



# Life Essay Challenge

## Official Rules & Submission Instructions

### Eligibility

- Open to individuals ages 12–17
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### Submission Guidelines

- Submit **one video reading of Essay along with written script**
- **Maximum video length: 4 minutes. Script to be from 350 to 500 words**
- Acceptable formats:
  - Uploaded video OR YouTube/Vimeo link
  - Written script: Text or pdf file
- Content must be:
  - Appropriate for all audiences
  - The final essay must be the student's own work, representing their voice, original thoughts, and unique perspective.
- Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):
  - AI may not be used to write the entire essay or substantial portions of it.
  - If AI is used in a significant way (beyond basic spelling/grammar), it must be disclosed, as an author's note or methodology section, detailing the prompts used and the specific AI tools used. AI may be used in the following ways, with proper disclosure:
    - to generate ideas or find different angles.
    - To help organize ideas into a logical structure;
    - For grammar and mechanics editing

### Submission Deadline

May 18 at 11:59 PM

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### Review & Approval

- All submissions are reviewed before being published

- Approved entries will appear in the public gallery
  - The Next STEPP Center reserves the right to decline submissions that do not align with event values
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## Voting Structure

### Public Voting

- Opens: **May 22**
- Ends: **Jun 16, 2026**

Each contestant will receive:

- Their speech video and script link on the Showcase Gallery
  - A “Cast your Free Vote” button
  - A personal fundraising page with a link in the Gallery
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## How Votes Work

- Each person may cast:
    - **1 FREE vote (email required)**
  - Additional votes:
    - **\$1 donation = 1 vote**
    - Minimum donation: \$5
    - Unlimited donation votes allowed
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## Finalists Selection

- Top 3 contestants by total votes
- Plus 2 Judges’ Picks

Three of the Finalists will be invited to read a portion of their essays at the Worship Gathering

## Prizes

- Awards will be given to Top three voting getting essays, plus up to two Judges’ picks if different

## Participant Promotion

Contestants are encouraged to:

- Share their voting page
  - Invite friends and family to vote
  - Promote their fundraising link through social media, church social media, everywhere!
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## Rights & Permissions

By submitting:

- You grant The Next STEPP Center permission to:
  - Display your video
  - Use it for promotional purposes
- You confirm you have rights to all content submitted
- Ages: 12–17
- Essay required + **video (max 4 minutes)**
- Voting based on **video or excerpt display**
- Finalists read essays excerpts LIVE at Gather For Life, June 20th