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How to Use This Program

Welcome to Blaze

Ask any parent today and they will tell you that this young generation is different from all others. Peer pressure has taken on new forms, with social media following our children wherever they go. The need to look good, achieve, and constantly keep their image intact can create anxiety, loneliness, and even depression. There has always been pressure, but the way kids today are glued to their phones means that there is never a break from it. It follows them home from school and causes the peer group to feel like their entire reality. The best safety net for this imbalance is to meet these them where they are and point them to the only One who will love them perfectly and satisfy their need to belong and be valued. And so this is how Blaze came to be.

Blaze is the Walking with Purpose program developed for middle school–age girls. Our mission in Blaze is to speak truth into the hearts of girls who are bombarded by lies about their true worth and beauty. Every week, they are introduced to a lie in our culture, which is then countered with a biblical truth. The Bible becomes relevant, and the girls begin to recognize the difference between the loving, affirming voice of their heavenly Father and the voices that tell them they aren't good enough. The young women in Blaze grow in confidence as they recognize there is nothing they can do to lose God's love. Even when peers hurt them, they know that God's approval is what matters most. They begin to develop an inner strength that changes everything. Teaching these young girls how to use the Bible as a tool for spiritual growth encourages daily prayer and strengthens their bond with God and family.

Blaze can be implemented in many different ways—in schools during lunch or after hours, in a small group at home, or one-on-one. It's capturing girls' hearts and keeping them engaged in their faith at a time when we often start to lose them.

Curriculum Objectives

- To teach the girls that they are unconditionally loved by their heavenly Father
- To explain the gospel message of salvation in a way that middle school girls understand
- To teach the girls how to differentiate between truth and lies
- To teach the girls to base their worth on being children of God
- To teach the girls how to pray in their own words
- To teach the girls how to use the Bible as a tool for spiritual growth
- That the material learned in Blaze and the relationships fostered in the meetings would provide an alternative to the unhealthy way our culture encourages teens to cope with the challenges of their stage of life

The Structure of Blaze

Blaze is a twenty-session program that integrates Scripture with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church to point middle school girls to principles that affirm their true worth and identity. It's designed for one-on-one or group experiences.

There are two years of curriculum for Blaze. We recommend offering the program to seventh- and eighth-grade girls. The content has been developed for this maturity level, and sixth graders may not be ready for these topics. While we leave the decision of which grade levels to include to your discretion, it's good to note that when the program is offered to seventh and eighth graders, the girls never receive repeated material. It doesn't matter which year you begin with (Blaze Year 1 or Blaze Year 2). Both cover similar material but from fresh angles. The Blaze Retreats (available separately for purchase) are a wonderful way to initiate sixth graders into the program. We recommend including the sixth graders in the year-end Blaze Retreat, which concludes with a commissioning ceremony in which the eighth graders welcome the sixth graders to Blaze, pass the baton of leadership to the seventh graders, and then receive a special blessing as they prepare to move on to high school.

The first part of a Blaze session is an **icebreaker** that welcomes the girls and warms up the conversation. This might be an activity, game, or video clip, depending on the lesson.

After the icebreaker, you should teach the **lesson**. Ideally, you will have taken the time to learn the material so you are able to maintain eye contact with the girls as much as possible.

The lesson is followed by **Prayer Partner time**, an opportunity for the girls to pray with and for each other.

Each lesson has an accompanying **takeaway gift, given out at the end of the session**, that reminds the girls of what they learned. These gifts, packaging materials for attractive presentation, and quotes/labels are all included in the Blaze Kit, available for purchase (one kit per participant).

Prayer Partners

One of the goals of Blaze is to teach the girls how to pray in their own words. The Prayer Partners concept is a way to do just that, while at the same time building closer relationships among the girls.

We recommend pairing an eighth-grade girl with a seventh-grade girl. Prayer Partners are announced at the first meeting, and the girls are encouraged to sit together. This breaks up cliques and helps the Prayer Partners get to know each other.

During the first session, explain to the girls that you have prayerfully chosen the Prayer Partners, and that you hope this will grow into a special friendship throughout the year, a relationship in which they feel safe sharing how they are truly feeling and what they are worried about. Let the girls know how important it is that they respect their Prayer Partner's privacy, never gossiping or talking with others about what has been discussed during prayer time.

Each lesson concludes with time for the Prayer Partners to share a prayer request, and the girls are taught how to pray for each other in their own words. We encourage the girls to pray for one other during the week, and remember to check in to see how the Prayer Partner is doing and if the prayer has been answered. Further explanation of how the prayer time will be led is included in the lessons.

Leadership Development

If you are leading Blaze in a school setting, we recommend giving additional time to four girls, offering them the opportunity to develop as Servant Leaders. We suggest that you choose two girls from both the seventh and eighth grades. They would receive the title of **Servant Leader** (or SL). Choose girls who are natural leaders, as this will increase the likelihood that the other girls will embrace what you are teaching in Blaze. At the same time, ensure that these girls display the character qualities that

Blaze values: humility, kindness, and openness to spiritual growth. A queen bee or bully would be the opposite of what you are looking for in these girls.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINING THE SERVANT LEADERS:

In addition to the Blaze Year 1 Leader's Guide, we offer the Blaze Bible study, *Discovering My Purpose*. This Bible study can be used one-on-one or as a separate group activity. It is an excellent resource for developing Servant Leaders. Delving into Scripture in an age-appropriate way, girls learn that they have received spiritual gifts from God, gifts that should be used to benefit others. The Blaze Spiritual Gifts Assessment (included in the Bible study) is an invaluable tool for revealing to middle school girls the unique way they are equipped to change the world. If you are doing Blaze in a school setting, we recommend that you meet once a month with the Servant Leaders, going through one of the Bible study lessons once a month.

When the Servant Leaders feel they have a voice and that their opinion is valued, they will be far more likely to invest their hearts in Blaze. We recommend asking the SLs to provide input regarding content, giving feedback as to its effectiveness.

If you choose to offer the Blaze Wanted Retreat (available for purchase), we highly recommend using your Servant Leaders as small group leaders and planning committee members.

This special mentoring is an opportunity to teach the Servant Leaders what it really means to serve in ministry. It's not about the glory, the platform, or the attention. It's about washing the feet of the people around you, following the example of Christ. It's about learning how to look for the farthest person out, the one no one wants to include. This can be effective in countering bullying, as the girls learn practical ways to use their natural leadership gifts to draw others in and lift them up.

Truth vs. Lie Cards

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32

Throughout Blaze, the girls will be exposed to the lies of our culture that damage their self-worth and sabotage their efforts to follow Christ. Each session, a specific lie will be compared to the truth found in Scripture and the Catholic faith.

It's interesting to note the way members of the Secret Service are trained to recognize counterfeit money. The majority of their time is spent studying real money, not the

fake bills. Their mastery of the real thing causes the counterfeit to be readily apparent. In the same way, Blaze focuses on truth so that when the girls hear a lie, something in their hearts will say, “Hmmm, that doesn’t seem right to me.”

The takeaway gift for Lesson 3 is a display case with hand-lettered cards featuring the lies and truths presented in Blaze. We recommend encouraging the girls to keep these cards in a prominent place—next to their bed, posted in their locker, or in the bathroom, for example. Saturating their minds with truth takes us one step closer to helping them see themselves through the loving eyes of God.

THE FOLLOWING TRUTHS AND LIES WILL BE ADDRESSED IN BLAZE YEAR 1:

Lesson 3

Lie: The Bible is boring and too complicated for me to understand.

Truth: Reading the Bible is one of the best ways for me to figure out what is true and what’s a lie.

“Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.”
Hebrews 4:12

Lesson 4

Lie: I’m not worth fighting for.

Truth: I am worth everything to Jesus and He died fighting for me.

“But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”
Romans 5:8

Lesson 5

Lie: My physical appearance is the measure of my beauty.

Truth: True beauty is found inside.

“But the Lord said to Samuel: Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The Lord looks into the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7

Lesson 6

Lie: What I think about doesn’t matter.

Truth: God cares about my thoughts.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Philippians 4:8

Lesson 7

Lie: I can't help what I say.

Truth: I am called to speak the truth, even if my voice shakes.

"No foul language should come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear." Ephesians 4:29

Lesson 8

Lie: God only loves me if I'm perfect.

Truth: Nothing can separate me from God's love.

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38–39

Lesson 9

Lie: I'm too young to make important decisions.

Truth: There's no better time than right now to trust Jesus with my heart.

"Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity." 1 Timothy 4:12

Lesson 10

Lie: I can't change my bad habits.

Truth: The Holy Spirit lives inside me and gives me strength to change.

"I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me." Philippians 4:13

Lesson 11

Lie: All I need to do is recite the Our Father and I'm good.

Truth: Jesus wants my friendship, and prayer is how I grow closer to Him.

"Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Matthew 6:8

Lesson 12

Lie: I need a boyfriend to be happy.

Truth: The missing puzzle piece to my heart is God, not a boyfriend. I am complete in Christ.

"and you share in this fullness in him, who is the head of every principality and power." Colossians 2:10

Lesson 13

Lie: It doesn't matter what I say about a friend as long as she doesn't find out about it.

Truth: Friendship killers are stealthy; they do damage even when things happen behind the scenes.

"Perverse speech sows discord, and talebearing separates bosom friends." Proverbs 16:28

Lesson 14

Lie: It's all about me.

Truth: Instead of starting with what I want for myself, I should look at how I can help others.

"Do to others as you would have them do to you." Luke 6:31

Lesson 15

Lie: The best qualities to look for in a friend are popularity and being fun.

Truth: Choose friends who are kind, encouraging, honest, and grace-giving.

"Walk with the wise and you become wise, for a companion of fools fares badly." Proverbs 13:20

Lesson 16

Lie: I am alone and no one understands me.

Truth: Jesus loves me so much and has not left me alone.

"Let your life be free from love of money but be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never forsake you or abandon you." Hebrews 13:5

Lesson 17

Lie: Compromising what is right won't matter this one time.

Truth: "It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it." —Benjamin Franklin

"A good name is more desirable than great riches, and high esteem, than gold and silver." Proverbs 22:1

Lesson 18

Lie: I need the approval of my friends to be happy.

Truth: Live for an audience of *one*. "Rejoicing in the Lord is your strength!" Nehemiah 8:10

"Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong. Your every act should be done with love." 1 Corinthians 16:13–14

Lesson 19

Lie: Following Jesus means I can't have any fun.

Truth: Jesus came so that my life would be full of joy and peace.

"A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." John 10:10

Lesson 20

Lie: My reputation will always follow me.

Truth: My choices matter, but with God, there is always a second chance—a fresh start.

“So whoever is in Christ is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Stay Connected with Social Media

The Blaze program is just the beginning. Join our community on Facebook and on Instagram for a regular boost and to participate in conversations by contributing comments. Instagram posts reinforce the core messages of the lessons and are aimed at middle school girls. Facebook posts, aimed at the mothers, give a glimpse into what the girls are learning. Follow us on social media—we’ve got more encouragement and hope available for you!

Walking with Purpose™ Website

A special middle school girls section of our Walking with Purpose™ website has been developed at www.walkingwithpurpose.com/BLAZE.

Please visit our website at www.walkingwithpurpose.com to find supplemental materials that complement our Bible studies; a link to our online store for additional Bible studies, DVDs, books, and more; and the following free content:

WWP Scripture Printables of our exclusively designed verse cards that complement all Bible studies. Available in various sizes, lock screens for phones, and a format that allows you to email them to friends.

WWP Bible Study Playlists of Lisa's favorite music to accompany each Bible study.

WWP Videos of all Connect Coffee Talks by Lisa Brenninkmeyer.

WWP Blog by Lisa Brenninkmeyer, a safe place where you are welcome, where the mask can drop and you can be real. Subscribe for updates.

WWP LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

We are here to help you take your leadership to the next level! Through our training, you'll discover insights that help you achieve your leadership potential. You'll be empowered to step out of your comfort zone and experience the rush of serving God with passion and purpose. We want you to know that you are not alone; we offer you encouragement and the tools you need to reach out to a world that desperately needs to experience the love of God.

Links to WWP Social Media



Twitter, Pinterest, Facebook, Instagram