makes?