Saint John Henry Newman

Seeking truth one faithful step at a time

Ages about 7-11 | Video 2:56 | Group lesson about 25-35 minutes

Central truth God invites us to seek truth thoughtfully and form our conscience through learning, prayer, and wise guidance.

Learning goals Recall Newman's search and teaching; explain Doctor of the Church; practice a thoughtful decision using reasons and trusted help.

Gather Video access, one handout per child, pencils or crayons, and a Bible.

Watch online Open this video on Servus Dei

Before watching | 2 minutes

Ask how we decide whether a choice is right, beyond simply liking it. Explain that conscience needs formation and can be mistaken.

Watch and notice

Notice study and prayer, costly conversion, priestly teaching, schools, conscience, and the images of guiding light and a growing tree.

Talk together | 6-8 minutes

1. How did Newman seek truth?
He studied, prayed, asked questions, and responded to what he learned. His search was thoughtful rather than a quick feeling.

2. What does Doctor of the Church mean?
A saint whose teaching greatly serves the Church. The title does not mean a physician who treats injuries.

3. Is conscience whatever I feel like doing?
No. Conscience judges actions and needs truthful formation. Scripture, Church teaching, careful thinking, and trusted adults can help.

4. What is a faithful next step in a hard choice?
Pause, ask what is true and good, consider others, and seek guidance. We do not need to know our whole future to choose well today.

Then respond and pray Allow 6-8 minutes for a handout or the activity on page 2; finish with the closing prayer.

Lead the response

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Short family lesson Watch the video, choose one recall question and one application question, then pray. About 12-18 minutes; the handout is optional.

Choose a handout

Draw & Tell Draw study and a guided choice; explain guiding light as imagery.

Read & Write Recall learning habits, explain the title, and practice forming conscience.

Adapt by readiness

Ages 7-8: use a simple true-or-uncertain example and dictate a next step.

Ages 9-11: distinguish a preference from a moral judgment and name sources for forming conscience.

A light for the next step | Optional 4 minutes

Draw a lantern lighting one stepping stone. On the stone write a simple invented choice, such as whether to repeat a rumor. Around the lantern list facts to check, a teaching to consider, and a trusted helper.

Look for understanding Look for reasons and guidance, rather than treating every strong feeling as God's voice. Keep disagreement respectful; questions can lead to deeper understanding.

Closing prayer God, guide us toward truth. Help us learn, pray, and take our next good step with courage and humility. Saint John Henry Newman, pray for us. Amen.

At home Ask an adult to explore a thoughtful question with you. Thank someone who helps you learn without making you feel ashamed for asking.

Handout answer notes Habits: study, prayer, careful questions. Doctor: outstanding saintly teacher. Decision: verify facts, consider truth and kindness, seek trusted help rather than repeat rumor.

Teach with care

The story includes lost friendships after conversion. Encourage respectful questions and honor the dignity of Christian neighbors from different traditions. Newman's dialogue is dramatized, and the special-purpose saying is a paraphrase. His teaching on conscience requires formation in truth, not automatic trust in every feeling. Pope Leo XIV proclaimed him Doctor of the Church on November 1, 2025. Conversion should never become an excuse to mock Anglicans or pressure a child to break friendships.

Words to explain Conscience: our judgment about whether an action is right or wrong. Doctor of the Church: a saint honored for outstanding teaching. Cardinal: a Church leader appointed by the pope.

Sources for the leader

Story source: Servus Dei video and English transcript

Vatican letter: John Paul II on Newman's search and conscience

Doctor proclamation: Leo XIV: All Saints homily, November 1, 2025