

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Listen to the Faithelement Podcast for additional insights on the text.
- Have any selected video or music clips ready to show

Commercial Break

Form at least two teams of not more than six people and tell them to imagine that they are conducting a commercial campaign for some item found in your meeting area (yes, it can be a tape dispenser, a chair, a picture, a lamp, a ping pong ball... anything). Each team has ten minutes to choose an object and to then come up with a way to convince you to buy it.

After the ten minutes have passed, have each team present their sales pitch and ask questions like:

- Be honest: which team had the best sales pitch and why?
- What made it easier or harder to come up with a good sales pitch and why?
- If someone was going to try to sell something to you, what would be the best approach and why?
- Under what conditions do you find it easier or harder to convince someone of something? To be convinced of something?
- What do you think your ability to be convinced or to resist convincing says about you as a person?

Two Trees

Read Genesis 3:1-21.

View the Bible Background Video.

Say something like: "The Serpent encourages Mary to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Then ask questions similar to these:

- What might Mary's thought processes have been in making this decision?
- Was the tree in the middle tempting? Do you think it was a good tree? Why or why not?
- Do humans seek the knowledge of good and evil? Do we prefer innocence? Explain.

Your Serpents

We make choices all the time, but some of them are harder than others. Some decisions have larger consequences than others. Often, we may feel as if there's a serpent whispering in our ear or lurking nearby to sway us.

Distribute note cards and pencils to youth, and encourage them to consider the serpents in their lives. Invite youth to write 3-4 statements that their serpents whisper in their ears.

Allow youth a few minutes to do the task, then ask for volunteers to share (don't insist that youth share... some may have written more private thoughts). For those who do share, feel free to ask follow-up questions such as: "How do you feel when your serpent says that?" or "How do you resist that sort of comment?"

Choosing to Grow

Say to the group: "We all know that it can be hard enough to make up our minds on little things, much less know the right and wrong of some of the larger decisions in our lives. Dealing with the temptation to choose something that may or may not be in our best interest might make it worse. Before we go, I'd like for you all to spend a couple of minutes thinking about the hard choices that you are facing, or that you have seen another person have to make. Think about the choice, about the potential consequences, both good and bad; and about the temptations that enter into the making of that choice. In a little bit, I'd like for those of you who are willing to name a tough choice - just the choice - understanding that it doesn't have to be a choice you're currently facing, to help us focus our prayers together."

Ask for volunteers to share by naming choices they face, then close with a prayer for all of those who face tough decisions, especially for the wisdom to see past temptation and toward the best possible outcome for those choices.