

READY FOR ANYTHING

PART TWO

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: FIND THE LIE

Give each of your teens a moment to think of and then tell a story about something that happened in their life in the last week. They’ll need a moment to plan because they must insert one significant lie into the story, trying to make it as believable and seamless as possible. The others must try to guess what element of the story was false. If time permits, give them a chance to discuss what factors made it easy or difficult to discover the lie.

FOR LARGE GROUPS, BREAK THE GROUP UP INTO ‘SHARING CIRCLES’ OF ABOUT FIVE OR SIX TEENS EACH.

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: CAUSE AND EFFECT

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.

- Why do people tell lies?
- Have you ever discovered that you’d been lied to about something important? How did it feel? What effect did it have on you and what did you do about it?
- How do you think telling lies affects the liar?

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

- *Sometimes people lie to protect themselves from the embarrassment or discomfort of telling the truth. But sometimes people lie with malicious intent – to harm someone else and to gain something for themselves, even if it is just the approval of others. Sometimes when people lie, they have convinced themselves that they are telling the truth.*
- *Being lied to feels like a betrayal. It makes us question whether we can ever trust the person who lied again, and may even make it difficult to trust other people in general – whether or not they have lied to us. While it is not helpful to go through life with a suspicious outlook, a certain amount of wariness is wise, especially if someone has demonstrated a tendency to bend the truth. “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16).*

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- *Those who tell lies can become trapped, feeling the need to tell more and more lies in order to support the ones they have already told. They will likely feel very estranged from those that they are lying to, and may even come to believe their own lies.*

THE LESSON: 1 TIMOTHY 4

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 false doctrine, heresy, and schism; from hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word and Commandment, Good Lord, deliver us.

The petition we're looking at today seeks God's deliverance from lies that are told about him and his message for us. For as long as there have been believers seeking to follow God, there have also been false teachers, pretending to point the way, but pointing in the wrong direction instead.

In the Old Testament, false prophets frequently claimed that no judgement would come upon the people of Israel even though they were living in opposition to God's law. In the New Testament, many of the false teachers were denying the Resurrection and suggesting that believers go backwards rather than fully embracing the new life in Christ.

Then and now, the best way to spot lies is to know the truth so well that you can tell right away when something is out of sync. God has equipped us with his word! The writers of the New Testament understood this and they were constantly encouraging Christians to immerse themselves in the scriptures (which at that time meant the Old Testament scriptures) so that they would not be easy prey for false teachers. You can really sense the frustration of those saints in some of their writing. Listen to this excerpt from the letter to the Hebrews:

"Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil" (Hebrews 5:12-14).

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St. Timothy was a very young leader in the church at Ephesus and St. Paul was his mentor. In two short but dense letters, St. Timothy is given all sorts of instruction and encouragement on how to lead and be ready for anything, in an environment when attacks against the faith were all around.

Refer to 1 Timothy 4:1-16.

(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.

- Based on this passage, what were some of the false teachings at Ephesus that St. Paul was concerned about? Notice both the source and the ultimate motive of the false teaching!
- What are St. Paul's instructions?
- What does St. Paul say will be the consequences of St. Timothy remaining strong in his life and teaching?
- What encouragement can we take from this passage?

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A few notes and reflections for reference:

- Verse 3 suggests there was a push to asceticism, likely linked to popular philosophies of that age (Gnosticism), which held that the material world was evil and the spiritual world good. St. Paul also refers to “irreverent, silly myths” in verse 7; possibly an issue with some Jewish converts appealing to superstitious or ill-founded practices. In every age, there is a tendency for elements of the surrounding culture to influence some in the church to shift their thinking away from the clear teaching of scripture. Notice that St. Paul identifies the source of these teachings not as those individuals who are spreading them, but as deceitful spirits and demons whose goal is to cause people to depart from the faith (v1).
- St. Timothy is exhorted to “have nothing to do with” the false teachings, but to “command and teach” the truth. St. Timothy is to train himself in godliness – which is concerned with the purity of both his life and his teaching, and his continued growth. St. Timothy is young, but he’s told not to allow that fact to hold him back from using his gifts and from acting as a strong leader.
- St. Paul tells St. Timothy that by his godly character and teaching, he can save both himself and his hearers (v16). Leaders and teachers have a great responsibility because by their example they can actually do a great deal to either harm or to help those who look up to them.
- Even though you may be young, God can use you to be an example to others, to use what gifts you’ve been given, even to lead. Like St. Timothy, we should train ourselves in godliness so that we can be “competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17).

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.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17: ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. (THE COLLECT FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT, BCP PAGE 97)

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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.

1 TIMOTHY 4: **IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE TRUTH**

¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ²through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

⁶ If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

¹¹Command and teach these things. ¹²Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. ¹⁴Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.