

THE DIAMOND STANDARD
CURRICULUM

**MIDDLE SCHOOL BIBLICAL
DISCUSSION TEACHER GUIDE**



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THE DIAMOND STANDARD

MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

BIBLICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE



ALIGNING OUR DREAMS WITH GOD'S WILL

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4–9

Students are encouraged to explore what goals and dreams they have for themselves, how God gives us dreams and goals to honor him and how to use their skills and resources to meet those goals.



LIVING OUT GOD'S BEST

Scripture: Romans 12:1–2

Students identify masks they hide behind and how God wants them to show up as their authentic selves.



SEARCHING GOD BY KNOWING YOUR GIFTS

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 4:1–11

Students explore their strengths through identifying interests and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) and how God uses them to show his glory.



LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR THROUGH HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

Scripture: James 1:19–20

Students learn about the cycle of communication, explore their current style of communication and discuss how God calls us to encourage one another to increase their ability to effectively communicate with others.



NAVIGATING CONFLICT WITH A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Scripture: Matthew 18:15–20

Students learn to distinguish between a "win-win" and "win-lose" approach to resolving conflict and identify their current conflict style to explore how to handle conflict better in the future. Students are reminded of God's steps for conflict resolution and reconciliation.



DELIGHTING IN THE LORD'S VALUES

Scripture: Psalm 37:4

Students examine how their personal values guide their view of success and shape their character. This session focuses on exploring why God desires us to have righteous character and how our character impacts our relationships.



SUPPORTING THE CHURCH THROUGH LOVE

Scripture: John 13:3

Students address their own support system and evaluate whether they could use additional support in areas of their life. Students are encouraged to seek out support from people who follow Christ.



BECOMING IMITATORS OF CHRIST

Scripture: Ephesians 5:1

Students reflect on the type of life they are modeling and how to be effective role models. Students explore the importance of imitating Christ in their actions and words.



ESTABLISHING CHRIST-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

Scripture: Philippians 2:1–5

Students assess the importance of having similar values and beliefs and their significant other. Students also explore why Christ desire for them to wait until marriage for sexual intimacy.



LIVING BY GOD'S GREATEST COMMANDMENTS

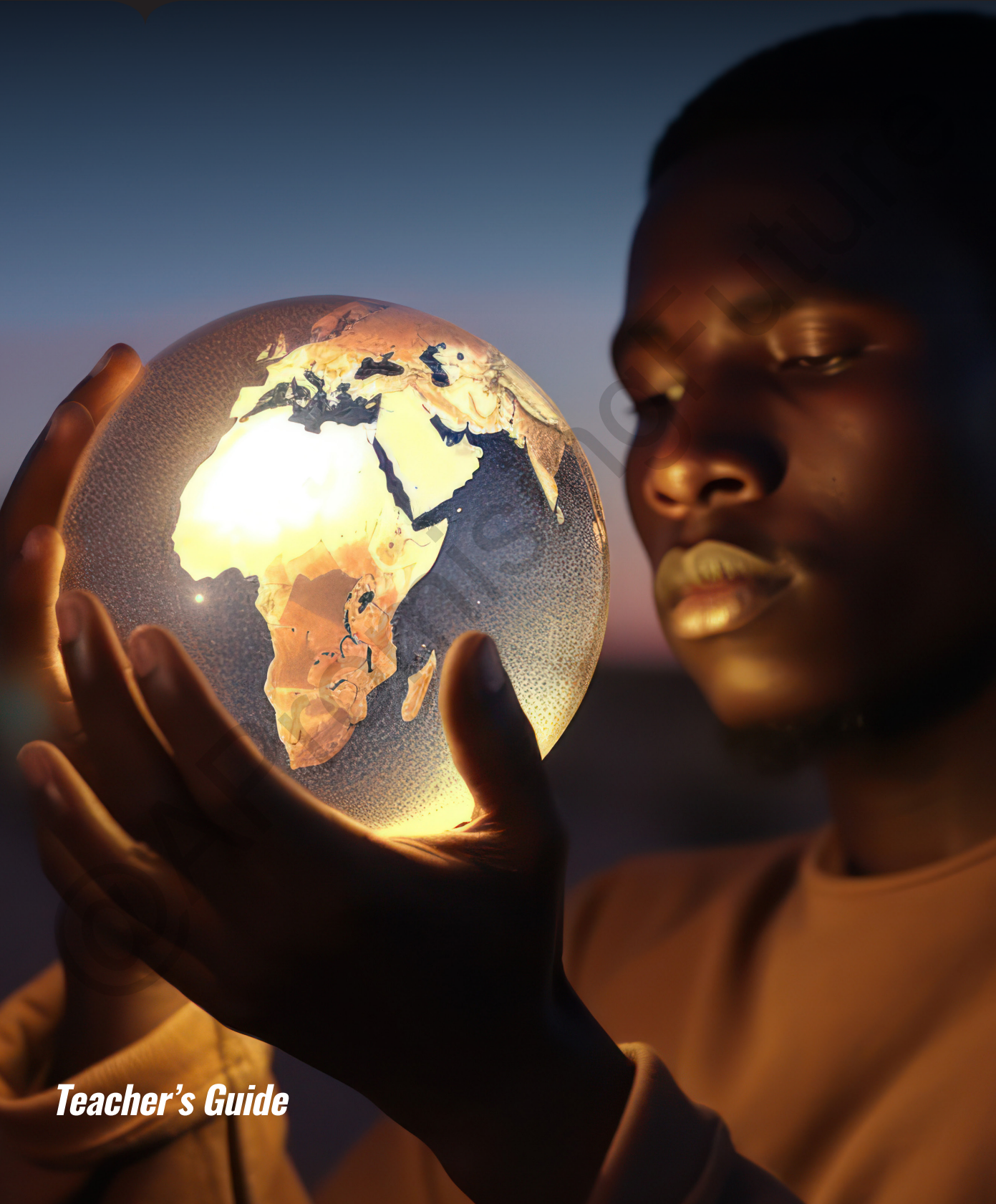
Scripture: Ephesians 2:8–10

Students are encouraged to take inventory of their whole person health and create goals to increase their wellbeing. Students are reminded that God wants them to live life abundantly.

DARE TO DREAM



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Teacher's Guide

Session Objectives:

- Create an environment for participants to understand the value of and create a vision/dream for the future.
- Develop an understanding of the barriers that can impact a dream.
- Help participants discover skills and resources that can influence and positively impact their dreams.

Executive Skills Present:

Organizing

Planning Ahead

Problem Solving

Vocabulary:

Prefrontal Cortex

Executive Skills

Intentional

Teacher Aids and Supplies Needed:

PowerPoint

Pens/Pencils

Index cards for activity

Extra copies of Brainstorming Webs

Paper for activity

Prize for winner of activity

Room Preparation:

Set up the computer/projector for PowerPoint Session 1.

Write the words “Dreams” on the board/poster paper.

Optional Icebreaker:

If you were to travel anywhere in the world, where would you go and what would you do?

Teacher note: *If you have time, you can ask this question to help students start to think about planning ahead and having goals. This can also help students find some common ground and feel comfortable with each other.*

Biblical Discussion Guide Focus

Aligning Our Dreams with God’s Will

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Activity: Two Stars and a Wish



Purpose:

To introduce students to the objectives of Session 1 through an activity that illustrates the importance of having dreams.

Preparation:

Put an index card, paper and pen/pencil on each student's desk.

To Play:

1. Tell student this game is similar to two truths and a lie. They are going to write three statements on their note card. Two statements will be things they have already achieved (stars) and one will be something they want to achieve (wish). They don't want other students to be able to guess which is the "wish" and which are the "stars" they've already reached. They want to write their list in a random order. Then, they are going to guess what each students' wish is. The person with the most correct guesses wins.
2. Give students 3 minutes to come up with their 2 stars and a wish. Tell students to write "1.) 2.) and 3.)..." next to their statements so other students can guess what number statement is the wish.
3. **Teacher's choice:** You can allow students to move around by telling the students to write their names at the top of their index cards and take a separate sheet of paper with them around the room. They will stop at each student's desk and write their name on the paper and what number they believe is the wish (one, two or three). When students are finished, have them sit back down at their desk. Ask each student to share what their wish was. Students can cross out the wishes they guessed incorrectly.
4. **Teachers Choice:** If you don't want students moving around, you can ask each student to reach their three statements aloud and have other students quickly write which statement (one, two or three) they believe is the wish on their paper. After a few seconds, ask the student who read their statements aloud which number is the wish. Then, move on to the next student. Do this until all students have read their statements and shared which is the wish.

Slide 1:



Discussion Points:

1. Was it hard or easy to come up with two achievements? Why?

Share This: *Sometimes we're so focused on what we want to achieve next that we forget to recognize and celebrate what we've already achieved. Or we don't recognize smaller achievements as important achievements.*

2. Was it hard or easy to come up with a wish? Why?

Share This: *Sometimes we get so caught up in our day-to-day activities that we forget to set goals. Goals help us work towards the future we want. The process of working towards goals also helps us build good skills like perseverance and problem solving.*

3. Why do you think we wanted you to write down two achievements along with your wish?

Share this: *Our small achievements can add up and help us work towards bigger achievements. Past achievements can also encourage us when we're struggling to reach our goals because we remember at some point we were working towards the previous achievement but now we've accomplished it. If we don't recognize our past successes, we may not feel like we can achieve future goals. This may keep us from setting goals. If we don't have goals, we can lose hope because we don't realize we have the ability to make changes and do hard things. But when we know our strengths and that we've overcome obstacles before, that can give us hope and remind us we can persevere to accomplish our goals.*

BDG Share This:

Walking with God, our Creator, makes us more of who we are created to be and we find our greatest fulfillment in that pursuit. As believers, our goals should reflect our identity in Christ. This does not mean, however, that all of our goals must be spiritual. Instead, if our goal is to buy a car by the end of next summer, we can glorify God by being good stewards of our money, honoring the boundaries of our parents/guardians, and driving responsibly.

Transition/Session Overview

Review the following objectives:

Advance to slide 2.

- We will encourage you to think about your future and your goals.
- We will introduce you to some common barriers people experience to achieving their goals.
- We will help you consider some of your strengths and resources that can help you pursue your goals.

Executive Skills Focus:

Organization

Planning Ahead

Problem Solving

Teacher Note: When we refer to executive skills, we are talking about the mental processes that facilitate our ability to: solve problems, plan ahead, adjust to new circumstances, regulate behavior, control impulses, be flexible in thinking, think ahead, exercise good judgment, be organized, learn from mistakes, concentrate, have a long attention span, and think critically. This curriculum provides intentional opportunities to practice and develop strong executive skills that can help youth to be more successful in life.

Slide 2:

DARE TO DREAM **1**
SESSION

Objectives

- Think about your future and your goals.
- Discover common barriers people experience to achieving their goals.
- Consider some of your strengths and resources that can help you pursue your goals.

• **Executive skills:** Organization, Planning Ahead, Problem-Solving

Introduction Page



1. Ask students to volunteer to read a quote from the first page in their student guide. Ask a few students why they chose the quote they read, and if they had a connection to what it said or to the author.
2. Advance to slide 3.
3. Read the Eleanor Roosevelt quote aloud or have a student read it. Ask the students what they think the quote means.

Teacher Note: *In case students have difficulty thinking of responses, you might ask: “What do you think the quote might be saying about dreams and their place in our lives?” or “Why do you think the quote says our dreams can have beauty?”*

Share This: *It’s easy to become complacent and get stuck living in the day to day without hoping for your future. If we want to enjoy life, we need to believe we can dream and achieve those dreams.*

4. Have students take a minute to answer the three questions on page 1 of the student manual.
5. Have the students share their responses from the questions aloud to see if there are any similarities between their three answers. (e.g., did they want to be a teacher, did they play school as kids, and did they enjoy stories about teachers?) If students would prefer, they can break off into groups of 3 or 4 to talk about their answers to the questions.

Share This: *There are amazing dreams and goals in the room, and we are going to learn more about how we can come up with goals, recognize things that can try to get in the way of achieving our goals, and how our strengths and resources can help us achieve our goals.*

Slide 3:



BDG Share This:

It can be especially difficult to dream when we do not have a vision of the overall picture. While each of our lives or circumstances are unique, God gives us a glimpse of the big picture with his promises in Scripture! He promises restoration, reconciliation, and hope through the Kingdom of God. In the meantime, though, the Bible gives us guidance on how to faithfully follow him. One of the most important Scriptures for understanding this is Deuteronomy 6:4-9. (Read this aloud with the class). These verses are quoted by Jesus himself as the “most important” commandment (Mark 12:28-31)! This scripture reveals God’s hope for our lives—that we glorify him with everything we’ve got. It is a holistic experience: body, mind, and soul are involved in keeping this commandment. Although it can feel like God’s will for our life is difficult to understand, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 reminds us that his will for our life is achieved by dedicating our whole life to him.

BDG Share This:

God created us with everything that we need to be healthy, successful, and relational beings. We can learn a lot about God based on how he created us (Psalm 139:13-18).

DARE TO DREAM

SESSION 1

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

- Eleanor Roosevelt

“The key to realizing a dream is to focus not on success but significance - and then even the small steps and little victories along your path will take on greater meaning.”

Oprah Winfrey

“Hold fast to dreams for if dreams die, life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly.”

- Langston Hughes

DREAM AGAIN...

Take a minute now and remember the things you used to dream of doing as a kid. Finish the following statements:

When I was a child, I wanted to be: _____
President, doctor, veterinarian, teacher, parent, astronaut

When I played make-believe, I liked to pretend to: _____
play doctor, play school, play house, play astronaut/ space explorer, play veterinarian, play castle (prince/princess)

My favorite story as a child was: _____
If a student shares a book name, ask them what the book is about and why they like it

Diamonds Are a Symbol Of...



1. Advance to slide 4.

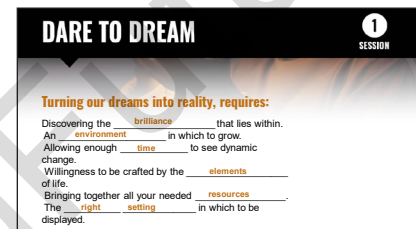
Share This: *We're talking about diamonds because they're valued for their beauty and strength, but they didn't always start out that way. Diamonds come from coal, one of the softest, most pliable elements on earth. To become a diamond, coal has to go through many difficult changes.*

2. Divide the class into groups of 3-4. Tell them they are going to unscramble the words at the top of the page and put those terms in the correct blanks in their student guide. Put a wordbank on a whiteboard or large paper in random order for students to reference while unscrambling.
3. Ask students to tell you the answers to each fill in the blank on the left side of the page. Click through slide 4 to show the correct answers.
4. Advance to slide 5. Ask students to tell you the correct answers to the fill in the blanks on the right side of the page. Click through slide 5 to show the correct answers.
5. Under the elements of life discussion point, ask students to think about how they can see adversity and challenges as a benefit. Ask them to think about what they might learn or skills they could build from those challenges to then help them to pursue their dreams.
6. Discuss the quote at the bottom of the page and ask students how it connects to diamonds.

Slide 4:



Slide 5:



BDG Share This:

Aligning our dreams with God's will should not be a process that diminishes the unique and purposeful way God created us. Our individual hopes, dreams, passions, and gifts all combine to form the "good works" God made for us and prepared us to walk in (Eph. 2:10). As we practice goal setting, remember that the Lord has equipped us with the strengths we need to achieve our

DARE TO DREAM

Diamonds are a symbol of:

WREPO POWER

YLRTOYA ROYALTY

HNETGRTS STRENGTH

LRIALIEBCN BRILLIANCE

LEXECNEECL EXCELLENCE

Like diamonds, turning our dreams into reality requires:

Discovering the brilliance that lies within.

An environment in which to grow.

Allowing enough time to see dynamic change.

Willingness to be crafted by the elements of life.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH:

Nature is often a reflection of life itself. Just like a diamond we may find ourselves living under intense heat and pressure. What are some things in your life that make you feel this way?

Homework/school, sports/after school activities, parents/sibling dynamics, friendships/peer conflict, expectations from parents, teachers, or coaches.

Pick someone in your life. Jot down the strengths they have that they can use to pursue their dreams.

Creative abilities, math skills, ability to talk easily with anyone, athletic abilities, interest in science, optimistic attitude, never giving up/perseverance, hard worker

“Be careful what you water your dreams with. Water them with worry and fear and you will produce weeds that choke the life from your dream. Water them with optimism and solutions and you will cultivate success. Always be on the lookout for ways to turn a problem into an opportunity for success. Always be on the lookout for ways to nurture your dream.”

- Lao Tzu

Dream Building: Webs and Resources



1. Ask students to flip to the next page of their student guides. Tell them they are now going to work on ways we can start to brainstorm and see what our dreams and goals may be.
2. Put students into groups of 3-4 people.
3. Tell them a generous donor has given them \$1 billion dollars to help the community. They must brainstorm all the ways the money can be used. They have 5 minutes to figure out how the money can be spent and put those ideas in the circle of the webs.
4. Give time for students to share responses and point out similarities/differences.

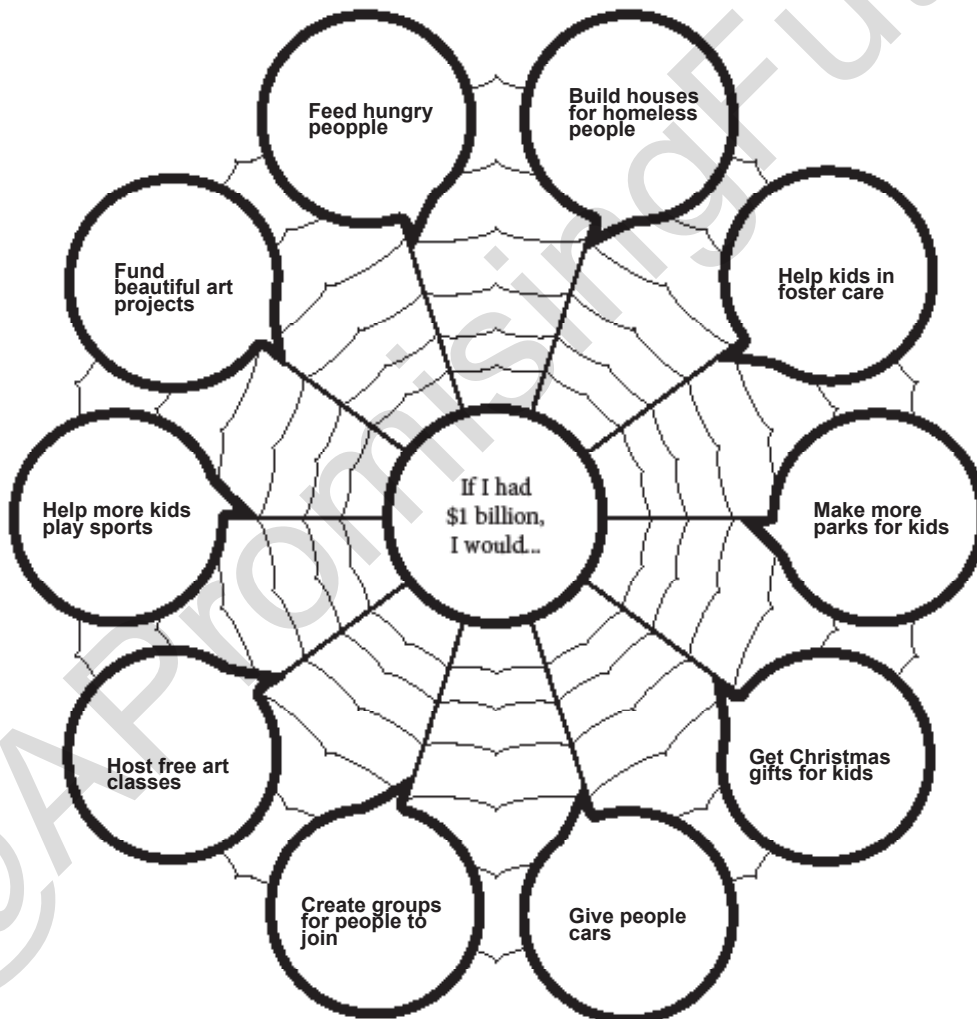
Questions to Consider:

- How did it feel to be in charge of putting \$1 billion to use in the community?
- How did you come up with the ideas for how to spend the money?
- Would any of these recommended ideas meet needs in your own personal lives?
- Would they meet needs in the lives of any of your loved ones?

Share This: *Often we are motivated to give back to the world the things that helped us or could have helped us in achieving our own success.*

DARE TO DREAM

Webs & Resources



Dream Building: Webs and Support

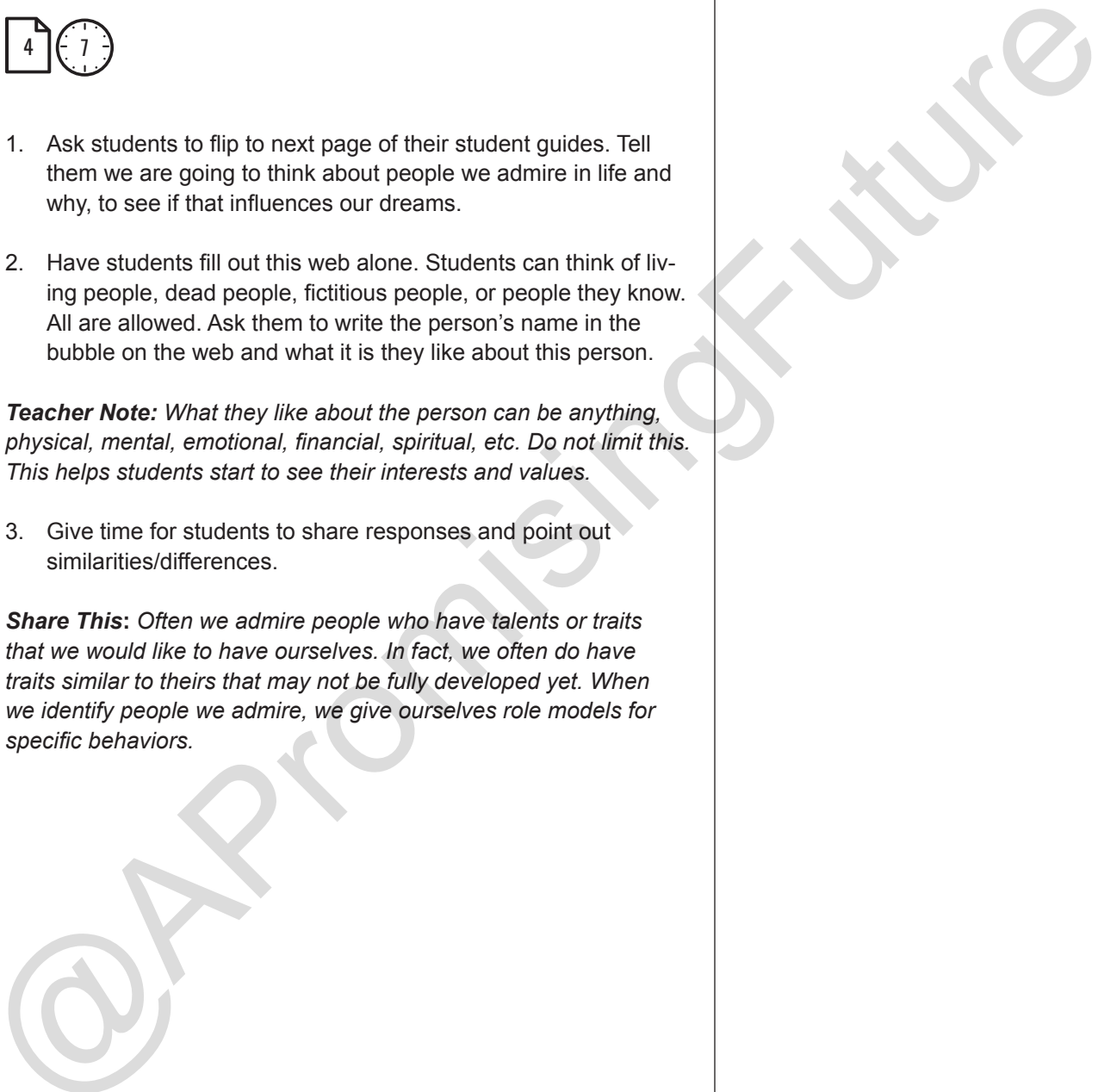


1. Ask students to flip to next page of their student guides. Tell them we are going to think about people we admire in life and why, to see if that influences our dreams.
2. Have students fill out this web alone. Students can think of living people, dead people, fictitious people, or people they know. All are allowed. Ask them to write the person's name in the bubble on the web and what it is they like about this person.

Teacher Note: *What they like about the person can be anything, physical, mental, emotional, financial, spiritual, etc. Do not limit this. This helps students start to see their interests and values.*

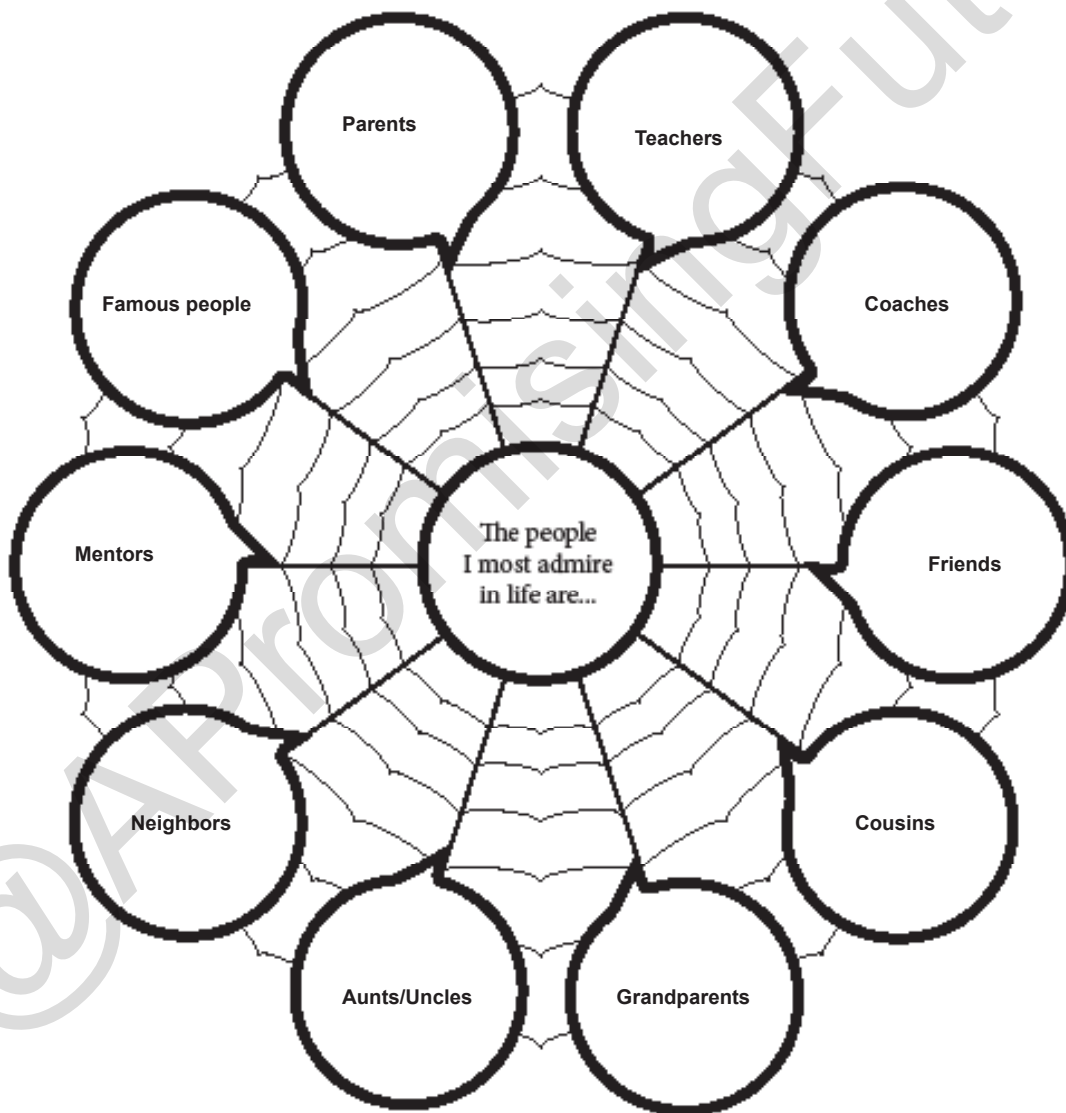
3. Give time for students to share responses and point out similarities/differences.

Share This: *Often we admire people who have talents or traits that we would like to have ourselves. In fact, we often do have traits similar to theirs that may not be fully developed yet. When we identify people we admire, we give ourselves role models for specific behaviors.*



DARE TO DREAM

Webs & Support



Dream Building: Webs & Making It Your Own



1. If time allows, ask students to flip to the next page of their student guides. Tell them we are going to identify their interests so they can start creating dreams and goals. Have students fill out this web alone.
2. Students can use the final web to brainstorm any of the following three prompts:
 - 1.) Things they want to learn
 - 2.) Places they want to travel
 - 3.) Words they'd like other people to use to describe them

Teacher Note: *All of these things can help students decide what's most important to them, what they value, and what dreams are worth pursuing. It helps them realize they can want more than they have and work towards those goals.*

3. Give time for students to fill out webs and share responses.

Share This: *The webs were meant to help us think about things we may want to do, achieve, or pursue. Having ideas about what you want in the future is a great start. The next step would be figuring out how you can begin to work towards those dreams.*

DARE TO DREAM

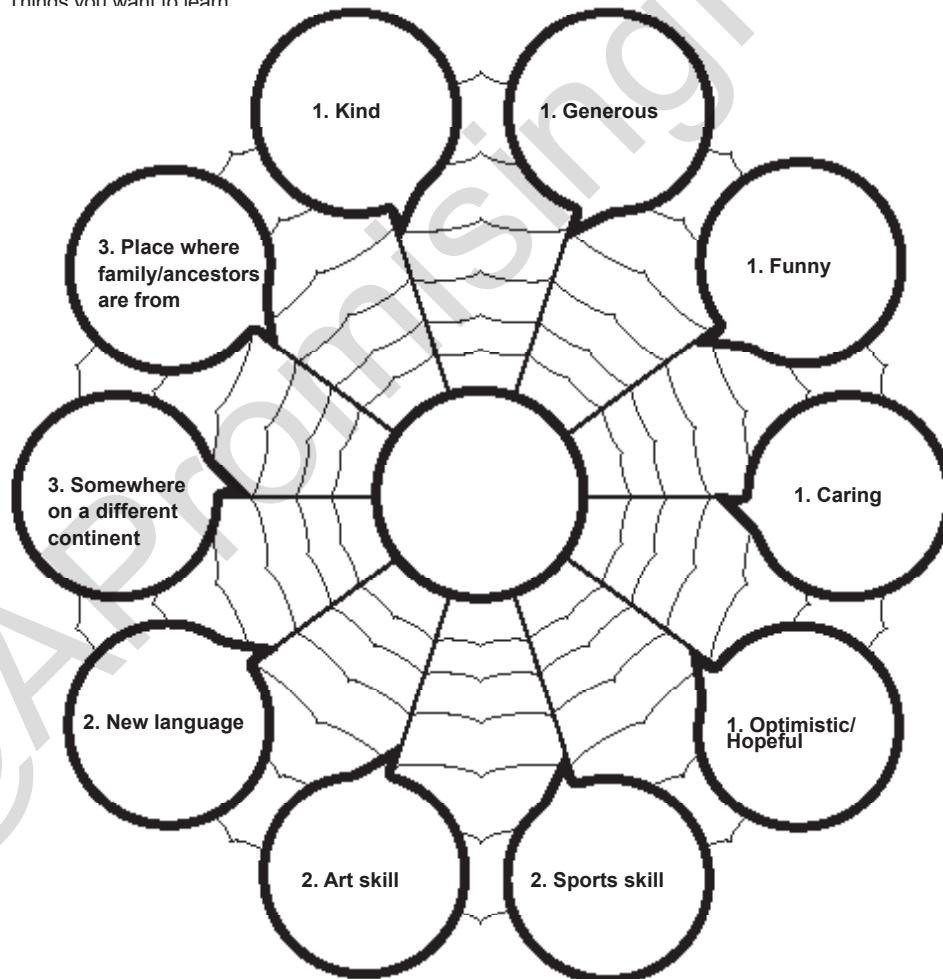
1
SESSION

Webs & Making it Your Own

You can use this brainstorming web for anything you want to think creatively about. Think about the things you want to learn, the resources you need to pull together to achieve your goals, or the people you would like to meet in the future. Dream big.

For this web, choose one of the three prompts below and brainstorm:

1. Words you want to use to describe yourself
2. Things you want to learn



Take It Home



1. Advance to slide 6 and review the “Take It Home” questions and tips. Tell students to fill out the questions and read through the tips. Choose one tip to complete over the next week.
2. Advance to slide 7.
3. Have students ask their parent/guardian what dreams they had as kids, which ones came to fruition, which ones changed, and which ones they’re still working towards.

Have students write down in the blank lines on their student guide which Create Connection tip they want to complete with their parent/guardian.

Teacher Note: *Create Connection is optional. This should only be used if parents/guardians are aware of and committed to completing the assignments together. Make sure you communicate with parents/guardians any parent connection points they can work on with their student at home (see below). If you are only working with youth and do not have access to their parent/guardians, skip this step.*

BDG Optional Activity

Consider starting a dream journal or vlog with God. Begin writing or speaking all of your thoughts and dreams and see if there is a pattern for how the Lord is leading you. You may discover new passions and directions for yourself.

Slide 6:

Slide 7:

BDG Discussion Questions

1. What life circumstances (family, culture, school, etc.) have shaped your faith in God?
2. How easy or difficult is dreaming for you? Is it difficult to believe that God cares about your dreams? Why or why not?
3. How has God shown examples of himself being a dreamer? (*Consider creation and how God might have imagined and dreamed of creation before he started creating. Remind students of how God used dreams throughout Scripture to communicate with his people.*)

DARE TO DREAM

TAKE IT HOME:

What do you dream of doing with your future?
Does it ever feel too difficult to achieve? If so, why?

When things heat up around me, what do I learn
about my character?

How do I show up in or react to tough
circumstances?

What unique qualities are being created in me
through the challenges in my environment (family
life, work, school, neighborhood, church, etc.)?
What are my skills?

What resources (talents, education or skills, life or
cultural experiences, personal qualities) do I have
that could be used to create success?

Tips for increasing your ability to dream big:

- Spend time listening to the dreams of children and remember your own dreams.
- Write out your dreams as a statement of positive action (affirmation) and read them regularly. For example, "I take good care of my body, mind, and spirit daily."
- Fill your mind with positive thinking from books, music, and/or electronic newsletters.
- Choose to spend time with people who have a positive view of life.
- End every day by telling a person a victory you saw them achieve that day.
- Create a visual collage with pictures of things you want to achieve in the future.
- Read about a subject you've always wanted to learn about.
- Watch movies about famous people or groups or read about the lives of others who succeeded despite barriers.

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

Additional Resources



Highlight the resources on this page and encourage the students to access them.

Teacher Note: Become familiar with the additional resources at the end of each session in case students have any questions.

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DARE TO DREAM

1



Additional Resources

→ **Personal Strengths:**

Search online for the Berkley Well Being Institute post "Strength Finding: 57 Questions, Exercises, and Activities"

→ **Character Strengths:**

The VIA Institute on Character, viacharacter.org has a page of resources and activities to help you find your strengths. You can also take the free survey.

→ **Goal Setting:**

Powerful Youth has an article titled, "A Beginners Guide to Goal Setting for Teens" that can be found at: <https://powerfulyouth.com/beginners-guide-goal-setting-for-teens-smart-goals/>

Summary



1. Advance to slide 8
2. Review the main points of this session with students:
 - We encouraged you to think about your future and your goals.
 - We discovered some barriers or obstacles that can make it harder for us to achieve our goals.
 - We brainstormed some of our strengths and values to help us see how they can positively impact our goals.

Slide 8:

DARE TO DREAM **1**
SESSION

Review

- We encouraged you to think about your future and your goals.
- We discovered some barriers or obstacles that can make it harder for us to achieve our goals.
- We brainstormed some of our strengths and values to help us see how they can positively impact our goals.

DARE TO DREAM

1
SESSION

Notes:

Horizontal lines for writing notes.

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