

TEACH US

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: UNSCRAMBLE

Write out the following scrambled words for the teens to unscramble together as they arrive. (The words have a common theme of being taken from the 622 opening prayer.)

DEPENDING ON YOUR GROUP, YOU MIGHT ASK YOUR STUDENTS TO WORK ON THE WORDS INDIVIDUALLY ON THEIR OWN PAPER AND COMPETE FOR SPEED, OR HAVE THEM WORK TOGETHER ON DIFFERENT WORDS AS TEAMS. IF THEY ARE QUICK TO UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS AND TIME ALLOWS, ASK THEM TO LIST SYNONYMS FOR EACH OF THE WORDS AND/OR TO BRAINSTORM ABOUT SOME ASSOCIATIONS THAT EACH WORD HAS FOR THEM.

- NECESLA (CLEANSE)
- STRAHE (HEARTS)
- ARPY (PRAY)
- TRIPSI (SPIRIT)
- ECHAT (TEACH)
- GHOSTUTH (THOUGHTS)
- UTTRH (TRUTH)
- DERNAW (WANDER)
- PHIRWOS (WORSHIP)

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: IS PRAYER EASY?

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- If you began with the ice breaker, ask the teens to take a look at the words we unscrambled: What do these words have in common? Do you recognize where they come from?
- Go back to the beginning of the 622 service and look at the opening prayer. What stands out to you?
- Think of someone that you find it easy to talk to about anything. What makes it easy? Was it easy the first time you met? Has there ever been a time when it was difficult?
- Think of someone you’d like to know better. What is it going to take for that to happen?

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- How is praying like trying to get to know someone better?

A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *Relationships usually take consistent effort (work!) before we feel like we really know someone and are close to them. Prayer is the same because through it we're drawing close to God.*
- *Prayer is joyful, just like getting closer to someone you really want to know better.*
- *Prayer is a privilege because the one we're drawing close to is God.*
- *Prayer is a discipline. Even though it's a joy and a privilege, it's not automatic, it has to be cultivated, like learning a new language or forming a new habit.*

THE LESSON: HEBREWS 4

The first part of the lesson begins with a few notes about the prayer and then introduces the scripture text. Next the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together). This is followed by additional questions for discussion.

Most of our prayer book services include what is called a “collect”, a name that comes from the Latin “collecta”. It refers to the idea of gathering together the people – and their individual prayers – into one united prayer. “Collects” occur throughout the Book of Common Prayer, for example at the beginning of the service of Holy Communion.

Collects usually follow a structure, which can be helpful to make note of so that when we are putting together our own prayers, we can consider using this format:

- an invocation or address to God,
- an acknowledgment of who is he and why it is that we are coming to him,
- a request, and what we hope will arise from his granting our request, and
- a conclusion that recognizes the mediation of Jesus Christ (our sympathetic High Priest!).

The opening prayer from 622 doesn't really follow the classic collect structure, but does call us together into a common prayer. It also serves to point out a few unique things. First of all, prayer is not automatic: we need God's help. The words, “Lord, teach us to pray”, are taken right out of Luke 11:1, where the disciples say those very words to Jesus. They recognize that he is the expert on prayer and they want to learn from him. This is a good place to start!

Next, we recognize our particular weaknesses and failings. We have a hard time keeping our thoughts from wandering. Like the disciples in Gethsemane, we find ourselves getting sleepy instead of staying alert to pray with Jesus.

Then we ask for a clean heart so that we can worship in “spirit” and in “truth”. This is another phrase taken from scripture (John 4:24), and points us away from an emphasis on the physical building where worship happens to a proper state of heart and mind. We are often cluttered with mixed motivations and none of this is hidden from God. So we acknowledge it and ask him to assist us to pray in a way that is focused and honest.

The New Testament letter to the Hebrews offers some encouragement for us as we begin to think about prayer.

Refer to Hebrews 4:12-16.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS' NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

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Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What is this passage talking about?
- What are some indications in this passage that we are: known? loved? destined?
- How does this passage make you feel?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *The epistle to the Hebrews is focussed on the revelation of Jesus: who he is and what he has done for us. One of the titles that scripture gives to Jesus is “the Word of God” (John 1:1). So in this passage, we are talking about our relationship to God.*
- *We are KNOWN right down to the “thoughts and intentions of our hearts”. Verse 13 describes us as being “naked and exposed” in God’s eyes. He knows us completely - inside and out. And yet, we are LOVED because Jesus came and died for us and is now our risen high priest. The passage reminds us of DESTINY through references to judgment (v13), heaven (v14), and of the place secured for us at God’s throne (v16).*
- *The first part of the text is scary (v12-13): God sees everything, even the motives of our hearts. And we will have to “give an account” to him for all this. But the second part is comforting (v14-16): We have a special relationship with Jesus, who in this passage is referred to as our “great high priest”, and who understands our weakness. He knew what it was like to be tired and distracted and tempted. Because Jesus is our high priest, we have confidence to approach God, and can expect to find mercy and grace and help in the time of need.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

At home, find a quiet space and spend some time reflecting on the words of the 622 opening prayer. You may even decide to write your own using the structure in the lesson’s notes as a guide.

Lord, teach us to pray.

Lord, keep our thoughts from wandering.

Lord, cleanse our hearts that we may worship thee in spirit and in truth;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Then put aside your distractions and speak to him.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

O Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray thee so to guide and govern us by thy Holy Spirit that in all the cares and occupations of our daily life we may never forget thee, but remember that we are ever walking in thy sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(PRAYER FOR THE REMEMBRANCE OF GOD’S PRESENCE, BCP PAGE 732)

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622 (AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE “PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS” SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU’RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the “Grace”, the final prayer in the booklet.

HEBREWS 4: **OUR SYMPATHETIC HIGH PRIEST**

¹²The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. ¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.