

# ST. JOHN

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## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pencils, pieces of paper
- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- 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: EUPHEMISM RACE

Ask your teens if they can tell you what a “euphemism” is. Explain that a euphemism is a way that we use language to obscure or soften the meaning of words that we might otherwise be uncomfortable with or find too harsh. For example, instead of saying that someone is “unemployed” we might say that they are “between jobs”, or instead of saying that someone stole money we might say that they “misappropriated funds”. Provide your teens with about two minutes each to come up with a list of euphemisms for each of the following words (feel free to add your own or remove any you like): *pregnant, in prison, vomit, died, go to the washroom, lie*. When the time is up, pause to see what they came up with. Give points for any euphemism that was only listed by one person (or team); the person/team with the most points is the winner.

IF YOU HAVE FIVE OR LESS TEENS, HAVE THEM COMPETE AS INDIVIDUALS. IF YOU HAVE SIX OR MORE, BREAK YOUR TEENS INTO TEAMS. (EACH TEAM SHOULD IDEALLY HAVE 2-5 PEOPLE IN IT TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE HAS THE CHANCE TO CONTRIBUTE IDEAS).

## 622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order for 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: THE WAY WE USE “LOVE”

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 are some of the different ways in which we use the word “love”? Think of as many examples as you can.
- Do these uses of the word “love” all have the same meaning? Take a moment to group your examples into different subcategories.
- How do we know which type of “love” we are talking about when we use that word?

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

- “Love” is an over-used word in our vocabulary. We tend to use it to describe anything we have positive feelings towards, though it can also be used to describe action rather than emotion. We may say that we “love” ice cream, or we may say that we “love” our parents. “Love” is often used in our culture as a euphemism for sex, or it may be used to describe acts of charity. The point of the exercise is to realize how broadly we use the term – often with very different implications.

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- *Your categories might include: Affection for friends and family; Sexual attraction and/or activity; Liking or enthusiasm for something; Compassionate acts, etc. Note that some of your categories may overlap and at other times they may be mutually exclusive.*
- *Typically we can tell which type of “love” is meant by the context in which it is used, but at other times our use of the word “love” can be ambiguous, leaving us with uncertainty about what exactly we mean. For example, scripture says that “God is love”, but when we do not look at the context in which we find that phrase, we might not understand its true meaning! (This is part of today’s text).*

## THE LESSON: 1 JOHN 1+4

The first part of the lesson (below) 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.

St. John and his brother St. James were young fishermen repairing their father’s nets on the shores of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus called them and they made the life-changing decision to follow him. Over the next few years, St. John would watch and listen as Jesus taught and healed many. He was one of a handful of disciples who were present at the Transfiguration and in Gethsemane to witness both the glory and the grief of our Saviour.

St. John is sometimes called the “beloved disciple”. He understood that God’s love was central to why Jesus came. He had experienced this love and he wanted others to experience it as well. Tradition tells us that St. John, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote the Gospel of St. John, the three epistles of St. John and the Revelation of St. John. It is St. John’s Gospel that gives us the well-known verse, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*” (John 3:16).

St. John’s Gospel also records for us that while Jesus hung on the cross, the beloved disciple was there, grieving with the faithful women disciples. Jesus then looked down and gave St. John and St. Mary to one another as son and mother, a sign of his love and care for them both. St. John took his newly adopted mother into his home, and went on to minister to the church in Ephesus. Some of the early Church writers have recorded stories about him and his sayings, providing us with a link between the New Testament scriptures and the history of the Church as it continued to grow and bear fruit.

Refer to 1 John 1:1-4, 4:7-21.

(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.

- How does St. John identify himself (and his motive for writing) at the beginning of his letter?
- How does St. John describe God’s love?
- What are the implications for believers if they have experienced God’s love?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *St. John identifies himself as an eyewitness to something epic. He’s writing about the God of eternity made flesh in Jesus Christ, and the miracle that he had known him with his human senses: hearing, seeing, touching. The ultimate reality of life had been revealed to him and he’d been invited into fellowship with a loving God. St. John wants to extend this invitation to others, to share something so wonderful that it produces great joy.*

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- *St. John wants his readers to understand that love is God’s very nature, but he does not leave that term undefined. He goes on to define it through the humbling and sacrificial work of the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. St. John’s “love” is not a euphemism nor is it something that ignores sin. Instead this love goes the distance, suffering much, in order to overcome sin and draw the beloved into a perfect and unending fellowship.*
- *If we have experienced God’s love, then there is an “abiding” – he is with us and we are with him. Through this abiding love, we learn to have perfect confidence in our future. We also come to better understand our mission here: to demonstrate God’s love to others. St. John is especially concerned (this comes up several times in his letter) that believers love one another, which is evidence that we belong to a loving God and that our fellowship with one another is characterized by that same love.*

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 your own rule of prayer.**

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE 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.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

*“Therefore, my brother, who would learn to abide in Jesus, take time each day, ere you read, and while you read, and after you read, to put yourself into living contact with the living Jesus, to yield yourself distinctly and consciously to His blessed influence; so will you give Him the opportunity of taking hold of you, of drawing you up and keeping you safe in His almighty life.” - Andrew Murray, “Abide in Christ”*

Spend some time each day for the first half of the week reflecting on God’s love for you. Just sit quietly and reflect on his love and consider how you can “abide” in that love more fully. During the second half of the week, spend some time each day reflecting on your posture towards your sibling-believers: is it loving? Ask God to help you to love them the way he loves both you – and them. (Don’t try to do both reflections each day because chances are you’ll end up skipping right to the second item without really allowing the first to sink in).

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following collect.

*Merciful Lord, we beseech thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon thy Church, that it being enlightened by the doctrine of thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist Saint John may so walk in the light of thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

(COLLECT FOR THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, PAGE 110)

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## CLOSING PRAYERS (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.

### 1 JOHN 1+4: **ABIDE IN HIS LOVE**

**1** <sup>1</sup>That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup>the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— <sup>3</sup>that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete...

**4** <sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup>In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

<sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. <sup>15</sup>Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup>So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. <sup>17</sup>By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgement, because as he is so also are we in this world. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. <sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If anyone says, "I love God", and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.