

IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Pencils (for students to make notes)
- Copy of the leader's notes - *note fifth page re ice breaker, you may want multiple copies*
- 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: CROSSWORD O' SAINTS

As the teens arrive, provide copies of the crossword puzzle (page five of the leader's notes), and have them see how far they can get in the allotted time. They will need Bibles to look up some of the references given in the clues. If time allows, take the answers up together, otherwise set the crossword to one side and provide the answer key (to right) at the end of the lesson. Some of the clues will be familiar and others may be obscure. This is intended to act as a teaser demonstrating how rich our "backstory" is!

FOR SMALLER GROUPS, YOU MAY EITHER HAVE THE GROUPS WORK COOPERATIVELY ON A SINGLE COPY OF THE PUZZLE, OR WORK COMPETITIVELY AS INDIVIDUALS. FOR LARGER GROUPS, TRY DIVIDING THEM UP INTO TEAMS COMPETING TO ANSWER MORE THAN THE OTHER TEAMS BEFORE TIME'S UP.

1	A	B	R	A	H	2	A	M	3	E		4	E	V	E
5	D	6	E	B	O	R	A	H	S			L			
	A	7	N	O	A	H	8	R	U	T	H	I			
9	M	O	10	S	E	S	O		H			J	11	I	
		C	A	12	A	13	N	I	E	L	A	S	14	G	
		H	U				A		R		H	A	I		
15	S	O	L	O	M	O	N	16	D	A	V	I	D		
17	M	I	R	I	A	M	18	M	A	R	Y	A	E		
19	J	E	S	U	20	S	21	I	S	A	A	C	H	O	
22	E	L	I	Z	A	B	E	T	H			23	J	N	
24	J	E	R	E	M	I	A	H					25	O	M
26	J	O	S	H	U	A	27	J	A	C	O	B	A		
		28	J	O	S	E	P	H	29	P	E	T	E	R	
		30	P	A	U	31	L	U	K	E					K

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.

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DISCUSSION: WHAT'S A BACKSTORY?

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.

- What is a “backstory”? Why does it matter?
- Have you ever heard people say that “history repeats itself”? What do they mean by this?
- What about Christians? Is there a backstory that helps us to understand our faith today? What is that backstory?
- How can remembering our backstory (or not remembering it) change our lives?
(Feel free to leave this dangling, as the lesson explores it further)

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

- *A backstory is like a prequel to the story that is being told right now. It helps us to better understand the people and the plot of our present story. This is true in fiction, in history, and in our own lives.*
- *This is a great place for a personal anecdote by way of illustration! (For example, maybe you had a disagreement with someone and couldn't understand their point of view, but when you learned more about where they'd come from or an experience they'd had, it helped you to understand, feel compassion, or work with them.)*
- *People tend to make the same mistakes over again, so remembering can help us to make good choices and keep in mind what really matters. We can learn from other people's mistakes or examples as individuals as well as collectively.*
- *The Bible - both Old and New Testaments, the Christian tradition and the stories of the saints are OUR backstory. These things tell us what God is like, how he has been active throughout human history to redeem us in spite of our sin, and about the character of the lives he wants us to live (and a whole lot more!)*

THE LESSON: PSALMS THAT RECOUNT...

The first part of the lesson begins with a few notes about the book of Psalms which can be read aloud. Next the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

Before Jesus came, before the prophets even spoke of God's promise to send a Messiah, the writers of the Hebrew scriptures (which we call the Old Testament) understood the importance of remembering what God had done for them in the past. As we consider this, we're going to look at some excerpts from the book of Psalms. The psalms form the ancient prayer book of Israel, which the Christian Church also uses in prayers, chants, and songs.

Refer to Psalm 44:1, 78:4-8, and 136:1,4-5,13-14,16,23-26.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE THIRD READING FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGE FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ IT IN ITS ENTIRETY: PSALM 136:1-26.)

(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 OR THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, PAGES 384, 426, AND 506).

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 the portions of the psalms that we just read, what are some of the explicit reasons given for why it was important to remember and to pass down that memory from generation to generation?

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- What specific acts, people or events are referred to?
(Note: You can tell we've skipped some verses – there's a lot more but we didn't have time to cover it all today!)
- What does the format in Psalm 136 emphasize? Why do you think that is? What do you think is the relationship between gratitude and remembering?
- Invite the teens to consider this case scenario: A car almost hits two people on their walk home and frightens them badly but doesn't hurt them. When they get home, they each remember it through a different lens: one is angry and one is grateful. Why might they react differently? Can we choose to remember things through the lens of God's love for us?
- When we think about the Christian backstory that has been passed down to us, even though many of those things happened a long time ago, what can we find to be thankful for?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *It's important to remember so that we can know what God has done, hope in him, keep his commandments, and avoid the negative examples in Israel's (and our) history.*
- *Specific things recounted are the deeds and wonders God performed, creation, the patriarch Jacob, the giving of the law, parting of the Red Sea, leading through the wilderness, rescue from enemies, provision of food.*
- *"God's steadfast love endures forever." Everything that Israel experienced – the struggle and the triumph, was all related to God's love for them. Elsewhere in the psalms, the writers remember times when humanity sinned, and God disciplined them, but his discipline was always for the purpose of bringing them back to repentance and restoring them to a right relationship with him again.*
- *We have a choice when we remember past events to see things through a bitter and cynical lens, or to see them through the eyes of faith in the knowledge of God's love for us and to be thankful.*
- *We can be thankful for evidence of God's love and forgiveness; the examples of the saints, etc.*

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 writing your own version of Psalm 136. Think about the things in your own life that have been blessings and write them in the same format.

An example might start something like this:

*I will give thanks to God for his love endures forever,
to him who gave me loving parents,
for his love endures forever,
to him who...*

- AND/OR -

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

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy power and come among us; that by thy protection we may be rescued from the bondage of our sins, and saved by thy mighty deliverance; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen. (COLLECT FOR A PAROCHIAL MISSION, BCP PAGE 326)

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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.

PSALM 41: **WE HAVE HEARD**

“¹O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old...”

PSALM 78: **TELL TO THE COMING GENERATIONS**

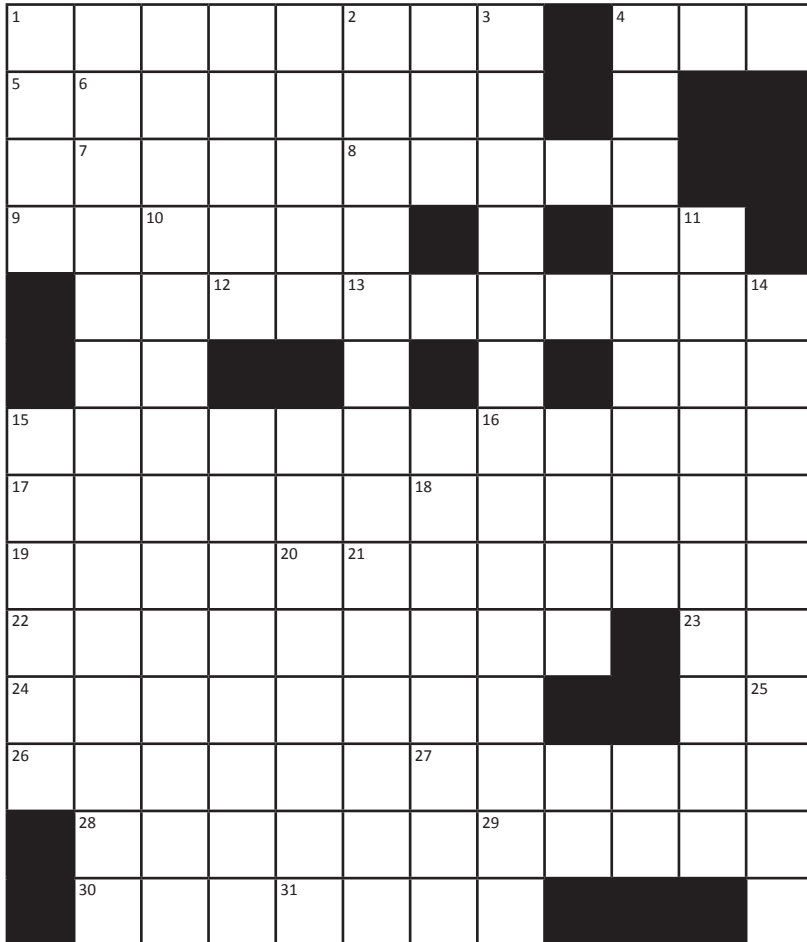
“⁴We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. ⁵He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, ⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; ⁸and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.”

PSALM 136: **SOMETHING THAT ENDURES FOREVER**

¹Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever...
⁴to him who alone does great wonders, for his steadfast love endures forever;
⁵to him who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever...
¹³to him who divided the Red Sea in two, for his steadfast love endures forever;
¹⁴and made Israel pass through the midst of it, for his steadfast love endures forever...
¹⁶to him who led his people through the wilderness, for his steadfast love endures forever...
²³It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever;
²⁴and rescued us from our foes, for his steadfast love endures forever;
²⁵he who gives food to all flesh, for his steadfast love endures forever.
²⁶Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

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ICE BREAKER: CROSSWORD O' SAINTS



DOWN

1. The first man (4)
2. Israel's first high priest (5)
3. Jewish orphan who became Queen of Persia and saved her people (6)
4. Prophet who was fed by ravens (6)
6. Hebrews 11:5 (5)
10. First king of Israel (4)
11. Prophet whose lips were touched with burning coal in a vision (6)
13. Mother-in-law of Ruth (5)
14. Famous judge who equipped a small army with trumpets and empty jars containing torches (6)
20. Last of the judges and first of the prophets, he was given to God as a child and raised in the temple (6)
23. Survived dreadful disasters and never cursed God (although his wife advised him to do so) (3)
25. Writer of the second Gospel (4)

ACROSS

1. Hebrews 11:8 (7)
4. The first woman (3)
5. Female judge (7)
7. Built an ark (4)
8. Moabite widow who became an ancestor of King David (4)
9. Led Israel out of slavery in Egypt (5)
12. Survived a Babylonian den of lions (6)
15. King of Israel renowned for his wisdom (7)
16. King who wrote many of the psalms (5)
17. Helped to save her baby brother, who was hidden in a basket placed on a river (6)
18. Said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (4)
19. John 1:14 (5)
21. Second patriarch, his name means "laughter" (5)
22. Mother of John the Baptist (9)
24. The weeping prophet (8)
26. Fought the battle of Jericho (6)
27. Had a vision of a ladder to heaven with angels going up and down (5)
28. Sold into slavery by his brothers, later to save them from famine (6)
29. Said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (5)
30. Was converted on the road to Damascus (4)
31. Writer of the third Gospel (4)