

# FROM FEAR TO COURAGE

## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- 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: WHAT'S CHANGED?

Choose one teen in the group to be "it". The "it" person leaves the room and changes something about himself/herself that is visible. (For example: Put an item of clothing on backwards, change hair, untie shoe, roll up cuffs, etc.) After coming back s/he should turn around slowly in front of the group so as to give them a 360-degree view. Teens in the group take turns guessing what has changed. The person who guesses correctly goes next.

IN A SMALL GROUP, PARTICIPANTS WILL TAKE MULTIPLE TURNS. IN A LARGER GROUP, THERE MAY ONLY BE TIME FOR A HANDFUL OF PARTICIPANTS TO BE "IT".

## 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: CHANGE CATALYSTS

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 do you think causes people to make a big change in their lives?
- Brainstorm about some big life changes – negative or positive – along with what the motivating factors could be.

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

- *People are often moved to make a big change in their lives by a crisis of some sort. A crisis can be negative such as an addict hitting rock bottom. But it could also involve an encounter that is so powerful that it provides lasting inspiration for life-change, such as someone who is the recipient of sacrificial love – think of an organ donor recipient.*
- *These "crisis" experiences push us to review the questions of who we are and what our purpose in life may be from a new perspective. Consequently, a crisis can cause us to move away from God or to draw closer to him.*

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## THE LESSON: JOHN 20, ACTS 4

The first part of the lesson begins with a quick summary note about the Gospel narrative and the disciples. This 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.

**“Perhaps the transformation of the disciples of Jesus is the greatest evidence of all for the resurrection.”**

– John Stott

The four Gospels in the New Testament tell us the story of Jesus’ birth, ministry, passion, death and resurrection. But while the Gospels are teaching us about Jesus, we also get to meet his disciples and see how their encounters with him changed them from ordinary people into bold witnesses.

In St. John’s Gospel, we get a peek into what the disciples were doing after Jesus had been crucified and how they were feeling. Then, in the Book of Acts (which St. Luke wrote as a sequel to his Gospel), we read the story of what took place after Jesus had been raised from the dead, appeared to the disciples and ascended into heaven.

Refer to John 20:19-22, Acts 4:1-24, 29-31.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE SECOND 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: ACTS 4:1-31.)

(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.

- Take a look at that first verse in the passage from John: What does it tell us about the state the disciples were in after Jesus’ death?
- What happened that gave the disciples the courage to face their fear?
- What happened when the disciples preached about Jesus?
- Are there situations today where Christians might be afraid to be associated with Jesus or to speak about him?
- What can help *us* to be courageous as Christians?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *The disciples were hiding somewhere with the doors locked because they were afraid of the very people who had lobbied for Jesus to be crucified. The fact that they were in hiding together shows that they were frightened to the point of cutting themselves off from the world. They certainly weren’t prepared to go out and preach.*
- *What changed everything for the disciples was that the resurrected Jesus appeared to them, and gave them a job to do and also gave them the Holy Spirit to help them in their mission.*
- *When the disciples found courage and motivation to go out and preach, people believed. It wasn’t without trouble: the disciples were arrested, but then released.*
- *There are lots of places around the world where Christians are persecuted or killed for their faith. In the west, many aspects of our faith are ridiculed, making it unpopular to believe in Jesus.*
- *Just like the disciples, we also know that Jesus did not stay dead, but rose again, and we have been given the Holy Spirit. Spending time reading God’s word, praying and sharing our faith with other believers can help to bolster our courage.*

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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.

Each morning and evening, follow the rule of prayer that you created for yourself.

(If you didn't make one, try saying the morning and evening prayers from the "Forms of Prayer to be used in Families," which begins on page 728 of the BCP. If you don't have a copy, you can look it up here: <http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer>.)

Spend some time bringing your personal fears before God and asking him to give you the courage to overcome them. Ask God to show you any things in your life that he wants you to change. Close with this prayer from Psalm 25:5: "*Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.*"

- AND/OR -

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

*Almighty God, who by thy Son Jesus Christ didst give commandment to the Apostles that they should go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: Grant to us whom thou hast called into thy Church, a ready will to obey thy Word; and fill us with a hearty desire to make thy way known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

(PRAYER FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH, BCP PAGE 41)

## 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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## JOHN 20, ACTS 4: **SOMETHING CHANGED THEM**

**(JOHN 20):** <sup>19</sup>On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup>When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup>And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

**(ACTS 4):** <sup>1</sup>And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, <sup>2</sup>greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup>And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup>But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. <sup>5</sup>On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup>with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. <sup>7</sup>And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” <sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup>if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. <sup>11</sup>This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. <sup>12</sup>And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

<sup>13</sup>Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup>But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. <sup>15</sup>But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, <sup>16</sup>saying, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup>But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” <sup>18</sup>So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup>But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, <sup>20</sup>for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” <sup>21</sup>And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. <sup>22</sup>For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

<sup>23</sup>When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup>And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them <sup>25</sup>...look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, <sup>26</sup>while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” <sup>27</sup>And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”