

SANCTIFIER

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: A DREAM... INTERRUPTED

As the teens arrive, have them write down some “life dreams” on pieces of paper. (Or you may prefer to have a few on hand). Some examples might be, “Discover an uninhabited island” or “Have a national holiday named in my honour”. Have the teens work in pairs or small groups. Each group selects a “dream” and imagines a character to attach the dream to. Encourage them to draw their character on a piece of paper while they come up with as many things as possible that will prevent their character from ever realizing their dream. Allow them to be as silly and imaginative as they’d like. After a few minutes, invite the groups to present to one another their character’s dream and the roadblocks they face. Post the characters together at the front. Once all have presented, ask the teens to see if they can come up with a single change in the narrative – an outside intervention or a magical solution – that could allow each character to overcome all of the obstacles to achieve their dream.

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).

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: GETTING TO THE TARGET

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.

- Ask the teens to tell the group about a goal they’ve set for themselves.
- What are some of the things you worry might keep you from achieving it?
- Is there any sort of promise or guarantee that could be given to you that would make you feel totally confident that you would be able to achieve it?

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

- *Your teens might share about a goal related to achieving a better grade in a subject they find challenging, or perhaps improving a broken relationship in their life. You might chose to share about a goal of your own.*
 - *Whenever we set a goal for ourselves, no matter how determined we may be to reach that goal, we are aware that there are things that could really trip us up. Some of those things have to do with our own personal failings or tendency to just give up, but there may also be things that are outside of our control which can get in the way.*
 - *Sometimes determination may be enough to get us there. But sometimes we need outside help in order to achieve a goal, whether it is to overcome our own weakness or to get past obstacles that are outside of our control.*
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- Remember that Jesus said “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). Though many things are outside of our control, nothing is outside of God’s control. When it comes to following Jesus, Hebrews 10:23 offers this great reminder: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised [God] is faithful”.

THE LESSON: JOHN 15-16

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.

O God the Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the faithful: have mercy upon us.

There are many titles given to the Holy Ghost in scripture. The Old Testament uses the Hebrew word “*ruach*” which has the suggestion of divine breath, pointing us to God’s creative power and his presence with his people. But the New Testament goes deeper still. This is because at Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent to *indwell* believers, signaling the beginning of a much more intimate relationship. St. John refers to him with the Greek word “*Paraclete*” or Helper. St. Paul calls him “the Spirit of adoption”, and in his letter to the Ephesians says this: “In Christ you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were *sealed* with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the *guarantee* of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (1:13-14).

As Christians, we live in a kind of limbo. Christ has died for our sins and we have received the Holy Spirit, but there is a completion that we are still waiting for while we live in a world that is characterized by darkness. We are being made perfect, but we have not yet arrived at perfection. There is a sense in which we *have* been sanctified, we *are* being sanctified and we *will* be sanctified. We are a work in progress! Yet we have not been left alone in this transformational work.

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The “farewell discourse” in St. John’s Gospel recounts in detail the teaching Jesus gave to his disciples on his last night with them before his arrest. Jesus wanted them to understand that even though he was about to go away to the Father, and even though they were facing a hostile world, they were *not* abandoned. Jesus’ words at this pivotal moment help us to better understand the “Sanctifier of the faithful”: God’s breath within us, adopting us, helping us, sealing us for a future with him.

Refer to John 15:18, 26-16:16, 22, 31-33.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READING FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGE FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ IT IN ITS ENTIRETY: JOHN 15:18-16:33.)

(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 are some of the indications in this text that things are not going to be easy for believers?
- What encouragement does Jesus offer in the face of this?
- What reason does Jesus give for sharing this information with them?
- What difference can these warnings and encouragements make to us in our lives?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- Today’s text begins with Jesus telling the disciples not to be surprised if the world hates them (15:18). He clearly indicates that there is going to be persecution (16:2, 33). He also indicates that there will be sorrow and they will be separated from him for a time (v6, 32).*

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- *Jesus promises that the Spirit is going to come to them (15:26). The Spirit is going to act as a witness, helping them to fulfill their role as witnesses (15:27-28). The Spirit is going to guide them and declare the wisdom of God to them (16:12-14). They will get to see Jesus again one day and they will experience a joy that cannot be taken away (16:22). Moreover, Jesus tells them “I have overcome the world” – ultimately, the outcome is already determined, and Christ is victorious (16:33).*
- *Jesus says that he is sharing this information so that they will not “fall away” in the face of persecution (16:1). Some very dark things are about to happen: his arrest and crucifixion, and following his resurrection a prolonged persecution for his followers! Jesus knows that even his prophecy about leaving them is making them feel sad and discouraged (16:6,12). But he wants them to remember the important truths he is entrusting to them when some of these things begin to happen (16:4). It’s important for them to know that in spite of all of this darkness, God is in control and they have not been abandoned! He wants them to “have peace” and to know that Jesus has “overcome the world” (16:33).*
- *Being reminded that we may face tribulation in this world can help to reset our expectations so that when we encounter difficulty, we turn in trust towards the One who is ultimately in control, who is present with us and loves us – rather than away from him. Knowing that Jesus has overcome the world, and that we anticipate a joyful future with him can help us to “take heart” no matter how challenging our circumstances.*

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).)

At home, take a few minutes to slowly and thoughtfully read the following three scripture quotes. After reading each passage, sit in quiet thanksgiving for a time.

- [Jesus said] “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth... You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:16-18).
- Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27).
- Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

O God, who didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit: Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort;

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through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

(COLLECT FOR PENTECOST, BCP PAGE 205)

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.

JOHN 15-16: TAKE HEART (IN THE FACE OF A HOSTILE WORLD)

15 [Jesus said] ¹⁸"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you... ²⁶But when the Helper [*Paraclete*] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

16 ¹⁴"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ²They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. ⁴But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you...

¹²"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁶A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me... ²²So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you...

³¹Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? ³²Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. ³³I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."