

FROM EVIL

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- 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: GREEN EGGS & HAM

Divide into two groups. The first group creates a short skit on reasons why a child should never eat green eggs and ham. The second group does the same for reasons why a child should always be ready to try green eggs and ham. At the end, ask your teens if there were reasonable arguments presented on both sides.

FOR GROUPS OF LESS THAN FOUR, A SINGLE GROUP CAN PREPARE TWO SEPARATE SKITS. FOR GROUPS OF MORE THAN EIGHT, BREAK INTO AS MANY GROUPS AS NEEDED TO FORM SKIT GROUPS OF BETWEEN TWO AND FOUR EACH AND LIMIT PREPARATION AND PERFORMANCE TIME AS NEEDED.

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: SHOULD WE TRY EVERYTHING?

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.

- “Try it! You just might like it!” may be reasonably good advice sometimes. Come up with a quick list of situations when “Just try it!” could actually be really bad advice.
- When we talk about evil in this world, what comes to mind?
- When people decide to do something evil, how do they justify it?
- What sort of justifications tempt you in your own life? (Perhaps not to do the evil things we’ve just talked about, but things that you know to be wrong, such as cheating, lying, gossiping).
- Do you think there are forces at work in our world that seek to inspire people to do evil and to justify doing evil?

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

- *We live in times when the mantra to “try everything” is very popular. But there are many things that we know we should stay away from – without having to try them. These are things that we are commanded by God to avoid: things that are more or less guaranteed to lead into sin. An extreme example would be that we should not try killing people just to see what it’s like. We should not try lying to our parents just to see what will happen. We should not consume drugs that will impair our ability to make right decisions. We believe that God’s commandments are loving and good. In these cases, the advice to “Just try it!” is actually a temptation to evil.*
- *Allow your teens to cite whatever examples come to their minds. They may think of terrorists, dictators, unethical corporations, or individuals who deliberately harm others.*
- *Even the sorts of people we would identify as “evil” will have self-justifications for their evil actions. Their justifications could be anything from “It doesn’t really matter”, to “I deserve to do what I want”, to “I know best what needs to be done”, to*

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- “Someone else is to blame for my actions”, to “Those who will be harmed by my actions deserve to be punished”.
- Chances are, some of the root justifications for our “lesser sins” are the same as the ones that can tempt people to what we think of as hardcore evil. That’s a sobering thought!
- If your teens say “No”, challenge them to consider popular media. Even if they are reluctant to consider a spiritual reality behind evil, they are likely aware that they are bombarded with messages in advertisements, books, movies, school, friends – and some of these messages can certainly be agents of temptation! Scripture teaches us that there is something more to it than this – a spiritual reality of evil that is actively seeking to destroy us. That’s why we come to our Deliverer, seeking help.

THE LESSON: GENESIS 3

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.

From all evil and mischief; from sin, from the crafts and assaults of the devil... Good Lord, deliver us.

This unit of our study is formed around the petitions of the Litany called “The Deprecations”, meaning, a prayer for deliverance from something. In each of the petitions we are appealing to God, our Deliverer, because we recognize that there are specific evils and dangers that we need to be delivered *from*. We call to our good Lord with the words of the psalmists, “O God! You are my help and my deliverer” (70:5).

Scripture doesn’t mince words or sugar-coat reality. It tells us that we live in a fallen world, and that evil is real. St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, said, “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” (6:12).

Each of us, in our own life and experience, knows that we live in a world filled with evil and with temptations to evil. But we also believe in a God who is greater than those forces. So with that in mind, we appeal to God for his help and deliverance when we find ourselves in a struggle with these things, even “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

Refer to Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-8, 14-15.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READING FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS. DUE TO THE COMPLICATED NATURE OF THE TEXT YOU WILL LIKELY FIND IT BETTER FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS LESSON TO USE THE CLIPPED VERSION, BUT MAY ALSO CHOOSE TO READ IN FULL: GENESIS 2:15-3:19.)

(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.

- Take a look at the technique of the serpent. What does his first question accomplish?
- Reread Genesis 3:4-5. Why do you think the serpent’s counter-narrative is successful in persuading them?
- What are the immediate results of Adam and Eve’s choice?
- Check out Genesis 3:15. It’s a short and strange prophecy spoken by God to the serpent, but one that has great importance for us. Does anyone know why?
- Considering our own struggles with temptation, what can we learn from this text?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- Scripture tells us “Satan is able to disguise himself as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). The serpent appears to them to be non-threatening. His first question misrepresents the truth, and casts God as unreasonable and perhaps unloving. He is using hyperbole (an extreme exaggeration) to initiate a conversation that is fundamentally concerned with undermining their confidence in God and in his commandment.

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- *The incentive to obedience is often rooted in its consequence. God's instruction is clear. Disobedience will result in death. Adam and Eve have no experience that can help them to understand this consequence, but up till now their relationship with God has been characterized by a trusting obedience. Now, as they gaze at the fruit, they can see that it is physically attractive, and the dialogue with the serpent arouses their intellectual curiosity. Having engaged their attention, the serpent blatantly contradicts the consequence God has clearly warned them of. He mixes this in with something true about the tree. The tree will give them independence. The choice to disobey will separate them from God, making them their own little gods.*
- *First of all the passage tell us, "their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked". Prior to this, Adam and Eve had been innocent. They had been confident to live as they were in the garden in close communion with their Creator. Now they are experiencing a sense of shame. They have a new self-awareness but it is not the wonderful thing the serpent said it would be. They make themselves clothing and they hide from their Creator. The first consequence of their sin is separation from God, a fracture in that most important relationship.*
- *This verse is sometimes referred to as the "proto-evangelium" or "first Gospel". Christians believe that here at the very beginning, at the first moment when humans chose death instead of life, God was already setting the stage to one day send the Messiah to conquer the serpent and make a way home. We believe that God did not stop loving us nor did he skip a beat in deciding that he would act to be our deliverer from the evil that we had been seduced by.*
- *Oftentimes the strongest temptations in our own lives result from lies that are mixed with truth. We are often tempted to question God's goodness and love towards us and then we may come to believe that the consequences of our sin can have some positive result. Temptation to evil often comes down to whether we will obey God or be our own little gods. We should also be reassured by this passage, that even though our sins have serious consequences, God has not stopped loving us, nor has he abandoned us, but he is committed to making a way for us to come home.*
- *A note about the origin of evil: "Adam's disobedience brought sin into the human race; but the Bible gives us no explanation for the existence of Satan and evil before the fall of man" (Warren W. Wiersbe). "Two great truths are clear: 1) that God is not the author of sin; 2) that sin was due to an evil power outside man's own nature" (W.H. Griffith Thomas).*

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))

Psalm 119:11 says, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you". The At-Home Challenge during this unit is to commit a short passage of scripture to memory each week. If the suggested passage is too long, try picking out one verse or phrase that speaks to you particularly and commit it to memory. You will be amazed at how the words of scripture, stored in the heart, will return to you in the moments when you most need them.

1 PETER 5: 6-10: ⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

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¹⁰And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

O God, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life: Grant us, we beseech thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure; that, when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen. (THE COLLECT FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY, BCP PAGE 131)

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.

GENESIS 2-3: DID GOD REALLY SAY THAT?

²¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"...

³¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. ⁸And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden...

¹⁴The Lord God said to the serpent... ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."