

Step Into My Shoes- Philippines

Adaptation Ideas for Middle Schoolers

While Step Into My Shoes – Philippines was designed with 8- to 11-year-olds in mind, with a few adaptations, it can easily be utilized with older middle school-aged youth as well. Below are a few ideas for adapting each of the elements of the resource.

*NOTE that if your church is hosting the 90-minute Give Back Day version of this experience, middle and high school students can be part of the core planning and leadership team, or perhaps your youth ministry could host the entire event for your church. Most of the volunteer roles can be accomplished by high school students, or middle schoolers paired with adults.

Step One: Called To Follow Jesus

WELCOME:

Depending on the size and dynamics of your group, you might want to play a game that requires listening closely to instructions, or listening closely to a partner in the midst of distractions. Or some version of “telephone,” where a message is passed from person to person. You could also divide students into groups and have each group come up with and sing a song (of any genre) with “call” or “call me” in it, rotating around the room from group to group until no one can think of another song, or until you run out of time. The group who sang the most “call” songs wins.

BIBLE FOCUS:

While we are tempted to shift into didactic mode with older students, they still have great capacity for wonder and imagination. Consider adapting the “wondering” exercise for an older group by shifting your language a bit to frame how we can engage our imaginations when we read Scripture as a way to encounter the text. Give students tools for writing and reflecting, and ask them to spread out around the room. Invite everyone to close their eyes and take a few deep breaths, then pray, asking God to open all of you to the text you’re about to read. Then read the verse, perhaps a couple of times, and give them each reflection prompt (rephrasing as appropriate). You may want to add a prompt about what “calling” may mean for us today.

PRAYER REMINDER:

The prayer flip-flop idea can still work with middle schoolers as a tangible take-home reminder to pray—just be sure to buy larger sizes so it feels like they are praying about following Jesus as preteens/teenagers. But if you feel like your group might find it childish, an alternative may be to create some kind of flip-flip art piece for your gathering space. Perhaps students write prayers and decorate the flip-flops with artwork, then glue them on a board or some kind of altar that you keep in your space for a season. Alternatively, lead a reflective prayer time in which you invite students to take off their shoes and

consider what it looks like to follow Jesus in their lives in the coming week—the places their shoes will go, the things they will do in their shoes—and what it looks like to say “Yes” to Jesus each step of their day.

Step Two: Called To Be The Church

WELCOME:

The yarn-tossing activity can still work with an older group, but naturally the examples will be different. Start off with an idea or two most relevant to your particular group based on what you know about them.

BIBLE FOCUS:

The focus of this week is the church as a family, so this angle on the passage is very important. You may want to adjust the discussion questions a bit to press a bit more into the awkwardness of being family to one another in the church. What does that mean for the way we interact with other churches in our community? How does it impact the work we are—or aren’t—doing globally as a youth ministry and as a church? How does family brokenness and dysfunction play out in the church, and why do we stick with each other anyway?

PRAYER REMINDER:

We suggest skipping the footprint craft, but keep the discussion focused on what it might mean to “be the church,” leading into prayer. You may divide into pairs or small groups to close in prayer focused on being the church together, or you may again want to invite students to remove their shoes for prayer (repeating this each week if it’s effective). If this would go over well with your particular group, consider distributing permanent markers and inviting each student to write “I am the church” on the bottom of one of their feet as a lead-in to prayer. Another option is to create a liturgy or reflective prayer based on 1 Corinthians 12 and Paul’s imagery of the church connected like the parts of a body are connected, inseparable from one another and dependent upon each other.

Step Three: Called To Care For Others

WELCOME:

It may work best with an older group to start the session by making something from trash, rather than during the video debrief. You may want to gather random bits of different kinds of trash ahead of time (avoid anything involving food—cardboard boxes and plastics work great) and separate students into small teams to see what they can think of to create out of their trash within a brief time limit. Make sure to give them rolls of masking tape to hold things together. Then let them present their creation—a game, a toy, something useful, something artistic—to the rest of the group. Alternatively, you could have them break into groups and scavenge for trash nearby—in the building, outside, whatever may be appropriate—and make something useful or beautiful. Then adapt the debrief questions accordingly, and transition to the video of Audrey Mae.

BIBLE FOCUS:

The current session gives ideas for adapting this exercise based on the age and maturity level of your

group. We suggest utilizing these ideas, and if you have time, connecting with the Luke 10:25-37 story linking the “Greatest Commandment” with the story of the Samaritan who helped an enemy on the side of the road. Be prepared for middle schoolers to bring up questions about racism, immigration, and refugees in your discussion.

PRAYER REMINDER:

The big idea you want students to take home is that showing compassion, or having a “cause,” is not about “what” but about “who.” Transition from the “Responding Together” discussion into a prayer that helps students solidify the “who” of compassion rather than simply “what” they (or your church) will do.

Step Four: Called To Take A Next Step

WELCOME:

This opening skit can work well with preteens and young teenagers to lead into the Bible Focus. You might add some fun references to technology (texting, messaging, etc.) for the last example.

BIBLE FOCUS:

If you have more time, you may want to add a couple of questions connecting action and words. For example, ask students to name specifics of what Jesus’ ministry on earth looked like, and reflect together how much centered on words versus action (concluding that he integrated both most of the time!) Ask them to name some ways the church—or your youth ministry specifically—focuses on words, and on actions. Don’t try to “solve” any discrepancies here yet; this discussion may set up a helpful tension for the response discussion later.

PRAYER REMINDER:

The current session gives a number of possible ideas that can be adapted for older groups for next steps and prayer. Depending on what your church is already doing, students may have very tangible next-step possibilities, or you may need to help them with ideas for age-appropriate next steps. Ideally you can tie this last session into an upcoming or ongoing service opportunity in your youth ministry as well.

Video Debrief

Adjust the video debrief questions accordingly throughout this series based on your group. It’s possible that you will find one or two of the videos seem to be aimed a bit young for your particular group, and it’s okay to name that if they bring it up afterward. However, it may also be helpful to note specifically that Leah (session 2) is a teenager, and Heugene and Heunice (session 4) are in their early 20s. Further, it’s worth noting that Jonas (session 1) is only nine years old, but probably holds more daily responsibilities than most teenagers in our society.

Older students may also be more likely to see some of the realities of extreme poverty in the situations presented in the videos. While we have tried to downplay differences, and focus on similarities in order to foster connection between kids in your group and kids in these impoverished communities, the differences are hard to avoid. It may be helpful to create space for some of this reflection following the videos with a middle school group.

Finally, depending on the nature of your group and the availability of smartphones, you may want to follow one or more of the session videos with the virtual reality videos as an interactive small group exercise, or you could even display these videos on a large screen for the group, manipulating the image to different angles during an interactive discussion.

Family Take-home Toolkits

While the approach of the family devotions may be better for younger kids, the virtual reality videos are still engaging for middle schoolers, so encourage them to watch these videos and talk about them with their families. Also, many students will have younger siblings at home. Encourage them to lead the conversation with their younger siblings, sharing about the stories from the Philippines and the main idea from each week.