

WE ASK

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pieces of paper, marker, strong tape
- 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: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: NAME THAT NEED

Take a stack of paper and on each piece write down one circumstance that would warrant prayer. As the teens arrive tape one of the papers to each back. As they talk with others in the group, the teens try to guess what their assigned identity is by asking yes-or-no questions of others until they have guessed it. (You may need to indicate that the identities are not proper nouns, but circumstances.)

Here are a few suggestions:

- Just been in a car accident
- About to become a nun/monk/priest
- Traveling by sea
- Just had a baby
- About to be confirmed
- In a responsible position in the government
- Stung by a bee
- Serving in the army

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: PRAYING FOR OTHERS CHANGES US

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.

“There is nothing that makes us love a man so much as praying for him.” - William Law

- Do you ever pray for others? Whom do you usually pray for?
- Do you ever pray for people you don't like? Is it easy? How can we begin to pray for people we don't like?
- Can praying for someone change how you feel about them (like the quote suggests)?

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

- Chances are we pray most for people that we care about: our families and friends.
- It is much harder to feel motivated to pray for those we dislike, but if we will take that step we will be forced to consider that person's need. We must start by seeking direction from the Spirit, and ask the question, "How do I pray for this person?" In asking that question, we are opening the door of our hearts to compassion.
- It takes the smallest flicker of compassion to begin to pray for someone, or even just a willingness to be compassionate, and with this, God can grow our heart towards that person. When we pray for others, we are working on our relationship both with God and with them. Our relationship with one impacts our relationship with the other.

THE LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 1

The first part of the lesson gives an introduction to intercessory prayer, and then introduces the text from Philippians. Next the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

"Intercession" is the word we use to describe our prayers asking God's help for others and for our world. While we are always invited to bring our own needs to the Father, we are also instructed to consider the needs of others. The Apostle Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, wrote, "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people".

We always want to pray in accordance with God's will. That doesn't mean we wait to be perfect – or to have a perfect understanding – before we pray (or no one would ever do it!), but it does mean we should work at knowing God and seeking his guidance when we make our intercessions. The Book of Common Prayer includes a section called "Prayers and Thanksgivings" (page 37), which is packed with prayers that can help us when we struggle to find the words to pray. And if we're feeling unsure about whether we're praying in accordance with God's will, we can close our prayer with the words, "Not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22: 42).

Scripture tells us to be persistent in prayer. Our prayers are not always answered immediately. God sometimes answers our petitions with "wait". And of course, sometimes God's answer is "no". Even Jesus received a "no", when he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane to be spared what was about to come. If we take Jesus as an example, we will struggle through all of these matters in prayer – everything and anything on our hearts – knowing that our loving God will answer, even if it is an answer we find difficult at the time.

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The Apostle Paul wrote many of the letters that can be found in the New Testament, including the letter to the Philippians (which we'll look at in a moment). He often began his letters with a prayer of thanksgiving or intercession, which gives us a window into how he prayed.

Refer to Philippians 1:3-11.

(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).

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.

- Based on this passage, how did Paul feel about the Philippians?
- What does Paul specifically mention as a cause for his thanksgiving regarding the Philippians?
- What did he want to see develop further in the faith and life of the Philippians?

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A few notes and reflections for reference:

- He was thankful for them; the thought of them gave him joy; he “yearned for them” with a godly affection.
- They had a long-standing “partnership in the gospel” with him. Verse seven suggests that the Philippians had also experienced persecution because of their faith, through their “defense” of the Gospel.
- Paul prayed that God, having begun “a good work” in them, would complete that work. He wanted to see them grow even more in love, knowledge, discernment, and “the fruit of righteousness”.

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.

Think about someone that you can pray for each day this week, “holding them in your heart”, as Paul did with the Philippians. Take five minutes each day, firstly to seek God’s guidance in how to pray for this person and then to bring them before him. Feel free to use one of the “Prayers and Thanksgivings” from the BCP (pages 37-61) to help focus your prayer. (You may also find the family prayers helpful, see pages 731-736).

- AND/OR -

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

O Loving Father, we commend to thy gracious keeping all who are near and dear to us. Have mercy upon any who are sick, and comfort those who are in pain, anxiety, or sorrow. Awaken all who are careless about eternal things. Bless those who are young and in health, that they may give the days of their strength unto thee. Comfort the aged and infirm, that thy peace may rest upon them. Hallow the ties of kindred that we may help, and not hinder, one another in all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (PRAYER FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS, BCP PAGE 732)

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.

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PHILIPPIANS 1: **I HOLD YOU IN MY HEART**

³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.