

NUNC DIMITTIS

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Clock or watch with second hand for timing
- 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: SLEEPING LIONS

All of the teens except one – the assigned “lion hunter” – lie down on the floor in sleeping poses and pretend to sleep. They must be perfectly still. The lion hunter is not allowed to touch the sleeping lions, but has to try to make them laugh. If a sleeping lion moves at all, then s/he is out for that round. The last lion still sleeping wins the round.

SMALL GROUPS WILL HAVE MORE ROUNDS, AND YOU MAY NEED TO TIME HOW LONG THE SLEEPING LIONS ARE ABLE TO KEEP FROM MOVING TO DETERMINE A WINNER IF YOU HAVE GROUPS OF LESS THAN THREE. FOR LARGER GROUPS, YOU MAY DESIGNATE MORE THAN ONE HUNTER AT A TIME.

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: PEACEFUL SLEEP

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 sorts of things prevent people from being able to get to sleep?
- What are some techniques or tricks that people might use to try to go to sleep?
- **“In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.” – Psalm 4:8**
Have you ever used a prayer like this verse to quiet your thoughts before sleep?

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

- *We might have a hard time sleeping if we are under a great deal of stress or anxiety, if we are physically uncomfortable, or if there are disruptive things around us like noise and light – to mention just a few.*
- *Some techniques that people might try to help them get to sleep include counting sheep, reading a book, taking a warm bath, listening to soft music, or praying.*
- *Note: If some of your teens indicate that insomnia is a regular problem, you may want to point them to some more long-term strategies such as avoiding napping and irregular routines, avoiding screen-time before bed, getting exercise, cutting down on caffeine, and seeking advice from a doctor.*

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- *The Book of Common Prayer includes a service of Night Prayer called Compline. Psalm 8:4 is one of the verses incorporated into our night prayers.*

THE LESSON: NUNC DIMITTIS

The first part of the lesson introduces the text from Luke and can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

The first two chapters of St Luke's Gospel include four hymns of praise that connect the New Testament with the Old Testament. These are: the song of Mary, the song of Zechariah, the song of the angel choir, and the song of Simeon. Each of these songs is an expression of praise to God that he has fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament by sending Jesus.

The Song of Simeon, also called "Nunc Dimittis" (from the Latin for "Now you dismiss") is said at Compline or Night Prayers because it speaks of Simeon's readiness to gratefully embrace a peaceful end, something that is as good of a prayer at the end of a day as it is at the end of a life.

Refer to Luke 2: 22-35.

(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.

- What do we know about Simeon based on this text?
- When Simeon sees Jesus, what does he do?
- How does Simeon describe Jesus?
- What do you think Simeon means by what he tells Mary in verses 34-35?
- How can Simeon be an example for us?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Based on the text, we know that Simeon lived in Jerusalem, he was righteous and devout, and was living in expectant hope that he would see God's promised Messiah before he died.*
- *Simeon's response to seeing Jesus is to take him into his arms and bless God.*
- *Simeon describes Jesus as God's salvation, a light for Gentiles (that is, everyone who isn't part of Israel), and the glory of Israel.*
- *Simeon's bittersweet blessing to Mary in verses 24-25 tells us that while all that God is doing is amazing evidence of his love and mercy, it is not going to be without a cost. Not everyone will accept Jesus. And before the story ends Mary will have the grief of watching Jesus crucified.*
- *Simeon's godly and hopeful life is a good example for us. Notice that his desires and passions were very much shaped by God's. Simeon wanted most to see God's salvation before he died and God had given him a promise that he would. When that promise was fulfilled, Simeon had such peace and joy that he felt ready to die.*

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.

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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.

Set aside ten minutes each night before you sleep this week to say the Compline service in the Book of Common Prayer (pages 722-728). If that seems like too much, instead just say this simple prayer that opens the Compline service: "The Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end. Amen."

- AND/OR -

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

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who hast opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, and art the peace and light of those who rest in thee: In company with thy holy Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs, and with all the faithful departed, we praise and glorify thee for the fullness of joy which thou gives to all who put their trust in thee; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

(ADDITIONAL PRAYER FROM THE SERVICE FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD, BCP PAGE 599)

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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LUKE 2: BITTERSWEET BLESSINGS

²²And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord... ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

³³And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."