

SOVEREIGN

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pencils and pieces of paper
- Copies of the downloadable “Litany” 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: THE MEANING OF WORDS

Ahead of time write out a number of obscure words on pieces of paper. Also have written on another piece of paper the correct definition of the words (see suggestions below). Give your teens one of the words (without the definition), and ask each teen to write a made-up definition of the word on a piece of paper without showing anyone else. Collect them together, and add to them the correct definition. Read the definitions out and have the teens vote on which definition is the real one. Whoever makes the most correct guesses wins.

- Calabash – A type of gourd.
- Loquacious – Talkative or chatty
- Soporific – Something that can cause sleep.
- Verisimilitude – Appearance of being true.
- Iota – The smallest letter in the Greek alphabet.

FOR LARGER GROUPS, HAVE TEENS BREAK UP INTO PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS. FOR VERY SMALL GROUPS YOU MAY WISH TO ADD AN ADDITIONAL TWO OR THREE FALSE DEFINITIONS.

THE LITANY: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the Litany, leaving off the Grace (which can be said at the close of the lesson).

DISCUSSION: WHEN WORDS FAIL

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.

- Have you ever been in a situation where you were trying to explain something and you just couldn't find the words? What happened?
- If you could go back to that moment and change something or give yourself some advice what would it be?

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

- *Most of us have had this experience of being unable to express ourselves as we'd like. Sometimes it may happen because we're intimidated by the people we're speaking to, or perhaps because we're in a state where our emotions are overwhelming our ability to think and communicate clearly. The experience may have been inconvenient, embarrassing or frustrating. It might even have prevented us from achieving an important goal. If you have a personal anecdote to share, share it!*

SOVEREIGN

- *Perhaps you would have liked someone else to step in and help you. Or maybe you wish you'd paused to pray and take a few deep breaths. Or you might have advised yourself to be better prepared, to practice what you'd say ahead of time or bring some notes. There will always be situations that are challenging for us, but learning to manage them can make a big difference!*

THE LESSON: PSALM 9

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.

Our lessons this year are shaped around the Litany, which forms the oldest part of the Book of Common Prayer. While some parts of the Litany have been revised and updated, its core dates all the way back to the *fourth* century! So when we pray with the Litany, we are uniting our voices with generations of believers stretching back many centuries, allowing words that express the concerns common to Christians in every place and time to direct our hearts and minds.

A few generations ago, the Litany was encouraged for use three times a week, but in more recent years it has fallen out of regular use, finding a place in corporate worship at most parishes once or twice a year, at the beginning of Lent, and if you are lucky at the beginning of Advent. If you are familiar with the Litany, what probably struck you is that it is an amazingly *thorough* prayer, and one that doesn't shy away from confronting the darkness that often inhabits our world.

At its heart the Litany is an invitation to enter into the presence of an awesome God, and to bring before him the myriad concerns that shape our lives: concerns for our world, for the Church, and for our own wellbeing. Why do we do this? We do this because we know that God is sovereign over everything and merciful towards us, and we have been given the privilege of approaching him through what Christ did for us. So our lessons begin where the Litany begins: with a consideration of the character of the God we address.

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The psalms form the ancient prayer book of Israel, written by many poets at many different dates, and these continue to be used by the Christian Church in prayers, chants, and songs. The psalms express a range of experience and emotion, but they share a common theme of recognizing that ultimately all human concerns are under the control of a sovereign God.

Refer to Psalm 9:1-10.

(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 OR THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER).

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 "sovereign" mean?
What are the words and phrases in the text that point to the Lord being sovereign?
- List together the different things that God's sovereignty extends to according to this passage.
- What are some of the other words in this psalm that tell us about what God is like?

SOVEREIGN

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- The word “sovereign” can be a noun or an adjective. It is a word that is used to describe a king or someone with supreme power and authority, above any other. The psalmist refers to the Lord as “O Most High” and refers to his throne in several verses, notably to his being “enthroned for ever” in verse 7.
- God is sovereign over enemies, over “causes” (think of an area of concern that is under dispute, perhaps before a court of law), over nations, over the wicked, over cities, over the world, over peoples, over the oppressed, over those who trust and seek in him. This is a very comprehensive list! When we consider the thoroughness of the Litany and all of the areas of life that we bring before God when we pray the Litany, we can be confident that we are following in the tradition of the psalmists who understood that nothing is outside of God’s authority.
- God has done “wonderful deeds” (verse 1); his presence is awesome (verses 3,6); he is just and righteous (verses 4-7); he is eternal (verse 7); he cares for the oppressed and those in trouble (verse 9); he is trustworthy (verse 10). The character of God is beyond what we are able to take from this short text, but we should be comforted to know not only that God is in charge, but also that he is just, trustworthy and cares for those who struggle. It is because he is all of these things that we bring everything before him.

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))

Choose one of the petitions from the Litany to focus on this week. Choose something that speaks to your own concerns right now. Begin with the words of the petition and then add your own to them.

*For example: “**To bring into the way of truth all who have erred and are deceived, we beseech thee, good Lord... I especially bring before you these people (...) that I am concerned about and ask that you would open their eyes to your truth and bring them home to yourself. I know that you are sovereign over all things, even this, and I thank you because I know you care...**”*

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth: We humbly beseech thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (THE COLLECT FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, BCP PAGE 229)

SOVEREIGN

CLOSING PRAYERS

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", printed at the end of the Litany booklet.

PSALM 9:1-10: **ENTHRONED FOREVER**

¹I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. ²I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. ³When my enemies turn back, they stumble and perish before your presence. ⁴For you have maintained my just cause; you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgement. ⁵You have rebuked the nations; you have made the wicked perish; you have blotted out their name for ever and ever. ⁶The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins; their cities you rooted out; the very memory of them has perished. ⁷But the Lord sits enthroned for ever; he has established his throne for justice, ⁸and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness. ⁹The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. ¹⁰And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.