

OUR FATHER

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- A blindfold and an object to hide.
- 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: FINDING WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Choose a person to be blindfolded and another to be a voice-guide. The blind-foldee leaves the room (or goes out of hearing range) while an object is hidden. The blindfolded person must try to find the object by listening to only verbal instructions given by the guide. When the object has been found the blindfolded person can remove the blindfold. Change the location of the object each time. Take a moment at the end of the exercise to ask what factors made for effective teams and which did not. (*This is explored more in the discussion section*).

IF POSSIBLE, TRY TO ALLOW EACH PERSON IN THE GROUP TO HAVE A TURN AS EITHER A GUIDE OR A SEEKER. IN VERY SMALL GROUPS YOU MAY HAVE TIME FOR EVERYONE TO BE BOTH.

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: LISTENING/TRUSTING

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 in a position of dependence on someone else – like in today's ice breaker – do you find it difficult to trust that they are going to lead you in the right direction?
- What would the most trustworthy guide be like?
- What makes it difficult to offer guidance to someone who is depending on you (e.g. blindfolded)?
- What could the dependent (e.g. blindfolded) person do to help things work better?
- Can you think of any life examples of times when we have to just trust the direction we get from someone else?
- Are the people we trust always trustworthy?

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

- Chances are the teams that worked best were teams where the dependent really listened and where the person offering direction was clear and patient and took things one step at a time.

OUR FATHER

- *Trust is never easy! But there are lots of times in life when we do have to listen to others and trust that they are leading us in the right direction, perhaps most obviously with parents, teachers and others in authority.*
- *People are imperfect and there is always a chance that they will let us down. When we trust in God, we are placing our trust in someone who is totally worthy of that trust.*

THE LESSON: MATTHEW 6

The first part of the lesson talks briefly about the Gospels and Jesus' life and teaching with regard to prayer, and then introduces the text which includes the "Lord's Prayer". Next the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

The first four books in the New Testament, called the "Gospels", tell us about the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus from four different points of view (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). All four Gospels show that prayer is important, and demonstrate in various ways that Jesus set an amazing example of prayer for his followers. Jesus often removed himself from the crowds that followed him, to go to quiet places where he could speak to God, his Father.

Like Jesus, we too are invited to approach God as children speaking to a loving Father – with communication that is marked by openness, honesty, and trust.

When asked by his disciples how they should pray, Jesus gave them this well-known prayer, which is found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The version appearing in Matthew's Gospel is slightly longer, and both are used in our prayer book.

Refer to Matthew 6:5-13.

(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 does this passage specifically tell us *not* to do?
- What does this passage specifically tell us *to* do instead?
- What can we learn about who God is from the way that Jesus addressed him in this prayer?
- What are some of the things in the prayer that indicate what we can depend on God for?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *We are told not to be hypocrites, and not to pray in public for the purpose of drawing attention to ourselves.*
- *Instead, we are to pray quietly and humbly. When we are alone, there is no chance that we will be trying to impress others with our words, instead we are free to just be honest with God. Jesus wanted his disciples to use words that mean something – to be sincere.*
- *God deserves our praise. He is in heaven, where his will is done. His very name is holy. God knows what we need before we tell him. It is within his power to meet our needs whether they are spiritual or emotional or material.*
- *We can depend on God for our day-to-day needs ("daily bread"), for forgiveness, for help with temptation and for deliverance from evil. This is not an exhaustive list! We can depend on our trustworthy, loving Father for everything. That doesn't necessarily mean he's always going to give us exactly what we want (or think we need), but it does mean that he will hear and he will care and he will act with love.*

OUR FATHER

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.

At home, find a quiet space, and spend some time praying with the Lord's Prayer, line by line. Try "translating" it into your own words and expanding on it with details from your own situation. For example, for the line, "Give us this day our daily bread", you could pray, "Give me today what I need for today, and especially give me help facing the math test I am worried about."

Finish your prayer by remembering that God knows and loves you, and that he wants to hear from you no matter how you are feeling. You might choose to end your prayer by thanking him for those things.

- AND/OR -

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

O Lord, from whom all good things do come: Grant to us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (COLLECT FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, BCP PAGE 196)

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.

OUR FATHER

MATTHEW 6: **WHAT HOLY DEPENDENCE LOOKS LIKE**

⁵“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread,

¹²and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.