

# THE SAINTS

## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pencils and pieces of paper; small container
- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Clock or watch with second hand for timing
- 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: ON THE SPOT, THE SPORTS VERSION

Write out some of the questions listed below on scraps of paper (you may wish to add your own), fold them, and place them in an opaque container. Have the teens sit in a circle. One at a time, ask each teen to select a question from the container and speak on the topic/question selected.

YOU MAY WANT TO ALLOW FOR ONE "PASS" PER TURN IF TEENS SELECT A QUESTION THAT THEY ARE UNCOMFORTABLE SPEAKING ABOUT. FOR SMALL GROUPS, YOU MAY WANT TO TAKE MULTIPLE TURNS. FOR LARGE (OR TALKATIVE) GROUPS, YOU MAY HAVE TO TIME RESPONSES (FOR EXAMPLE, EACH PERSON HAS THIRTY SECONDS TO ANSWER).

- If you could have lunch with any sports figure – living or dead – who would it be (and why)?
- What is your least favourite sport to play (and why)?
- Have you ever been on a sports team? Tell a bit about the experience.
- What would the best coach in the world be like?
- Would you rather watch a game in a stadium with strangers or at home with friends (and why)?
- Would you rather be the captain of a sports team or ace all your exams (and why)?
- If you could be best in the world at one competitive sport, what would it be (and why)?
- If you had to coach a sports team, which team would you choose (and why)?
- What is the most inspiring sports movie you've ever seen (and why)?
- What is your favourite sport to watch (and why)?
- Would you rather play a sport or watch one?

## 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 (ACTIVITY): AN ARENA OF SUPPORT

As an introduction to the lesson draw a stick person – representing an athlete – on your board (or assign a teen to draw). Invite the teens to produce a list of the different people who may have helped the athlete to succeed, and have them draw and label stick figures on the board to represent these additional people.

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## Discussion (Activity) Notes:

- Likely the athlete's family supported them in training and provided encouragement, as well as their coaches and their fans.
- Ask the teens to expand the range to include the people who may be further removed, for example, the inventors of the game, and the developers of strategy and training techniques.
- When the stick man drawing is complete, our athlete should be surrounded.

## THE LESSON: HEBREWS 11, 12

The first part of the lesson 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 writers of the New Testament sometimes used sports images to help the early Christians understand their part in the work of God's kingdom. Like the role of an athlete, our role requires discipline, perseverance, and a focus on our goal.

Something we also have in common with athletes is the fact that our (spiritual) success doesn't happen in isolation. There are others who went before us, who left us an example in life and prayer. Think of those whose stories are recorded in scripture, but think as well of those who have lived faith-filled lives since the canon of scripture was closed. And consider also those still living who support and encourage us along the way.

Sue Careless wrote, "We don't come before God as isolated individuals, not even in our private devotions, but as members of a family, a community of faith, the communion of saints". Not only are we part of a family that spans the globe, but we are also part of a family that spans time!

Refer to Hebrews 11:1-3, 8, 24-25, 32-38, 12:1-3.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE 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: HEBREWS 11:1-12:3.)

(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 all of the people mentioned in Hebrews 11 have in common?
- What does it suggest to you that these saints are referred to as a "cloud of witnesses" surrounding us?
- According to this passage, who is our ultimate example?

## A few notes and reflections for reference:

- Hebrews 11 is about faith, so all those whose stories are referenced are examples of lives lived by faith. It's worth noting that some of these lives were victorious and happy while others involved hardship and loss. The point is not in the details of whether the mouths of the lions were stopped or not, but rather that the saints were living by faith – anticipating that they would "rise again to a better life", (11v35). They are described as people "of whom the world was not worthy" (11v38).
- Some Greek scholars point out that the word that is translated here as "witness" does not mean "spectator", but rather "one who bears witness". Anyway, whether or not we imagine these saints watching and cheering us on, the writer's intent is that we be inspired in our faith and encouraged to persevere when we are reminded of them.

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- *Jesus is our ultimate example (12v2). It's worth noting that this passage does not suggest we will obtain perfection through our efforts. The writer points to Jesus as the one performing the work in us by calling him the "founder and perfecter of our faith". The word "perfecter" is sometimes translated as "finisher". The work of Christ makes us complete. As Philippians 1:6 says, "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ".*

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.

Pick one of the following prayers to pray with each day this week:

LORD, teach me to be generous.  
 Teach me to serve you as you deserve;  
 to give and not to count the cost,  
 to fight and not to heed the wounds,  
 to toil and not to seek for rest,  
 to labour and not to ask for reward,  
 save that of knowing that I do your will.

- St Ignatius of Loyola

DEAR JESUS, help me to spread your fragrance  
 everywhere I go;  
 Flood my soul with your spirit and life;  
 Penetrate and possess my whole being so completely  
 That all my life may be only a radiance of yours;  
 Shine through me and be so in me  
 That everyone with whom I come into contact  
 May feel your presence within me.  
 Let them look up and see no longer me—but only Jesus.  
 Amen.

- John Henry Newman

O GOD, early in the morning I cry to you.  
 Help me to pray  
 And to concentrate my thoughts on you:  
 I cannot do this alone.

In me there is darkness,  
 But with you there is light;  
 I am lonely, but you do not leave me;  
 I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help;  
 I am restless, but with you there is peace.

In me there is bitterness,  
 but with you there is patience;  
 I do not understand your ways,  
 But you know the way for me...  
 Restore me to liberty,  
 And enable me to live now  
 That I may answer before you and before me.

Lord, whatever this day may bring,  
 Your name be praised.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- AND/OR -

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

*O Heavenly Father, who in thy Son Jesus Christ hast given us a true faith and a sure hope: Help us, we pray thee, to live as those who believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to life everlasting; and strengthen this faith and hope in us all the days of our life; through the love of thy Son Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.* (PRAYER FOR THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS, BCP PAGE 56)

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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 11, 12: **OUR CLOUD OF WITNESSES**

**11** <sup>1</sup> Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup>For by it the people of old received their commendation. <sup>3</sup>By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible...

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going... <sup>24</sup>By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, <sup>25</sup>choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin...

<sup>32</sup>And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— <sup>33</sup>who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup>quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. <sup>35</sup>Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.

<sup>36</sup>Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup>They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— <sup>38</sup>of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth...

**12** <sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

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## THE LESSON: HEBREWS 11, 12

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 That all my life may be only a radiance of yours;  
 Shine through me and be so in me  
 That everyone with whom I come into contact  
 May feel your presence within me.  
 Let them look up and see no longer me—but only Jesus.  
 Amen.

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Lord, whatever this day may bring,  
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