

# OFFENDERS PART TWO

## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Small container and pieces of paper with pre-written ice breaker scenarios
- Clock or watch with second hand for timing
- 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: EMBARRASSING MOMENTS CHARADES

Ahead of time, write down on pieces of paper an assortment of embarrassing scenarios that teens will act out, and place them in an opaque container. One at a time the teens select a piece of paper and have up to thirty seconds to silently act out the scenario. The rest of the teens try to guess what is being acted out.

A few scenario ideas include:

- You try to push a pull door (and walk into it).
- Someone has stuck a sign on your back without you realizing it.
- You emerge from the bathroom with toilet paper stuck to your shoe.
- You are standing in front of a cashier and realize you have no money.
- Someone points out that you have food stuck in your teeth.
- You offer a seat to a woman you mistakenly assumed was pregnant.
- You are talking about someone who turns out to be right behind you.
- You are texting while walking and you trip.
- You get caught talking to yourself out loud.
- You excitedly wave to a friend, who turns out to be a stranger.

FOR GROUPS OF FOUR OR MORE DIVIDE THE GROUP INTO TEAMS AND KEEP SCORE (TEAMS GUESS FOR THEIR OWN TEAMMATES’ PERFORMANCES). FOR MUCH LARGER GROUPS YOU MAY HAVE PAIRS OR SMALL GROUP PERFORMANCES (THEY WILL NEED A BRIEF MOMENT TO PLAN). IT’S A GOOD IDEA TO HAVE EXTRA SCENARIOS SO THAT TEENS CAN PASS AT LEAST ONCE IF THEY DRAW SOMETHING THEY DON’T WISH TO ACT OUT.

## 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: CAUGHT OUT

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.

- Can you think of a time when you thought everything was going just fine, only to realize it wasn’t? How did you react when you realized your mistake?

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- Hebrews 4:13 says “No creature is hidden from God’s sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account”. How do you think God sees our embarrassing moments? What sorts of things do you think matter to him?

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

- *This is a great chance to share a story of your own.*
- *Oftentimes our embarrassing moments are caused by our failure to realize something. We think we have a full understanding of the situation we’re in, and then we realize painfully that we got it wrong. Under these circumstances, we may become angry and direct our anger towards others, or we may be able to find the humour in the situation and laugh at ourselves. If the mistake arises from a foolish choice on our part, we may determine to be more careful in the future.*
- *Many of the things that cause us embarrassment in the here and now don’t really matter, like having an article of clothing on backwards. But some things that cause us embarrassment are actually sins, and our embarrassment is a reminder that we have been doing something we should not do, like talking about someone behind their back (and we know we’re in the wrong if they happen to hear us). How we respond to difficult situations is important too. It may take real grace, humility and courage to respond well.*

## THE LESSON: MATTHEW 5

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.

*Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers...*

Let’s recap. God made the world good. And then humanity chose to rebel, setting the stage for a fallen world, utterly separated from our Creator. But God didn’t give up on humanity. He called the people of Israel to be his chosen people, set apart, a light to the nations, from whom the Messiah would one day come to make a way back.

At the time of Moses, God gave the people of Israel the law, which told them how to walk in obedience so that they would not offend his holiness. The law was very complex. In fact, the people always fell short of fully obeying it. The law showed them that they were sinners who had “fallen short of the glory of God”. This is true for all of us today as well, not just as members of the human race, but as individuals with “dark hearts” that cannot be hidden from the eyes of God.

By the time Jesus’ earthly ministry was taking place, there were distinct groups within Israel who had different attitudes towards keeping the law. The Pharisees prided themselves on keeping it, right down to the smallest minutia. They felt that even if everyone else was “fallen”, they were getting it right. But Jesus challenged them to recognize that though they were serious about keeping certain details, they were missing the very foundation of the law: to love God and to love one’s neighbour; to walk in justice, mercy and faithfulness. He needed to spell it out for them: They were *not* getting it right at all. They – like us – needed someone to get it right for them.

Refer to Matthew 5:17-20, 27-28, 38-42, 48.

(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: MATTHEW 5:17-48.)

(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.

- Imagine you’re someone standing in the crowd who has always kept the ten commandments. You think of yourself as a “good person”. How would Jesus’ remarks make you feel?

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- Take a look at verse 19. What do you think was going on there?
- According to the text, who *can* fulfill these requirements?
- How do you think Jesus wants people to respond to what he's saying here?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *This teaching would be a great shock to those who felt they were getting it right all along. It would seem to them that Jesus was taking the law of Moses and making it way harder to be right with God. To those who already felt they were failing, this may have increased their sense of hopelessness. But those who thought they had it all together would be convicted by his words, and perhaps angry.*
- *Jesus was likely taking issue with the religious teachers of that day who were failing to look at the heart of the law. In Matthew 23:23, he says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others" (see also Matthew 23:16-19). Mark 12 tells us more about the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and were out to try to trick Jesus. To them, Jesus says, "You know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (v24). Jesus wants his disciples to be more faithful in what they teach than either of these groups.*
- *Jesus begins his talk by saying that he has come for the purpose of fulfilling the law and the prophets. This points us to the good news that we'll get into next week: Jesus came to do for us what we could not do on our own.*
- *Jesus is calling people to a higher standard of obedience, but also to a deeper and more honest self-examination that doesn't just look at the most extreme examples of sinful actions, but that looks at the sinful state of the heart and all of the ways in which that sin can manifest itself. If we are honest, we know that we fail the heart-test. Like our spiritual ancestors who were called to "be holy" as their God is holy, we are still called to be perfect, like our Father (v28). But we are not able to do it on our own!*

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).)

*Spend some time reflecting on our text from Matthew 5. What areas of sin in your own heart and life does the passage make you aware of? Confess them by name to God, and close with these words from Psalm 25:6-7: "Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!"*

- AND/OR -

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Take some time to pray through this collect.

*O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping of thy commandments we may please thee both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.* (COLLECT FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, BCP PAGE 217)

## 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.

## MATTHEW 5: YOU ARE NOT RIGHTEOUS ENOUGH

[Jesus said,] <sup>17</sup>"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. <sup>18</sup>For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup>Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>21</sup>"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgement.' <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire...

<sup>27</sup>"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup>But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart...

<sup>38</sup>"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' <sup>39</sup>But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup>And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup>And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup>Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you...

<sup>48</sup>You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.