

Survivor: Identity Island
By Kathy Kensinger

Purpose

Participants will learn more about their true identities and values as they learn skills to cope with expectations and peer pressure.

Session at a Glance

7:00 PM	Welcome and Introductions, Community Builder
7:15 PM	Opening Prayer
7:25 PM	Four Corners of the Earth
7:35 PM	Buried Treasure
	Extend the Session: Bible Treasure Hunt (add 20 minutes)
7:55 PM	Closing Prayer
8:00 PM	Announcements and Refreshments
8:15 PM	Good Night!

Extend the Session: Bible Treasure Hunt (20 minutes)

Divide participants into small groups and look up one of the following passages in the Bible: Matthew 6:19, Matthew 19:16-22, Luke 6:43-45, Matthew 13:44, Isaiah 33:5, Colossians 2:1-4, Proverbs 2:1-4, and Hebrews 11:23-28. Groups discuss the meaning of the verse, and then share what they have discovered with the large group.

Materials Needed

- Newsprint and markers
 - White paper, cut into 3x5 pieces, one per participant
 - Brown lunch bags, one per participant
 - Pens
 - Carpet squares, two for each team in the community builder
- Note to Leader: If carpet squares are not available, give each team two bandanas
- Bible, candle, and cloth for prayer table
 - Handout 1, The Real Me, one for each participant
 - Resource 1, Buried Treasure (see #7 in Prepare in Advance)
 - Island decorations and several pirate hats
 - CD player
 - CD of pirate songs (i.e., "Pirates' Boat Load of Fun" by Veggie Tales)
 - Song, "Stained Glass Masquerade" on Lifesong by Casting Crowns
 - Clean 2 liter plastic bottle for "Message in a Bottle"

Prepare in Advance

1. Decorate the meeting space with palm trees, tropical flowers, and a variety of island decorations. Play pirate songs in the background.

2. Invite two young people to mingle during the gathering time to shake hands with and welcome participants. They may want to wear pirate hats and talk like pirates to add to the island atmosphere.

3. Set up the meeting space with chairs, and tables or desks to use as a work surface. Leave an area cleared for the ice breaker and prayer space.
4. Prepare a prayer focus by placing a small table near the open area, covering it with a cloth and placing the Bible (open to Galatians 6:3-4) and a candle on it. Have matches or a lightstick nearby.
5. Set up tables for refreshments (if you are serving any) and sign-in. Have one or two people at the sign-in table with a check-in sheet and name tags. (Skip the name tags if participants know each other and you know them. However, if they wear nametags, you wear one, too.) Hospitality is important: As the facilitator, do not use the gathering time before the session begins to take care of last minute preparations. Spend the time moving among the participants, greeting and speaking with them.
6. On a sheet of newsprint, make a list of the gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, right judgment, knowledge, courage, reverence, wonder, and awe. This will be used for the “Buried Treasure” activity.
7. Prepare ‘gold bars’ for the “Buried Treasure” activity by copying Resource 1 onto gold paper and cutting out the gold bars. You will need one set of ‘gold bars’ for each participant. Place the gold bars into small lunch bags.
8. Assign each corner of the room a number from 1 to 4. Write the number on a sheet paper and post it in the corner of the room.
9. For the Four Corners activity, you may wish to write the four choices for each question on separate sheets of paper. Give all of the #1 answers to one volunteer, the #2 answers to a second volunteer, the #3 answers to a third volunteer, and the #4 answers to a fourth volunteer. Ask each to stand in the corner and reveal the choice for each question that you ask. This will help the young people see the choices available to them and move more quickly to the corner of their choice.
10. Invite some adults or senior high youth to serve as small group facilitators (captains) for each group.

Session Outline

Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)

Welcome the participants as they arrive, and make sure everyone gets a nametag. Welcomers should model introducing themselves, shaking hands with people as they arrive, and thanking them for coming. To set the mood, pirate music and talking like a pirate is encouraged!

Community Building: Shipwreck Relay (10 minutes)

Call participants to the open area and ask that they gather into equal groups of 5 or 6. If there are extra participants they can act as “sharks,” who make sure that the rules are

being observed and calling “out” anyone who touches the water. Designate one side of the room to be the shipwreck and the other side to be the island, then give these instructions:

Your ship has wrecked and you all need to get to the island for safety. Unfortunately the water, (indicate the floor between the ship and the island), is shark infested. Each team has two life rafts (carpet squares) which can be used to get from their ship to the island. The teams may use the life rafts any way they wish. A person is out of the game if any part of his body touches the “water.” The winning team is the one who makes it across first, without losing any crew members.

Note to Leader: Ask the captains to observe this activity carefully to make sure no one gets hurt or feels uncomfortable.

Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Call participants to sit in a circle in the open area. While they are gathering, play the song “Stained Glass Masquerade” and distribute Handout 1, The Real Me.

Prayer Leader: (begin with the Sign of the Cross)

Loving God, hear our prayer tonight. Be with us, help us to feel your presence. Amen.

We are starting off on an adventure, not on the high seas to find treasure, but to find the treasure of our true selves. As we open this session we are called to close the door on the false parts of ourselves that we think we need to survive. Let us listen to the following scripture passage and reflect on the words of St. Paul to the Galatians

Invite the reader to proclaim Galatians 6:3-4. Allow a few moments of quiet, then say:

Let us pray together from the prayer sheet “The Real Me.”

Four Corners (15 minutes)

While the participants are still seated in the prayer circle, explain the next activity:

We will begin our journey to our true selves by considering some options and making choices. Each corner of the room has been assigned a number—1, 2, 3, or 4. I will read a question, and depending on your answer you will go to the corner that corresponds to your choice.

Ask the following questions, allowing time after each question for participants to move to a corner and for a few participants to share the reason for their decision.

1. If you were a location, would you be
(1) an ocean (2) a mountain (3) a forest (4) a street
2. If you were a building, would you be
(1) a library (2) a church (3) a hospital (4) a mall

3. If you were music, would you be
(1) classic rock (2) gospel music (3) hip/hop (4) pop music
4. If you were a meal, would you be
(1) breakfast (2) lunch (3) supper/dinner (4) midnight snack
5. If you were a TV show, would you be
(1) a reality show (2) a drama (3) a situation comedy (4) a sporting event
6. If you were clothing, would you be
(1) blue jeans (2) a swimsuit (3) a winter coat (4) formal attire
7. If you were a holiday, would you be
(1) Easter (2) 4th of July (3) Halloween (4) Christmas

Each time that you made a choice you uncovered a little bit about yourself. Did any of you find yourself in the same group as any other person for all seven of the questions? That would probably be a rare occurrence, because it is the combination of all of our preferences that makes us unique. It is important to remember that you all have valid reasons for your choices and that no one's choices are better than anyone else's, just as no person is better than another. Our differences are valuable and should be treasured.

Note to Leader: If you are working with a class that is uncomfortable responding to language activities, you may ask them to first discuss answers in small groups in their corner, then, share their answers with the larger group. Remember that all answers are acceptable.

Buried Treasure (15 minutes)

Gather participants into their small groups again. Give each person a bag of "gold bars" as prepared from Resource 1.

You and your shipmates have discovered a buried treasure and have divided the spoils. Please inspect your treasure at this time. What items are in your treasure bags?
Answers include: family, fun, faith, popularity, power, wealth, and athletic ability.

What value do these items have?

Answers will vary and all should be acknowledged appropriately. Explain that stating your values takes courage, but helps others to understand us and respect who we are.

Ask the young people to think about how much they value each of those treasures. Ask them to choose two of the treasures that they would give up, if forced to. Have each small group talk about the two that they are giving up. Then, ask them to do the same thing again. This time, ask for a few volunteers to share with the group the three treasures that they kept.

Next display the newsprint sheet with the gifts of the Spirit written on them. If necessary, explain what the gifts of the Spirit are and provide insight into each of them.

Wisdom—see things as they are

Understanding—listen, understand, forgive, care

Knowledge—think and know, make sense of things

Right Judgment—making good choices
Courage—strength to do the right thing
Reverence—gentle, tender, concern and care for all creation
Wonder and Awe—sense of the greatness of God

Then continue:

What value do these “treasures” (gifts) have?

Who would like to trade any of their treasures for any of the treasures listed here? What value would this treasure add to your life?

How would it help you as you are growing up?

Proceed through the list of the gifts of the Spirit. When the exercise is complete, say:

The gifts of the Spirit are freely given to us by God. We don't need to trade anything for them, but we do need to think about them and use them. If we don't use our gifts, they are like buried treasures that have never been found. Each of us has the capacity to use our gifts in very special ways. These gifts should not be kept in a bag, but should be proudly displayed and lived out in our lives.

We sometimes hide our treasures and pretend to value things that we don't even care about just to please other people. Naming our own gifts and values is a powerful way to survive the expectations and pressure that we often feel from others. When we appreciate our own worth we can likewise value the gifts of others without feeling that we have to be just like them. God created you to be yourself. You already are a treasure. As we move into our closing prayer, quietly call to mind what you value about yourself and what you would like the world to value in you.

Closing Prayer: Message in a Bottle (5 minutes)

Gather participants into the open area around the prayer table. Invite a volunteer to light the candle.

Prayer Leader: (begin with the Sign of the Cross)

Loving God, you give us many treasures—some we already know about and some that are still buried within us, and known only to you at this moment. Help us, we pray, to focus on what is truly important and to value what you value, so that we can become the person you want us to be. Amen.

Give each participant a 3x5 piece of paper and a pen.

Say:

You may know that many people who are either lost at sea, or sometimes just feel a little lost in life, write a message and put it in a bottle and put it in the sea. We want to give you a chance to write your own message for the bottle. This should be a message

to yourself about the person that you want to be in the future. Write a couple of sentences that will remind you of something that you want to start doing, or something you need to start believing about yourself, or something that you might need to turn away from. Only you will read your message.

Give the participants about 3 minutes to write. When they are through, instruct them to fold their message, put their name on the outside, and put their message in the bottle. Inform them that you will be giving their message back to them at a future meeting so they can assess how they are doing at achieving their goals. Place the bottle on the prayer table.

Invite the participants to say a silent prayer, asking Jesus to help them in making the change that they need. (pause for 30 seconds)

Invite the participants to say a silent prayer for all the other people gathered, that they might have Jesus' help in making their change. (pause for 30 seconds)

Close the prayer by praying the Our Father.

Announcements and Refreshments (15 minutes)

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

This session was written by [Kathy Kensinger](#), Director of Youth Ministry, Young Adult Ministry and Confirmation, St. Gerald Catholic Church, Ralston, Nebraska.

Handout 1

The Real Me

Some people act like they are more than they really are.
Maybe you have tried to be something you aren't.
The next time you need help in being yourself, say this prayer.

Dear God,
I want to be me.
But my parents tell me to be one thing,
My friends tell me to be my own person
And television and music and movies make me think I should be something else.
It's all very confusing.
Then I remember you.
Who do you want me to be?
You have given me direction in your word.
Help me to hear your call.
Help me to be the person you created me to be.

The Real Me.
Amen.

Resource 1

Buried Treasure

Directions: Copy onto gold paper and cut into squares for gold bars.

Faith

Family

Popularity

Fun

Wealth

Power

Athletic Ability