

Aim of lesson

For the young people to think ahead to the journey that lies ahead of them, and to see their lives as a purposeful walk to the kingdom of God.

Bible background

Deuteronomy 30:15-16,19.

Preparation required

Find out, if you don't know already, about the walking habits of the young people in your group. If you are unfortunate enough to have a group of couch potatoes you may find this lesson a bit hard going. You may be able to think of a different analogy - a long journey by train, for instance, though that is definitely second best. The alternative would be to deal with the subject in general terms - why do 'people' like walking, or to think of a group of mountaineers.

Get something that you can write on during the lesson, like a whiteboard or flipchart. The students' notes have no spaces to be filled in; after all, if the young people have worked their way this far they deserve a week off. They do, however, have a summary of the sorts of conclusions you should be coming to, in the form of scriptural quotations. It is probably best to discourage them from reading their notes ahead of the discussion; they have the rest of their lives to think about them.

Suggested outline of lesson

This lesson is all based on the analogy of a walk. It is of course a scriptural parallel - think of the exodus, or the quotation at the head of the students' notes.

You should spend about a third of the time at your disposal thinking with the young people about a real walk in the hills - ideally an actual journey they have made relatively recently. While they talk, make notes on the board.

Then turn to the spiritual journey, and go through the points they have made, drawing out the scriptural and practical lessons for life.

A walk in the hills

Talk to the young people about any time when they may have walked a long way. They will probably have experience of walking in the hills on holiday, at camp, or on some other occasion. Ask them to think of one or two specific journeys that come to mind - it may be helpful if they don't all remember the same terrible day last month when they all got lost and ended up soaked to the skin!

Spend a while thinking simply about this sort of journey, and ask them more questions. They may give the answers in the column on the left, or they may not! If they don't, don't despair. When you come to the second part of the lesson and you are thinking about the 'journey of life', ask them if their answer applies, and think about why it does or doesn't.

A walk in the hills	The Way of Life
How do you feel before the walk?	
<p>Sometimes keen, but not always? It's often easier to stay at home. Not very keen?</p>	<p>That's often how we feel about our service to God. It takes some willpower to overcome these feelings, but it's important that we do.</p>
What do you need to do before you start?	
<p>They may never have planned such a journey themselves, but you can get them to think about what their parents or CYC leaders may have done.</p> <p>Decide where you are going. Plan the journey and work out how long it will take. Get a map and read it.</p>	<p>Just as we need to decide about a walk before we start, we do about life. If we keep changing our minds about the destination we will never get anywhere.</p>
How do you decide what to carry?	
<p>Only things essential for the journey. A map and compass. Protective clothing against the wind and rain. Nourishment. It is a tiring business, walking, so you need food for energy, and something to drink.</p>	<p>Think about the map - the Bible - and a compass - our conscience? You may like to think about the 'armour of God' from Ephesians 6. Fellowship with the Lord Jesus, represented in bread and wine - John 6:35.</p>
What should you leave behind?	
<p>Things that you don't need. In practice you need only a fraction of what you have in order to make the journey.</p>	<p>Think about the thorns that choke the word in the parable of the sower - the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches. As in the hills, it's best to travel light.</p>

A walk in the hills	The Way of Life
<p>What can make the journey easier?</p> <p>Footpaths - if other people have walked the way before you it helps you to know where to go.</p> <p>A guide who knows the way.</p> <p>A good friend to talk to.</p>	<p>The Bible is full of the examples of people who have 'gone before' - in particular the Lord Jesus.</p> <p>We too have a guide who knows the way - a good friend to talk to. Think about the importance of prayer on the journey.</p>
<p>Whom should you travel with?</p> <p>People who are going the same way as you!</p> <p>People who've been there before.</p> <p>People you can trust to help if you are in trouble.</p>	<p>We should travel with friends who share our faith. Travelling alone can be fun, so long as the sun is shining. But as soon as the way becomes hard, we need help and companionship.</p> <p>We should travel with God. He will walk with us and give us guidance and strength.</p>
<p>How many other people do you meet?</p>	
<p>Usually very few. Most people stay at home, go to work or the shops.</p>	<p>Usually, hardly any. But it's important to remember that the fact that the hills are deserted doesn't mean we're stupid - sadly, everyone else is missing out.</p>
<p>What can make it harder?</p>	
<p>Not knowing the way.</p> <p>If it gets misty, or rains heavily, and you can't see the path or any landmarks.</p>	<p>The way is sometimes unclear. There are some situations in life where the Bible doesn't give us clear guidance. We have to pray and be guided by a conscience that has been primed by God's word.</p>
<p>What things can go wrong?</p>	
<p>You can get lost.</p> <p>You might fall and hurt yourself.</p>	<p>Sometimes we lose our way in life; our faith may become weak. We often sin, and hurt ourselves and other people.</p>

A walk in the hills	The Way of Life
<p>When you get lost?</p> <p>You need to stop and work out where you are - use the compass and map.</p> <p>Then you need to work out a fresh route that will take you to the end of your journey. You may need to retrace your steps.</p> <p>But you can always get there from where you are. Getting lost may mean that the journey takes longer, but it's not impossible.</p>	<p>The important thing is to know that there is always a way back. We need to repent and once more follow God's ways, and he will forgive us and bring us back.</p> <p>You can always get there from here.</p>
<p>Can it be dangerous?</p> <p>It can be, especially if you wander off the path or go to dangerous places.</p> <p>But usually it isn't. The path may be faint at times, but if you keep to it you get to the end all right.</p> <p>It's dangerous to get separated from the people you're with; you need to keep close together.</p>	<p>We can make the journey dangerous for ourselves by going to the wrong places and mixing with the wrong people.</p> <p>We need to keep with people on the same journey.</p>
<p>What are the most enjoyable things about a walk?</p>	
<p>The fresh air, the scenery, the company</p> <p>The exhilaration of being on top of the hills</p> <p>The views - you can see for miles</p>	<p>The vision of the kingdom</p> <p>The fact that we understand - in outline at least - what God is doing in the world.</p> <p>The spiritual blessings are a rich reward in this life.</p>
<p>How do you feel at the end?</p>	
<p>Satisfaction</p> <p>Feeling of achievement</p> <p>Comradeship</p>	<p>Imagine the end of your journey, being part of a world at peace, full of joy and happiness.</p>

You may like to read through the passages in the students' notes with the young people, and discuss what they have to say about this subject. If they missed the opportunity to take notes, there is room!

Relevance to our lives

The poem by Robert Frost is well-known in the US, but for us it has a special - and scriptural - meaning. The road we have chosen is less travelled - it is a narrow way, with a narrow gate. But the choice does indeed, for us, make 'all the difference'. The difference between life and death; between walking alone and with our maker. Young people are often very self-conscious about being different, but the poem confirms what God tells us in his word: to live, we walk the road less travelled.

Prayer

O Son of Man, who walked each day a humble road, serene and strong; go with me now upon life's way, my comrade all the journey long. Amen.

Other suggestions for activities

Think about a journey in the Bible, like the journey through the wilderness, and bring out all the parallels with our spiritual journey through life.