

THE CANON

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pencils and pieces of paper; small container
- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Clock or watch with second hand for timing
- 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: ON THE SPOT, THE TRUTH-TELLING VERSION

Write out some of the topics listed below on scraps of paper (you may wish to add your own), fold them, and place them in an opaque container. Have the teens sit in a circle. One at a time, ask each teen to select a question from the container and speak on the topic/question selected.

YOU MAY WANT TO ALLOW FOR ONE "PASS" PER TURN IF TEENS SELECT A QUESTION THAT THEY ARE UNCOMFORTABLE SPEAKING ABOUT. FOR SMALL GROUPS, YOU MAY WANT TO TAKE MULTIPLE TURNS. FOR LARGE (OR TALKATIVE) GROUPS, YOU MAY HAVE TO TIME RESPONSES (FOR EXAMPLE, EACH PERSON HAS THIRTY SECONDS TO ANSWER).

- Describe a character in a book that you identify with.
- Do newspapers always tell the whole truth? Explain.
- What kind of books do you like to read and why?
- If you could make any book into a movie, which one would you choose?
- What word would you add to the dictionary if you could, and what would it mean?
- What was your favourite bedtime story as a child?
- If a book were written about your life, what would it be called? What sort of genre would it be (comedy, romance, etc.)?
- When you were little, who was your favourite superhero? Why?
- What is the movie that you can quote the most? How much of it can you quote?
- If you were about to be stranded on a desert island and could only bring three books with you, what would they be?
- Describe a time when a favourite book of yours got made into a movie. Did they do a good job of it?
- Describe a work of fiction that teaches something true.

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: GOD'S WORD, OUR ANCHOR

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to read together the following quote, and then invite them to comment on it. Use the questions below to draw out further discussion as needed.

THE CANON

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.

“If we are cut loose from the anchor of God’s Word, we will not be free. We will be slaves of personal passions and popular trends.” - John Piper

- How is God’s word like an anchor? (What does the author mean by this illustration)?
- Have you ever felt constrained by Christian beliefs and values?
- What are some examples of how people might become “slaves” of “personal passions” or “popular trends”?
- How could being anchored by God’s Word save us?

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

- *Piper is using a nautical illustration. We are like a boat that is kept from drifting off into the open sea by the anchor of God’s Word.*
- *Sometimes we may feel like we’d like to go drifting off into the open sea, ignoring the direction we have from scripture on how to live. For a boat that would mean getting lost and encountering all sort of dangers. For us, if we move away from the guidance of scripture, the same can be said: we would become lost and be susceptible to harmful influences.*
- *Without scripture to guide us, we may simply follow our impulses or the beliefs of others. Instead of making a conscious choice to do what is good and right, we could end up doing things that we’d regret and that lead us away from God.*

THE LESSON: 2 TIMOTHY 3

The first part of the lesson begins with a short description of what the Christian canon of scripture is, where it comes from and why it matters. This can be read aloud. You may wish to pause so that the teens can ask any questions they might have about that before moving on to the introduction to today’s text. Next the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

*Let’s take a look at this book we call the Holy Bible. It is a collection of 66 books of scripture used in Christian churches. The first part of it, the Old Testament, was originally written mostly in Hebrew and these are the Jewish scriptures, sacred to both Christians and Jews. These 39 books include the books of Moses or “the law”, historical books, wisdom books, and prophetic books. These writings are what Jesus and the apostles were referring to when *they* talked about scripture. These were the writings that were used in the worship of Israel, in synagogues and in the temple.*

The second part of the Bible, the New Testament, was originally written in Greek, and these are the Christian writings. There are 27 books, and they include the Gospels (which tell the story of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection), the Acts (which tells about the early apostolic ministry), the epistles (which are apostolic letters written to early churches and Christians) and the revelation of John (a prophetic or apocalyptic book).

What we refer to as the “canon” of scripture is that collection of books – both Old and New Testaments – which the early Church came to agree upon as the authoritative group of holy writings for Christians.

*It became necessary early in the development of the Christian Church to make clear what the true teachings and scriptures of the Church were, because many false teachings were cropping up. So, largely in response to these false teachings (or *heresies*), we came to have both a canon of scripture and the creeds of the Church.*

THE CANON

The Bible has been passed down to us through centuries of generations of believers, and translated into hundreds of languages (including many translations into English). Christians believe that God was intimately involved through the Holy Spirit in inspiring the words of scripture and in preserving them. We believe that this collection of writings contains God’s revelation to us, telling us about where we come from, who God is, how we can be in a right relationship with him, how he wants us to live, and much, much more!

Questions? Comments?

In the New Testament, in the epistles section, there are two letters written by the Apostle Paul to a young Christian leader named Timothy. Let’s take a look at an excerpt from the second letter that describes the importance of scripture.

Refer to 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

(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.

- Based on what we just read, what sacred writings would Timothy have been familiar with?
- Take a look at verses 14 and 15. Paul points out that Timothy has been familiar with these scriptures since he was a child. What does he say this is able to do for him (verse 15)? Can it do the same for us?
- What does Paul say is the source of scripture?
- According to verses 16 and 17, what uses does scripture have? Try to come up with an example of each.

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Timothy would have been familiar with the Old Testament (the Hebrew scriptures).*
- *His knowledge of the scriptures makes him “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”. All of scripture points us to Jesus. It did this for Timothy, and it still does this for us today.*
- *The source of scripture is God – having been “breathed by God”. This is not a book like any other book!*
- *Scripture is useful for: “teaching... reproof... correction... training in righteousness... completeness... (making us) equipped for good works...”*

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 slowly re-reading the words of 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

THE CANON

Ask God to use his holy scriptures to do each of these things for you: teach, reprove, correct, train in righteousness, complete and equip for good works. Don't rush through it, but spend a bit of time with each word, seeking how God might want to lead you.

- AND/OR -

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

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. (COLLECT FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, BCP PAGE 97)

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.

2 TIMOTHY 3: **GOD-BREATHED**

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.