

THE TRANSLATORS

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- 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: FOREIGN FILM DUB

Have the group come up with pairs of ideas and languages. (For example: “Tourists on a beach discover buried treasure / Japanese” or “Firefighter rescues goldfish from burning building / German”. Assign two actors and two interpreters (see note below about group sizes). The actors act out the scene, pretending to speak in the foreign language. The interpreters make up English translations to go with whatever the actors are doing. This is usually very funny, but it can also be quite impressive when a group manages to sync well.

THIS GAME IS TRADITIONALLY DONE WITH TWO ACTORS, TWO INTERPRETERS AND AN AUDIENCE (WHICH SUPPLIES THE SCENE AND LANGUAGE), BUT IF YOUR NUMBERS ARE SMALL YOU CAN DO IT WITHOUT AN AUDIENCE AND WITH JUST ONE ACTOR AND ONE INTERPRETER. FOR LARGER GROUPS, TIME SCENES TO GIVE EVERYONE A CHANCE EITHER TO ACT OR INTERPRET. FOR SMALLER GROUPS, SWITCH ROLES, LANGUAGES AND SCENE IDEAS A FEW TIMES.

IF YOUR TEENS ARE CONFIDENT WITH IMPROVISATION GAMES, HAVE THEM COME UP WITH JUST A TITLE (“THE GOLDFISH RESCUE” OR “BURIED TREASURE”) INSTEAD OF A FULL SCENARIO.

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: TOWARDS COMPREHENSION

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.

- When you’re trying to understand something, what are some of the obstacles that can get in the way?
- Have you ever been in a situation where people were speaking and you didn’t know what they were speaking about?
- How did this feel?

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

- *There are many barriers that we experience to understanding, and not all of them are related to language, though some are. Our environment may be a barrier for us: perhaps there is too much noise or other distractions. Our own previous experiences can cause us to have fears or other reactions that prevent our understanding. Perhaps we have a physical disability or learning disorder that adds to this struggle. One of the most obvious barriers we experience is language, whether because the language spoken is not one that we know, or whether it is because the speaker is using a language we know but with a vocabulary that is unfamiliar.*

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- *This is a great chance to share a story of your own. Perhaps you have travelled to a place where the language spoken was not one you understood and it was difficult to do anything from ordering food to asking for a washroom. Or perhaps you have had the experience of getting results to a medical examination only to find that the terminology used was so unfamiliar as to be almost like another language to you.*
- *When we want to understand, but lack the tools to do so, we often experience frustration and alienation. The experience may cause us to give up entirely, or it may spur us on to work towards developing the necessary skills so that we will be able to understand in the future.*

THE LESSON: THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND ACTIVE

Lessons 13-42 follow a slightly different format from previous lessons. The story of the saints being studied is interspersed with verses from scripture that provide added perspective. You may prefer to read the lesson text aloud together as a group, or ask the teens to read it silently to themselves.

*“Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour.”
(Ephesians 5:23)*

In the early days of the Christian faith the churches had local leadership and looked to the teaching of the apostles for guidance. But as Christianity spread and persecution subsided, greater power and wealth came to reside in the hands of its leaders. There began to be clashes over church jurisdiction, and arguments over which bishop (if any) should be regarded as the universal “father” of the Church. These clashes played a significant role in the rift between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, and went on to create crisis within the western Church when rival nations began to throw their weight behind different factions (and vice versa).

By the sixteenth century the Church had experienced a wide range of leaders; some were humble men of integrity while others were duplicitous and scheming. There were many efforts over the years to bring about reform, and to call the Church back to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But faithful Christians struggled to discern how they could best serve God in the times in which they lived, much as we do today.

*“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword...
discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
(Hebrews 4:12)*

Those seeking reform during this period had numerous concerns, some of which were doctrinal and others political. But many of them believed that the key to reform lay in empowering believers to read scripture for themselves so that they could hold to account those who sought to speak for the faith. Now the Church had used a Latin translation of the scriptures since the fourth century, and though many common people had learned to read, most could not understand Latin. Therefore reformers sought to provide translations of scripture in the “vernacular” – the language of the people.

John Wycliffe, a priest and theologian in England in the 14th century, was a forerunner of the Reformation, completing his translation of the scriptures into English in 1382. Though Wycliffe’s work got him into plenty of trouble with the Church hierarchy, he died naturally of a stroke while saying the Mass in 1384. More than a century later, William Tyndale also produced a translation of scripture into English. For this, and for his reformation views, he was captured, convicted of heresy, and executed in 1536.

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“No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.”

(2 Peter 1:20)

Though there were many believers in many different places seeking to bring reform to the Church, the incident that set the movement ablaze happened in Germany in 1517. Martin Luther, a monk and university professor, authored a document that he called “95 Theses” – a list of areas in which he believed the Church had veered into error – and he posted this publicly. Luther’s dissension occurred close to the time of the invention of the printing press, which made it possible for his vernacular writings to be reproduced and spread quickly.

In 1521 Luther stood trial for heresy because of what he had written. He was called upon to take back what he’d said. This is how he responded:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures and by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me” (Brecht, *Luther*).

Luther was excommunicated for his refusal to take back what he’d written. Shortly afterwards he translated the New Testament into German, working to complete and refine his translation of scripture throughout his life.

One of the key doctrines emphasized during the Protestant Reformation was *sola scriptura* – “the scriptures alone” – the belief that only scripture had authority in matters of Christian faith and practice. Anglicanism, which traces its roots to the reformation period, embraces the authority of scripture as the revealed Word of God, while understanding it to be illuminated by the Christian tradition and by reason.

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: MARTIN BRECHT, “MARTIN LUTHER”, TRANS. JAMES L. SCHAAF | BRITANNICA.COM, “WILLIAM TYNDALE” AND “JOHN WYCLIFFE” | JUSTO GONZÁLEZ, “THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY, VOLUME 2” | WIKIPEDIA.ORG, “MARTIN LUTHER”, “SOLA SCRIPTURA”, “WILLIAM TYNDALE” AND “JOHN WYCLIFFE”.)

Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- Why was the work of translation so important to these men?
- What was at risk for them? For the Church leadership?
- What can we learn from their example?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *These men believed that placing the translated scriptures into the hands of the ordinary Christian was the key to reforming the Church. They felt that the Church was abusing the ignorance of the common folk in order to gain more wealth and power, rather than focussing on the mission of spreading the Gospel. If the people could read and understand the scriptures, then they would be able to recognize when the representatives of the Church said and did things which were inconsistent with the true faith.*
- *The men who translated scripture into the common languages during this time were placing themselves in conflict with the Church, something which could cost them everything, even their lives. At the least they were likely to be charged with heresy, at worst executed. The Roman Catholic Church of this era was concerned with preserving a unity that would keep power in the hands of the hierarchy. To them, these grassroots efforts had the potential to unsettle the obedience which they had come to command from people throughout the Christian world.*
- *The translators of scripture had little to gain by worldly standards, and almost everything to lose. They spoke and worked in defiance of the Roman Catholic order because they were convinced that the institution had “lost the plot” and was no longer honouring God in its doctrine and activities. It was more important to them to seek to*

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honour God, obey conscience and do the work of reforming the Church, than it was to preserve a comfortable and secure life. We can be inspired by their readiness to use the skills they had in God's service, by their commitment to act in accordance with conscience, and by their willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice.

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/BPCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Review today's lesson. Choose a line of scripture or a phrase from the story of the scripture translators that you find edifying, inspiring or instructive:

Throughout this week, spend some time prayerfully reflecting on the phrase you've chosen. Decide on one concrete action you can take this week based on your reflections, and come back next week prepared to share a bit about your reflections and the action you took.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following prayer.

O God, who by thy Holy Spirit hast given unto one man a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge, and to another the gift of tongues: We praise thy Name for the gifts of grace manifested in the translators of scripture, and we pray that thy Church may never be destitute of the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF A DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH, POET, OR SCHOLAR, P. 317)

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.