



LEVELUP

CONNECTION • ACTION • IDENTITY • DIVERSITY

EMPHASIS
2026

LEVEL UP

NYI MAR Emphases 2026

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for the Church of the Nazarene Mesoamerica Region

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EMPHASES 2026–2029

2026: LEVEL UP: CONNECTION

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”
— John 15:4

2027: LEVEL UP: ACTION

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.”
— Colossians 3:23

2028: LEVEL UP: IDENTITY

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”
— 1 Peter 2:9

2029: LEVEL UP: DIVERSITY

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
— Galatians 3:28



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PRESENTATION

Dear young people:

During the four-year period that concludes in 2025, we emphasized and envisioned an NYI that transcends. For this, our monthly emphases were focused on different challenges rooted in loving God, loving yourself, and loving your neighbor. These challenges have shaped a generation of young people who are sensitive to God's call and willing to respond positively in fulfilling the mission Christ has entrusted to us.

We continue believing that the youth ministry of the Church of the Nazarene in the Mesoamerica Region is called to grow, to move forward, and to live in a constant process of transformation in Christ. That is why, during the next four years, we want to challenge every young person to level up in their faith, their character, and their impact on the world, remembering that life with Jesus is never static, but a path of continuous growth.

Under the motto LEVEL UP, we will walk together on a spiritual journey that will take us from the root of our relationship with God to the full experience of unity in the diversity of the body of Christ. Each year will have a special emphasis, guided by the Word, that will help us focus our walk:

• 2026: LEVEL UP – CONNECTION

We will learn that true growth only happens when we remain in Christ, like branches connected to the vine (John 15:4). Connection with Him is the basis of all fruitful life.

• 2027: LEVEL UP – ACTION

Seremos desafiados a vivir nuestra fe con propósito, sirviendo y trabajando con excelencia, haciendo todo de corazón como para el Señor (Colosenses 3:23).

- **2028: LEVEL UP – IDENTITY**

We will rediscover who we are in Christ: a chosen people, called to live in holiness and reflect His light (1 Peter 2:9). Our identity in Him gives us direction and purpose.

- **2029: LEVEL UP – DIVERSITY**

We will recognize that in Christ we are one, beyond our cultural, social, or gender differences (Galatians 3:28). Diversity is not an obstacle, but a richness within the unity of the body of Christ.

With this vision, we invite every young person to dare to level up in their walk with God, to be an active part of this generation that connects, acts, affirms its identity, and celebrates diversity in Christ.

Our commitment is to accompany you, guide you, and provide you with tools so that together we may grow in this journey of God's grace.



Rev. Benjamín Soria
Regional NYI Coordinator, Mesoamerica.

How to use this material

By Edgar Corzo

LEVEL UP is a resource for youth leaders in Nazarene Youth International in the Mesoamerica Region. It was created with the purpose of accompanying the youth leaders of our region in the spiritual formation of the new generations. Its main focus is to guide young people to “level up” in their Christian life, through our four annual emphases: Connection (2026), Action (2027), Identity (2028), and Diversity (2029).

Each emphasis is developed month by month with a specific theme that addresses the current challenges of young people. For example, in 2026 we address topics such as the importance of staying connected with God, spiritual growth, mental health, prayer, restoration, calling, humility, and the dignity of being created in the image of God.

The content of each monthly theme combines three elements: a biblical reflection, current examples close to the youth reality, and a practical challenge that invites young people to make concrete decisions. This ensures that the Word does not remain theory but is translated into transformative experiences.

One of the most valuable sections is “To Put Into Practice.” Here you will find four activities designed to be implemented in youth groups, one for each week of the month. These dynamics include debates, games, creative exercises, guided prayers, personal challenges, and community experiences. Their purpose is to reinforce the teaching of the month and generate active participation among young people. In practice, this means that a leader has the complete material for a month of work with their group: a central theme, a biblical reflection, and four activities that range from the personal to the communal.

How to use this material: we suggest planning each month in advance, reading the reflection and adapting the activities to your group’s context. You can assign different young people the responsibility of leading the weekly dynamics, which encourages leadership development. It is also useful to record testimonies and learnings, so that the group can see its spiritual growth throughout the year.

In summary, LEVEL UP is not just a manual of topics, but a practical guide to disciple the youth of our local churches, helping them to live their faith with purpose, love, and unity.

LEVEL UP

EMPHASES 2026–2029

2026:LEVEL UP: CONNECTION

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

— John 15:4

Don't lose the connection

Edgar Corzo – México

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” John 15:4

We live in a world where being connected is vital. If the Wi-Fi signal goes down, everything seems to stop: we can't send messages, watch videos, study, or work. Now then, can you imagine your spiritual life without connection? Jesus used the figure of the vine and branches to remind us that without Him we can do nothing. I once heard a reflection that used this principle but with a current example: Jesus is the modem, and we are the devices.

When a device is close to the modem, the connection is strong and everything flows: uninterrupted videos, instant messages, updates on time. But if the device moves away, the signal weakens and eventually is lost. The same happens in our spiritual life: if we remain close to Christ, our lives bear fruit; but if we move away, the connection is cut and nothing works as it should.

Connection with God is not automatic; it requires intentionality. Just as we look for the best signal to stay online, we must daily seek to be in the presence of Jesus. Prayer, reading the Word, worship, and silence before Him are like access keys to the divine Wi-Fi. It is not enough to connect once a week at church; we need a constant, daily, and real connection.

The good news is that Jesus never turns off the modem. His love and grace are always available. We are the ones who decide if we want to be close or prefer to live with a weak signal. The challenge is to choose each day to remain in Him, because only then will our lives have meaning, strength, and eternal fruit.



TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Wi-Fi Challenge

Place the church's real router in the center and ask: what happens if we turn this off? Connect it with John 15:4 and reflect in groups.

Week 2: Connection Map

On a poster, draw a router in the center (Jesus) and have each young person write their name on a device around it. Share: what things weaken your connection with Him?

Week 3: Airplane Mode

During 15 minutes of prayer, invite everyone to put their phone on "airplane mode" and dedicate themselves only to listening to God. Pray in this way: "Lord Jesus, I recognize that without you I can do nothing. I want to stay connected to your love and your Word every day. Help me stay close, not be distracted by what pulls me away, and live a life that bears fruit for you. Amen."

Week 4: Connection Journal

Each young person receives the challenge of writing for one week a brief record: "How was I connected with Jesus today?" and share it at the next meeting.

Grow to impact: a heart for christ

Abigail García – México

“No one has greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

John 15:13

Developing the right heart and attitude to share Christ

Objective: That young people understand the importance of personal spiritual growth as the foundation for authentic relational evangelism, and learn to develop a heart willing to love, serve, and impact other young people who do not yet know Christ.

In Latin America, we live surrounded by young people who are searching for purpose, love, acceptance... and many of them have not yet met Jesus! God wants to use you to be light in the midst of your friends, in your school, in your neighborhood. But to impact others, we first need to grow spiritually and allow God to form in us a heart like Christ’s.

What is spiritual growth?

It is the daily process in which, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we become more like Jesus. This does not happen overnight, nor is it only about attending church:

- It is seeking God in prayer.
- It is reading and applying the Word.
- It is letting God transform our character.
- It is obeying, even when it is difficult.

The heart and attitude God wants to form in us

If we want to impact others, we need:

- A humble heart: Recognize that we are not better than others; we are sinners saved by grace. (Philippians 2:3-4)
- A compassionate heart: See others as Jesus sees them; with love and mercy. (Matthew 9:36)
- An attitude of service: Be willing to listen, help, and walk alongside others in their struggles. (Galatians 5:13)
- A consistent testimony: That what we speak about Christ is reflected in how we live. (1 Timothy 4:12)

Relational evangelism: Winning friends for Christ

Jesus calls us to make disciples, and that begins with authentic relationships. It is not only about “preaching,” but about:

- Building true friendship – Take genuine interest in people.
- Listening more than speaking – Sometimes we impact more by listening than by saying nice words.
- Sharing your story – You don’t need to have “all the answers.” Share how Jesus changed your life.
- Praying for your friends – Prayer prepares the soil before you share Christ.
- Inviting them into your world – Bring them to your youth group, a Bible study, activities where they can see God’s love.

TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Dynamic

1. Make a list of three friends or acquaintances who don’t know Christ.
2. Pray for them each day.
3. Look for a moment to talk with one of them, caring about their life, not to “preach,” but to connect from the heart.
4. Do something practical: invite them for coffee, help them with something they need, or send them an encouraging message.

Week 2: Prayer

Pray individually and as a group:

“Lord, help me grow every day in my relationship with you. Form in me a heart like yours: humble, compassionate, and willing to serve. May my life reflect your love and may I impact my friends so they may know you. Amen.”

Week 3: Reflection

Reflect in groups:

- What obstacles sometimes prevent us from impacting others?
- How can we support our friends in drawing closer to Christ naturally?
- What examples of relational evangelism have we seen in our lives?

Be who God wants you to be

Jerson Chupina – Guatemala

Have you ever felt like you are not enough? Have you been told you are useless, too young for something, or that you cannot achieve anything important? The world, culture, and many people have tried to impose an identity on you, and they will continue to do so.

Gideon felt the same way. He lived in fear, hiding, believing he was not worth much. All his life he had been made to believe he was small, from an insignificant tribe, of an insignificant people, weak, and without a future. But God saw him differently. He called him “mighty warrior.” God saw in him a liberator.

The people of Israel were in crisis. They were afraid, they were hiding, and their enemies destroyed and stole everything they sowed. But in the midst of chaos, God showed up, came in the form of an angel, and sat near an ordinary young man. That young man was Gideon. And although he felt small and insignificant, God had already chosen him, because God knew what he was made of.

God still acts the same way. He sees beyond what you see in the mirror or what others see. Maybe you think: I am too young, not that good, my family is not the best, or I am afraid. But God looks at you and says: “I am with you, young mighty warrior.” He does not expect you to be perfect, only willing. He wants to use you now, not until you are an adult, nor when everything is “right” or “in order” in your life.

So, young person, how do you see yourself?

As just another one? Or as someone called by God to make a difference? No matter how many excuses you have, none will be stronger than God’s calling. Today He tells you: “Trust me. I am with you.”

Stop seeing yourself with the eyes of fear, culture, or what others have said about you. Begin to see yourself as God sees you: strong, brave, and ready to do great things. Will you dare to respond like Gideon, with faith, even with doubts? God has already set His eyes on you.

TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Words that Mark

Materials: A list of what God says in the Bible about His children, Post-its, a cross, and pins.

Dynamic: Each young person writes negative words they've heard ("useless," "dumb," "you can't") and places them on the cross. They finish by praying and declaring God's words over their lives.

Objective: Renounce the world's labels and embrace God's.

Week 2: A Letter from God

Materials: Colored papers and envelopes.

Dynamic: Before the preaching, youth write an anonymous letter as if they were struggling with identity or cultural pressure to God. At the end, they exchange it, read the letter, and write a response as if God were speaking. Close by returning it and praying for one another.

Objective: Learn to hear God's voice amid inner pain.

Week 3: Sea and Land

Materials: Chalk or tape, a list of negative phrases and a list of God's truths.

Dynamic: Draw a line on the floor: left side = the world's sayings, right side = God's truths. Read phrases aloud and each youth jumps to the correct side. Increase speed to make it fun and challenging.

Objective: Distinguish God's words and discard what does not edify.

Week 4: God's Mirror

Materials: A mirror, camera or phone, and Post-its with God's truths (loving, brave, precious, etc.).

Dynamic: Place the mirror at the entrance, stick the Post-its around it, and have each youth look at themselves and take a photo. At the end, project the photos or share them on social media, declaring those truths over their names.

Objective: Affirm what God sees in them and reject negative labels.

Jehovah Rapha: He who shines in my darkness

Sumayah Edoo – Trinidad y Tobago

Our mental health encompasses our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, influencing how we think, feel, and act. I'm sure many young people across the world right now are struggling with a variety of mental conditions such as isolation, depression or anxiety and are hopelessly searching for a solution. The thing is, mental health has been a taboo subject for many years and was therefore ignored or shunned, even by people in the church. Many people believe that you cannot be a "real" Christian if you are battling with your mental health or that you're not praying about it enough. Thus, many youths don't think to turn to God first, as they are uncertain if simply praying is sufficient to battle mental illnesses, as they constantly hear. However, dealing with mental illness should not be treated as if it is a rare and sinful disease, but rather, it must first be recognized that mental health issues affect everyone and it is our job as the church to help young people cope with it.

We must first recognize as Christians, that we are also physical beings, susceptible to trauma and other illnesses. Even some of the most famous and reputable characters of the Bible such as Saul, Hannah and Elijah all struggled at some point in time with their mental health. These were all strong believers in Almighty God, Jehovah Rapha, our Healer. However, Saul, the first king of Israel chosen by God, who killed thousands for God, suffered a massive mental breakdown leading to his demise. Hannah was depressed for years, being taunted by Peninah because she was barren. Elijah, one of the greatest prophets suffered from anxiety and isolation to the point that he felt that he needed to die. Nowadays, issues such as isolation, depression and anxiety which were not given proper attention by society in times passed, can be diagnosed and treated today. As Christians, we must learn to navigate our feelings and attend to our emotional and mental status. We must learn when to take a break, breathe and attend to self. In so doing, we must always be ready to help others in similar situations. We can never fulfill our divine purpose without love and a sound mind according to 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

that simply praying is enough to overcome feelings of isolation, anxiety or depression; but we must not forget the power of prayer and the God in whom we believe. He said in Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” We must also remember what the psalmist says about sorrow being temporary in Psalm 30:5, “... weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” And, asking for help is critical, especially in situations where it is absolutely necessary. Seeking guidance from a mentor, a trusted brother/sister in the church, family members, or a Christian counselor is okay and recommended.

The Bible says in Galatians 6:2, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Always remember, you are not alone, as long as you are in the body of Christ. We will fall, we will be knocked down, we will suffer hurt or trauma in this life. There are times you will even feel alone and helpless, but help just a prayer or a brother or a sister away. The prophet Isaiah reminds us, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10”

TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: A Debate

Is it always necessary to resort to medicine and counseling to heal mental health issues?

Week 2: Personal Challenge

Think and share in groups: If you have a friend who suffers from one of these conditions, how can you help them after this lesson?

Week 3: Bible Boxing

Divide the youth into teams to compete by finding and explaining the verses used in this article and others about healing, hope, and God’s faithfulness.

Week 4: Prayer Vigil

Organize a half-night of prayer where young people can anonymously share what they are going through and pray for one another. Church elders may also attend to intercede for the youth.

Relationships and connections

Luis Pineda – El Salvador

Someone once told me they wanted to be a great evangelist, but their thought was: “I don’t need to have friends at church, I just go and leave before the service ends.” So I asked: Can I show God’s love to the people around me with that mindset? Do we need to have friends only at church, or only outside of it? We both know the answer is no.

Our mission in the world is for many people to know the love of God, but we will not accomplish this just by speaking ourselves. PEOPLE NEED TO BE HEARD! In a relationship it is boring if only one person talks, or if only one listens. When we know how to build relationships, we build bridges that connect us to a port of endless possibilities.

In a community where I once served, one of my first contacts was the president of that community, a politician. We collaborated together on several projects for the community, without proselytizing. The result was that many people began to say that our Christian lifestyle was different, and that as a church we cared about them. Many people started attending the church we were planting. We can have meaningful relationships in our lives that help us fulfill our mission. Can you imagine how many things we could do if we truly had meaningful relationships? How many people would feel connected to our local church and, above all, to God’s love?

Many times, we think we don’t have talents, resources, or maybe we think we are introverted. You are reading this from an introvert. I have seen that the little or much I have, if I place it in the Lord’s hands, He takes care of the rest. It has surprised me! You just have to trust the process. Build meaningful relationships and connections in your community that help you show God’s love to others.

I encourage you to connect with people, see their needs; connect with people who can support you, and even in the little you can do, it is more than enough if you do it in faith. You are not doing it for yourself, but for God. Watch how God can work in your life. Are you ready to see God’s glory?



TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Dynamic

Download the app SOMOS – Card Game. Have a moment of conversation with your friends. The questions there will help you get to know each other better.

Week 2: Group Reflection

Would you advance and accomplish much if you think you don't need relationships and connections? Why? Personal Challenge: Ask 10 people how their day is going, and if you can, pray for them for 1 minute.

Week 3: Community Activity

Look for a need among your neighbors. Ask for the support of your leaders and help meet that need. It may be an elderly woman who needs cleaning help, or perhaps the community president needs your talents.

Week 4: Prayer

Pray individually and as a group: “Lord, help me to build relationships with people, to see their needs; to connect with people who can help me, and show me your glory and purpose in all of this. Amen.”

Prayer

Jael Estrada – México

Bored? Meet this exciting and powerful weapon.

Yes, to pray is to talk to God, but to talk to Him you have to learn to distinguish His voice, and that is what the Bible is for, so you can differentiate the voice of the human being and God's voice.

If you are having a hard time, I invite you to try the following steps:

1. Praise God! Recognize who God is and how great He is (Ps. 148:13).
2. Be thankful (Phil. 4:6).
3. Ask God for forgiveness, even for what you have unconsciously thought/ done (Ps. 134:23-24).
4. Ask that there be no physical, mental or spiritual distractions at this time.
5. Ask God to direct this time and clarify what He wants to say to you.
6. Read the Bible and be silent.
7. Write down everything you think God is trying to tell you. Each time you will be able to distinguish what came from your mind and what came from God's heart.

Remember that praying is not only asking, but listening, and God may be asking you to do or to stop doing something. You got this! God bless you.



TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Challenge

I challenge you to experience God on another level in your spiritual life. Find a notebook to use every time you want to write down what you feel God is speaking to you. Over time it will become a prayer journal. Set apart a time with God once a week. Go to a park, forest, or a quiet place without distractions. Play instrumental worship music in the background and practice the steps above.

Week 2: Group Dynamic

Organize a time of prayer after the preaching/devotional/Sunday school in a spacious and quiet place (a forest, a beach, the church prayer room, etc.). Make sure to have these resources:

- Paper/Notebook and pen (physical, not electronic).
- A device with music (without ads) or someone not participating playing an instrument.
- Comfortable clothing.

You can share prayer requests (personal, group, or upcoming activities). Establish a time limit (start with 10-15 minutes). Divide the first five steps of prayer among everyone (all pray together but each person leads aloud one step). When it is time to remain silent or read the Bible, each person goes to a comfortable spot and plays instrumental worship music in the background. When finished writing, gather together and share what God spoke to you. Sometimes God speaks to others through what He told us.

Week 3: Prayer (Individual & Group)

“Beloved Father, thank you because in Christ you saved me and gave me back your love, your purpose, and your grace. Forgive me when I stray and forget that I am your child. Help me to live each day as you want, to reflect your image, and to share with others the message of reconciliation. May my life be a testimony of you. Amen.”

Week 4: Prayer in Public Places

Make it your goal to pray at least once each day this week in a common, public place (transport, school, plaza). You don’t need to close your eyes or bow your head; pray with your eyes open as you walk or observe the people around you.

Restoration: relationship with the father

Donna Walsh – Jamaica

Why did Jesus come and die? Why would a holy God take on humanity, walk among sinners, and suffer death on a cross, bearing the sin of the entire world? The answer to such a great sacrifice is found in God's original intent: to restore humanity to a right relationship with Himself, healing what was broken.

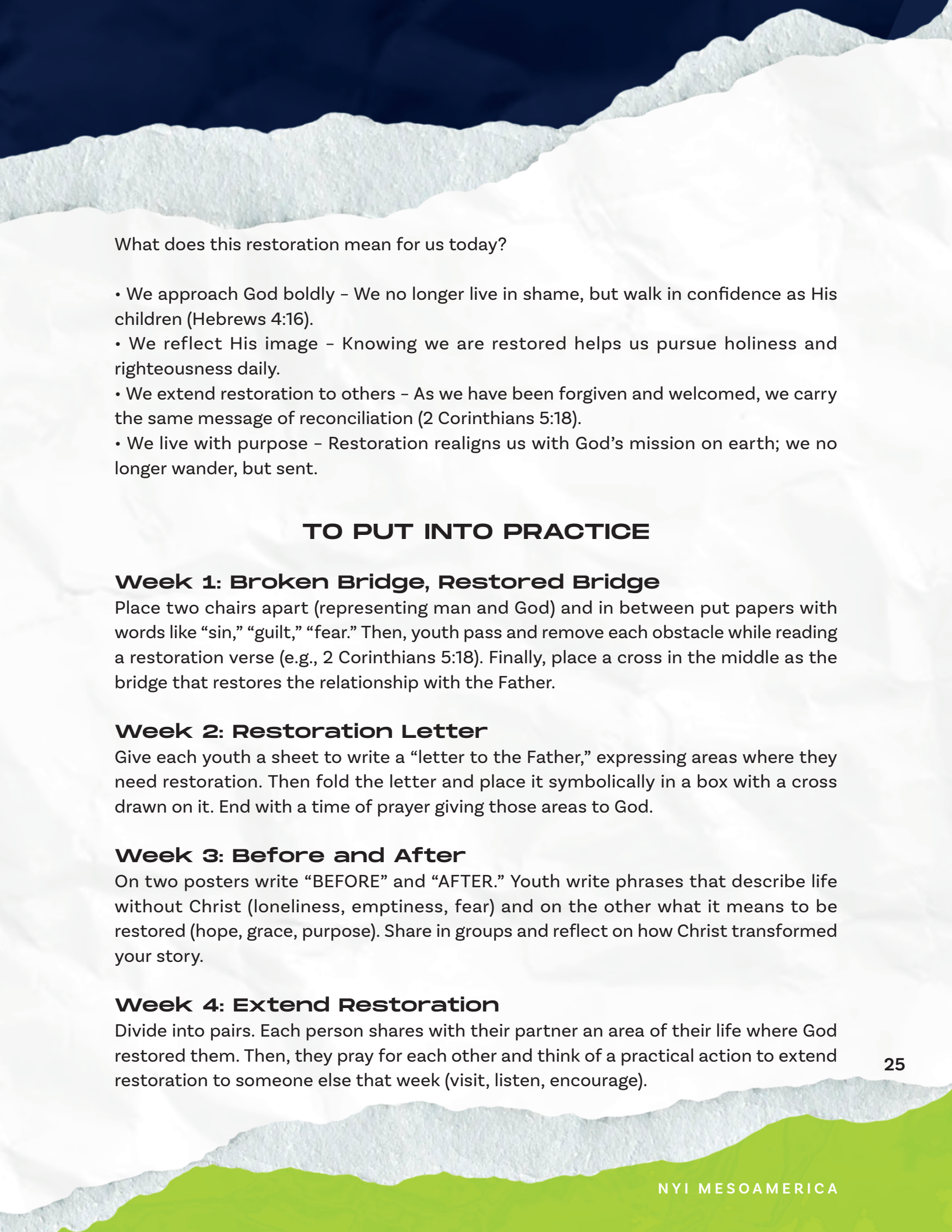
Where we were – At creation, humanity was in perfect harmony with God. Made in His image, we lived in intimate fellowship with the Father, marked by love, trust, and purpose. We were not just created: we were beloved masterpieces.

What happened – Sin disrupted that relationship. Deceived by the enemy, humanity disobeyed God and allowed sin to enter the world. Romans 5:12 explains that through one man, sin and death spread to all. With sin in our hearts, we could no longer stand before a holy God. The thoughts and intents of man's heart became continually evil, for all unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17). A barrier now stood between God and humanity.

What was done to restore us – But God, rich in mercy, initiated restoration – *apokathistēmi* in Greek, meaning to return to a former state. He sent His Son, Jesus, to live among us, to reveal the Father's heart, and to die in our place. Jesus bore our sin and rose again, opening the way back to God. His sacrifice was not only redemptive, it was restorative.

This is powerfully shown in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). The son expected to return as a servant, but his father reinstated him as a son. If a human father can show such love, how much more our Heavenly Father?

What was restored – Through Christ, we are no longer outsiders, but sons and daughters. We regain access to the Father, purpose, identity, and eternal life. Our brokenness became healing; guilt was exchanged for grace. We are fully restored to fellowship, just as it was in the beginning.



What does this restoration mean for us today?

- We approach God boldly – We no longer live in shame, but walk in confidence as His children (Hebrews 4:16).
- We reflect His image – Knowing we are restored helps us pursue holiness and righteousness daily.
- We extend restoration to others – As we have been forgiven and welcomed, we carry the same message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).
- We live with purpose – Restoration realigns us with God’s mission on earth; we no longer wander, but sent.

TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Broken Bridge, Restored Bridge

Place two chairs apart (representing man and God) and in between put papers with words like “sin,” “guilt,” “fear.” Then, youth pass and remove each obstacle while reading a restoration verse (e.g., 2 Corinthians 5:18). Finally, place a cross in the middle as the bridge that restores the relationship with the Father.

Week 2: Restoration Letter

Give each youth a sheet to write a “letter to the Father,” expressing areas where they need restoration. Then fold the letter and place it symbolically in a box with a cross drawn on it. End with a time of prayer giving those areas to God.

Week 3: Before and After

On two posters write “BEFORE” and “AFTER.” Youth write phrases that describe life without Christ (loneliness, emptiness, fear) and on the other what it means to be restored (hope, grace, purpose). Share in groups and reflect on how Christ transformed your story.

Week 4: Extend Restoration

Divide into pairs. Each person shares with their partner an area of their life where God restored them. Then, they pray for each other and think of a practical action to extend restoration to someone else that week (visit, listen, encourage).

Calling and vocation

Cesia Aragón – Guatemala

“And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’”

Matthew 4:19

There is a question that sometimes troubles us more than we admit: Why am I here? In a culture that pushes us to chase fame, success, and validation, Jesus calls us to something different: to follow Him and live with purpose.

The call is not only for those who “already know what they want to do with their life” or those who already have experience. God’s call can come at any age, and many times it begins in the ordinary.

When Jesus called the first disciples, they were not in a temple nor waiting for a great revelation. They were fishing. Jesus approached them, looked at them, and said: “Follow me.” They left everything and believed Him. That is the essence of the call: not having all the answers, but trusting the One who calls you. God does not always reveal the destination, but He always promises His presence along the way.

God has given you talents and abilities that are not accidental. Perhaps your vocation is in art, teaching, social media, leadership, or missions. Maybe you are not sure yet, and that’s okay. Sometimes discovering vocation takes time. But one thing is sure: God can use everything you are (your story, your gifts) to bless others and show His love. We are not all called to the same thing, but we are all called to the eternal.

The call is not always about going far. Sometimes it is about staying and being light where you are. It is about saying “yes” to the small tasks, to the unseen ministries, to the challenges no one wants to take. God does not look for perfection; He looks for willingness. And when you are willing, He takes care of the rest.

Your call does not start when you are older, when you have a degree, or when you feel “ready.” It starts when you decide to say: “Yes, Lord, here I am.”



TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Group Dynamic

Organize a “circle of calling,” where each person shares one ability they have, and the group prays for ways to use it for God.

Week 2: Bible Dialogue

Read Matthew 4:18-22 and discuss: What would we need to “leave behind” today to follow Jesus freely?

Week 3: Challenge

Each person makes a list of three things they love to do, share them, and talk about how they could use them to serve others this week.

Week 4: Community Action

Organize a day of service as a youth group (visit a family, clean a public space, support another ministry).

It's not about me

Edgar Corzo – México

*John the Baptist understood it all: "He must increase, but I must decrease."
John 3:30.*

Life is not about me; it's about Him. This is radical, because we live in a time where everything pushes us to focus on ourselves: our social media, our photos, our achievements, our "me." But when life revolves only around me, everything falls apart: relationships become toxic, selfishness rules us, and even our faith shrinks to what "I want God to give me."

Julian of Norwich said that "the only sin that exists is selfishness"; because any human need or desire may begin naturally, but when it passes through selfishness it becomes something that harms and destroys oneself and others. It is a hunger to satisfy what we want at all costs—unhealthy, without pausing to think about others.

Max Lucado expressed this same idea in his book: "It's not about you." The great mistake of our generation is believing we are the center of the universe and that everything revolves around us. The truth is that we were created for God and to reflect His glory. On God's stage, the star is Jesus... not us! When we understand this, our life gains meaning and direction.

Imagine the solar system: if the sun is not at the center, the planets go out of orbit. The same occurs with us. If we try to put our "self" at the center, everything gets disordered. But if we place Christ where He belongs, everything aligns.

"It's not about me; it's about Him" is a call to humility and surrender. It means recognizing that my talents, my time, and my dreams are a gift from God to serve Him and bless others. It means letting go of control and allowing Christ to be the protagonist of my story. When we live for ourselves, we burn out. When we live for God, we find peace, purpose, and fullness. The secret is not to inflate the ego, but to let Christ grow in us each day.



TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Pray Individually and as a Group

“Lord Jesus, I recognize that my life is not about me, but about You. Forgive me when I put my ego at the center. Help me decrease so that You may increase in me. May my words, actions, and dreams reflect Your glory. Amen.”

Week 2: Selfie vs. Christ

Each youth takes a selfie and writes around it who they think is at the center of their life (ego, success, fear, etc.). Then they write the name of Jesus over the photo as a reminder that He must be at the center.

Week 3: Solar Circle

On a poster, draw a sun (Christ) in the center and have each youth write their name as a planet around it. Reflect: what happens if I want to be at the center instead of Christ?

Week 4: Post-it Challenge

Each one writes on a Post-it an area where they tend to be selfish (social media, family, friends). Then they place it on a cross or sign that says: “It’s not about me; it’s about Him.”

In the image of God:

Part one

Mauricio Constantino – México

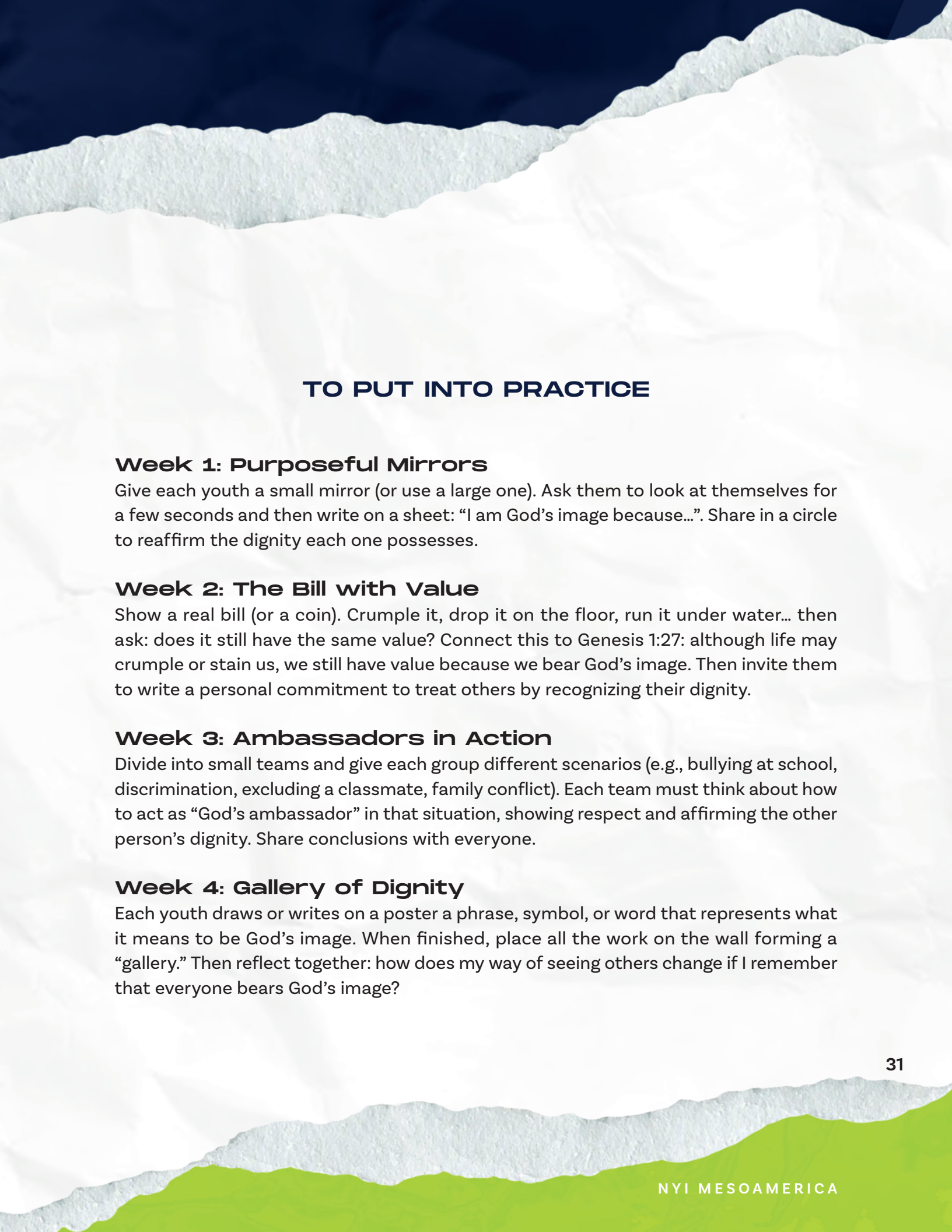
What is the first thing we should say about any human being? To many, the obvious answer might be: that they are sinners or far from God. However, the first thing we should affirm is that all have been created in the image of God. We often forget that Genesis chapter one comes before chapter three.

We have developed our way of approaching the world and those who are not Christians from the idea that they are sinners, before recognizing that they bear the image of God. What does it mean that, as divine creation, they were formed in His image?

First, we must recognize that the image of God in humanity confers a unique dignity that transcends merely physical or intellectual aspects, manifesting itself in a relational calling and a responsibility toward the world. Regardless of situation, condition, sex, nationality, or faith—everyone, absolutely everyone, bears the image of God. It is striking that Genesis 9:6 forbids the taking of any human life precisely because every person was created in God's image.

Second, the idea of the image of God is framed within a territorial reality and sovereignty. In antiquity, when a king had a vast kingdom and was unable to reach the limits of his lands, he used certain strategies to have his authority recognized to the ends of his domain. Two of these strategies were the use of statues—as seen in the book of Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar's statue—and the minting of coins with his image, which indicated that whoever carried those coins could do business with the king's authority or in his name.

Both forms represented that, by means of the image, the ruler's authority was made present regardless of distance or even language differences. In other words: "the image of the king meant that he reigned among them." In the same way, the image of God indicates that human beings are His ambassadors on earth. Therefore, we are exhorted to recognize the divine imprint in each person, which means that no individual can claim superior value or a hierarchical position over another. Human dignity is inalienable and equal for all, because the One who reigns is not another human being, but God among us...



TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Purposeful Mirrors

Give each youth a small mirror (or use a large one). Ask them to look at themselves for a few seconds and then write on a sheet: “I am God’s image because...”. Share in a circle to reaffirm the dignity each one possesses.

Week 2: The Bill with Value

Show a real bill (or a coin). Crumple it, drop it on the floor, run it under water... then ask: does it still have the same value? Connect this to Genesis 1:27: although life may crumple or stain us, we still have value because we bear God’s image. Then invite them to write a personal commitment to treat others by recognizing their dignity.

Week 3: Ambassadors in Action

Divide into small teams and give each group different scenarios (e.g., bullying at school, discrimination, excluding a classmate, family conflict). Each team must think about how to act as “God’s ambassador” in that situation, showing respect and affirming the other person’s dignity. Share conclusions with everyone.

Week 4: Gallery of Dignity

Each youth draws or writes on a poster a phrase, symbol, or word that represents what it means to be God’s image. When finished, place all the work on the wall forming a “gallery.” Then reflect together: how does my way of seeing others change if I remember that everyone bears God’s image?

In the image of God: part two

Mauricio Constantino – México

Continuing in the same line of thought, third, according to the biblical teaching on the image of God, it possesses an integrating character between man and woman, so it cannot be considered complete without the presence of both. Therefore, any interpretation that implies male superiority is mistaken. Scripture repeats that God created both man and woman in His image; we cannot sustain the idea that man, without woman, fully contains that image, nor that woman, without man, does so on her own. In biblical thought, it is in the integration of both that the image of God is fully manifested.

Fourth, the image of God is the distinctive mark of the Creator's greatest work, separating human beings from any beast or animal. Therefore, any idea of objectifying human beings is entirely foreign to the creation account and to the notion known in Latin as *imago Dei*.

Fifth, the idea that God created us with a body—along with His provision of both food and clothing (after the fall), as well as the incarnation itself—shows us that we cannot hold a dualistic and erroneous stance that separates spirit from body. Both New Testament writers and the Church Fathers rejected such dualism, emphasizing God's involvement in the creation of flesh. This highlights the uniqueness and dignity of humanity as an integral whole: body and spirit.

Lastly, the human being reaches fullness when reconciled with God and neighbor through Christ, putting an end to all enmity. This restoration flows from the close relationship the Christian maintains with Christ.

For John Wesley, the image of God was understood as the capacity to love God and others. Therefore, when sin entered the world, what was affected was not human dignity, but the original relationship with God and, with it, the capacity to love one's neighbor. Instead of seeing others as equals, we began to consider ourselves gods over them, reducing them to subjects or even to inferior beings, as happened tragically during the transatlantic slave trade, where other human beings were treated like mere beasts of burden.



For this reason, when we come to Christ, it is in this “second humanity,” created by the second Adam—new creation in Christ—where we are rehabilitated and empowered by the Holy Spirit to love others. It is in this restored relationship that we can fully enjoy the capacity to love, originally granted by the image of God and renewed by the action of divine grace. However, this restoration does not authorize Christians to belittle those who do not yet share the faith. In short, the restoration of God’s image in the Christian translates into a deep love for God and for neighbor.

When asked what we should first see in another human being, the answer is that he or she is a person made in the image of God, with intrinsic dignity. There is nothing among us that makes one more than another, because in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free; we are all one in Christ. In Him, all the barriers that sin and power divisions have raised have been torn down. Only in Him, and by belonging to Him, are we able to love without any barrier.

TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Image-of-God Puzzles

Give each group a puzzle to put together. Reflect: just as the puzzle is incomplete when a piece is missing, God’s image is fully manifested in the union of man and woman, and in diversity reconciled in Christ.

Week 2: The Dignity Balance

Prepare a symbolic balance (a rope with two containers works). Hand out papers with social “labels” (rich, poor, man, woman, foreigner, believer, non-believer). As youth place them on the balance, reflect on what happens when some are treated as more valuable. Conclude with Galatians 3:28: in Christ we are all one.

Week 3: Body and Spirit in Motion

Lead a short physical activity (stretching, light exercise) followed by prayer. Explain that God created us as a whole—body and spirit—and both must honor Him. End by writing on cards: “How can I honor God with my body and spirit this week?”

Week 4: Wall Torn Down

Build a small wall with boxes labeled with barriers such as prejudice, pride, discrimination, selfishness. As a group, tear it down while reading phrases like “In Christ there are no barriers.” Close with prayer for reconciliation and unity in the community.

The love of God

Candy Castro – México

The love of God has been a subject of reflection for centuries. It is a love that has changed the lives of millions around the world. For me, God's love is very personal and tangible. I remember a moment in my life when I faced a challenge that changed my perspective on everything.

When I was five years old, I suffered an accident. The medical diagnosis predicted serious consequences that would definitely affect my future. The doctors could not believe that I did not have a single injury, because God intervened miraculously. My mom prayed for me, and it was as if God's love flowed through her and reached me in a tangible way.

God's love is like a river that flows freely. There is no place where His love and care do not reach. Sometimes, we experience His presence through the people around us—family and friends who support and love us.

God's love is unconditional and does not depend on us. No matter what we have done or failed to do, God's love remains the same. It is a love that seeks us and finds us, even when we are not aware of it.

In the Bible we are told that “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son” (John 3:16). This shows us the depth of God's love for humanity. His love has been given to us freely, and we can experience it in our daily lives.

How to experience God's love daily:

- Prayer
- Reading the Bible
- Reflection
- Service to others
- Reflect this love to your neighbor each day

God's love is a precious gift that has been given to us. It is a love that transforms us and motivates us to love others. May we experience God's love in our daily lives and share it with others—without a doubt, a double blessing.



Finally, consider this verse in Romans 8:38-39: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

Week 1: Prayer

Set aside time each day to reflect on God’s love in your life. Pray for someone you know who is going through a difficult time.

Week 2: Bible Reading

Read the Bible and reflect on God’s Word. Look for passages that speak to you about God’s love and consider how you can apply them in your life.

Week 3: Reflection

Take 5 minutes to think solely about how God has cared for and protected you in the past and now.

Week 4: Service to Others

Look for ways to show God’s love to others through acts of kindness or words of encouragement.

NYI Mesoamerica