

A LIVING SACRIFICE

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- A stack of old newspapers and magazines, scissors, paper and glue
- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- 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: THE "WHATEVER IS" LIST

Bring in a stack of old/unwanted newspapers and magazines. Invite the teens to cut them up and create a collage together of things that meet the Philippians 4:8 criteria:

"Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

When they finish (or when the allotted time has passed), post the resulting work, and use the discussion questions to further explore what dominates in our world and in our own minds.

A SMALL GROUP MAY BE HAPPY WORKING TOGETHER ON A SINGLE COLLAGE. FOR LARGER OR MORE INDEPENDENT GROUPS YOU MAY WANT TO HAVE THEM WORK SEPARATELY AND THEN POST THEIR COLLAGES TOGETHER AS ONE LARGER PIECE BEFORE REVIEWING.

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: WHERE OUR MINDS LIVE

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.

- Brainstorm to come up with a list of things that the world is preoccupied with.
- Is there any overlap between the Philippians 4:8 criteria (see ice breaker) and this list?
- If we find that our minds are stuck in the "world" list, what are some ideas for shifting our focus to the Philippians 4:8 list?

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

- *Your group will have their own insights based on school, peers, and media. In general, however, the western world tends to be obsessed with superficial things and places an emphasis upon personal gratification. People spend a lot of time and energy thinking about celebrities, fashion, sex, money, etc.*
- *Your teens may find some overlap, but generally speaking the obsessions of our culture are not in line with the things we are exhorted to direct our minds towards as believers.*

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- *The straight-forward answers here are to spend time with scripture and in prayer, and to build relationships with other believers who will encourage us in these things. But your teens may also have some creative and practical ideas like taking a walk in nature, listening to sacred music, subscribing to a Christian publication, etc.*

THE LESSON: ROMANS 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 epistle to the Romans is generally viewed as the Apostle Paul's masterpiece. In it he presents a clear explanation of our salvation: God is righteous. All humanity – both Jews and Gentiles – are sinners, destined to die. We can be made right with God by faith in Christ Jesus because of his death on the cross for us – an act that was motivated by his love for us. Our belief in Christ frees us from sin and death. Christians have become children of God, destined for glory...

But then we come to an important word: “therefore”. This means that everything Paul has just written has further implications. Because of all that he's just finished writing about, Paul wants his readers to know how this has an impact on the way we live our lives each day.

Refer to Romans 12:1-2, 9-21.

(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: ROMANS 12:1-21.)

(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 verses 1 and 2. When we become “a living sacrifice” what is going to be affected?
- Run through the text and list those exhortations that stand out to you.
- What do you find most difficult on the list?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Everything is included when we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice: mind, body, and spirit.*
- *The exhortations in this text are extensive! Your list doesn't have to be exhaustive, just a good sampling. Your list might include: holy bodies, renewed minds, discerning the will of God, showing genuine love, abhorring evil, holding fast to good, loving each other, showing honour, zealous, fervent in spirit, serving, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, constant in prayer, contributing to needs of the saints, showing hospitality, blessing those who persecute us, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep, living in harmony, not haughty, associating with the lowly, humble, not repaying evil for evil, honourable in the sight of others, living peaceably with others, not seeking vengeance, showing kindness to enemies.*
- *The suggested collect today is especially wonderful. Invite your teens to think specifically of that thing that they find hardest to include in their own living sacrifice – whether they shared it or not – and then pray together the collect, asking God to redirect our “wills” and “affections”.*

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.

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 quietly considering what it means to be a living sacrifice: mind, body, and spirit. Close with this adapted version of the collect for the fourth Sunday after Easter: *O Almighty God: You alone can order my unruly will and affections: Enable me to love what you command, and to desire what you promise, so that in this world of constant change, my heart will be fixed upon what brings true joy; through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.*

- AND/OR -

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

O Almighty God, who alone cast order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men: Grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (COLLECT FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER, BCP PAGE 194)

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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.

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ROMANS 12: **NOT CONFORMED, BUT TRANSFORMED**

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect...

⁹Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour. ¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.