

FULL ARMOUR

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Clock or watch with second hand for timing
- 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: ONE ANSWER

As the teens arrive, ask them to think up scenarios that involve a questioner and a responder (for example: a police interrogation, a celebrity interview, etc.). Have the teens pair up, and each pair designate a questioner and responder. One at a time the pairs are assigned a scenario and give a performance based on it. The interrogating actor can only ask questions and the responding actor must answer each time with only the word “panoplia” (pan-op-lee’-ah), no matter what the question was. The questioner’s challenge is to keep the scene moving forward as though the responses are meaningful. The goal for the responder is to infuse as much emotion and meaning (without laughing) into that single word as possible. So for example, “What do you think we found when we searched your backpack, young man?” - “Panoplia” (said with hand gestures, shrug, glaring facial expression and tone of “I don’t know”) followed by “Do you really expect me to believe you have no idea how that got in there?” - “Panoplia” (said earnestly with nodding). See how long the scene can be kept going and how much expression your teens can put into the scene. You can either time the scenes or allow them to go until they reach a natural conclusion or run out of steam.

Note: at the end of the activity, tell your teens that “panoplia” is a Greek work that is used in the scripture passage we’re going to be looking at today, and it means “full armour”, that is, everything needed both defensively and offensively to triumph in (spiritual) battle.

FOR SMALL GROUPS, SWAP ACTOR ROLES AND SCENARIOS A FEW TIMES. FOR LARGER GROUPS, LET EVERYONE HAVE A TURN AS EITHER THE INTERROGATOR OR THE RESPONDER AND LIMIT TIME AS NECESSARY.

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 (ACTIVITY): PRAYER COACHING

For this portion of the lesson draw a stick person on your board (or assign a teen to draw). Explain that, as a team, you’re going to take on the role of a “prayer coach” for this imaginary person. Have fun with it, and give your stick person as much personality as the teens want (don’t forget a name!). Take a few moments with the teens to imagine who this person is, what they are like, and so on. Ideally, the stick person should be vaguely representative of your group (check out the notes below). Consider these questions:

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- What does our imaginary person’s current prayer life look like? How would it rate on a scale of one to ten?
- Where do they need to improve? What are their challenges?
- What has worked well for them before? What hasn’t?

Together come up with a brainstormed daily prayer plan for your stick person. We’ll use this stick person again in the lesson portion. *(Then, if possible, keep your stick person to have on hand for lesson #25.)*

Discussion (Activity) Notes:

- *This lesson begins our “customization 101” unit, the goal of which is to expose the teens to a variety of resources that they might incorporate into their own practice of prayer, so today’s discussion is meant to get them thinking about moving towards that goal.*
- *Ideally, your imaginary teen should be as representative as possible of the teens in your group. If there’s a willingness for them to share their own answers to the start-point questions above, encourage them to do so.*
- *This is also a good opportunity to share a bit about the ups and downs of your own prayer life. The honest example of someone they know will be more memorable than the words they read in the lesson!*
- *In putting together your prayer plan, be sure to include a prayer time in both morning and evening and ask the teens to consider what sort of prayers will be included. Will the plan be simple or complicated? Will it include BCP prayers? Prayers from scripture? Spontaneous prayer? Have they made it achievable for your stick person or will s/he give up after one attempt?*
- *Before wrapping up the discussion let the teens know that over the coming weeks many different prayer types and resources will be explored so that in our final week of this unit they will be challenged to write their own daily prayer plan.*

THE LESSON: EPHESIANS 6

The first part of the lesson begins with an introduction to the epistle to the Ephesians, which 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.

Decades into his ministry, the Apostle Paul found himself in prison in Rome, and it is there we believe he wrote his epistle to the Ephesians.

Through this letter, Paul sought to help believers to see their lives and their world through a heavenly lens. He wanted them (and us) to understand that their purpose was far beyond the earthly concerns of daily life. He wanted them to know, too, that God had equipped them to fulfill their purpose both as individuals and as a Church.

In the final chapter of his letter, Paul draws upon battle imagery to illustrate his point. This would have resonated both with those readers who were familiar with the Old Testament, and with those readers who were familiar with the Roman military of that day. He uses this image of full armour (“panoplia” is the Greek word) to describe how God provides us with all of the spiritual tools we need to be victorious in living for him each day.

Refer to Ephesians 6: 10-20.

(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).

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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.

- According to this passage, who is *not* our enemy?
- What are the weapons we've been given as our full armour?
Have teens draw them onto your stick person from the earlier discussion activity. (Then, if possible, keep your stick person to have on hand for lesson #25.)
- Is this an active or a passive image?
- Take a look at verse 18. What permeates the armour? Why do you think that is?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- Verse 12 points out that people ("flesh and blood") are not our enemies, rather our enemies are described as "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places".
- Our full armour includes: truth, righteousness, readiness ("given by the gospel of peace"), faith, salvation, the Spirit (the word of God), prayer(!)
- This is a very active image. We are called to "put on" the armour and many active words are used: "stand against", "wrestle", "take up", "withstand", "stand firm", etc. So we're called upon to ACT, but note that Paul's final verse in Ephesians is one of grace: "Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible". (6:24)
- The whole spectrum of spiritual tools (armour) is to be permeated by prayer – all kinds of prayer and at all times. God is the one who supplies us with what we need to accomplish his purpose in our lives and in the world, and he is the one in charge, so keeping close to him and talking to our "commander" is essential for us.

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 this week, take five or ten minutes to spend in spontaneous prayer. Close your eyes and have a conversation with God: Tell him whatever is on your mind, whatever your concerns are for the day ahead, and ask him to equip you for whatever you will face.

- AND/OR -

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

Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve: Pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

(COLLECT FOR THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, BCP PAGE 236)

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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.

EPHESIANS 6: **ALL KINDS, ALL TIMES**

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.