

# INTERCESSOR

---

## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Large pieces of paper, pens (for ice breaker)
- 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 BYSTANDER BRAIN

Ahead of time, post or place several large pieces of paper around the room. On each one, draw a stick figure of a situation requiring intervention (suggestions below). Be sure to leave lots of white space around what you’ve drawn. Depending on the clarity of your artwork, you may want to write a brief line explaining what’s going on. Equip each of your teens with a pencil and ask them to go around and add a stick figure of a bystander to each scenario along with a thought bubble explaining why the person is choosing not to get involved.

*Some scenarios might include: an unconscious person lying on the street, an elderly person trying to carry something heavy, a lost child, a baby locked in a hot car, a pick-pocket, someone selling cigarettes to an underage kid, someone not picking up after their dog, someone drunk about to drive, etc.*

## 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: BYSTANDER VS. HELPER

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.

- What is a “bystander”? What are some of the reasons people come up with to justify not getting involved (such as the ones listed in the opening activity)?
- What’s the opposite of “bystander”? What makes it difficult to be an “upstander” or helper?
- Can you remember a time when you really needed someone to step in and help you? What happened? If you could rewrite what happened, how would things have gone differently?

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

- A “bystander” is someone who is present when something is taking place, but who chooses not to get involved. (The “bystander effect” takes this one step further and notes that people are less likely to intervene in a situation when there are other bystanders around.) Some reasons your teens may come up with for bystander behaviour include: not my problem; someone else will help; stepping in could get me in trouble; it’s inconvenient; the person who needs help is a stranger; the person causing the problem is a friend; not knowing how to help; in a hurry.

# INTERCESSOR

- *The opposite of a “bystander” is often termed an “upstander” – or a helper. It is someone who is willing to risk standing out from the crowd in order to intervene in a situation on behalf of someone who needs assistance. Choosing to take on that role might involve risk, personal inconvenience, or sacrifice – many of the reasons why most people prefer not to get involved. Note: sometimes our best option for helping can be to alert someone who is in a better position to help (for example, to let a teacher know about a fight happening on school grounds, rather than trying personally to break it up).*
- *Most of us can recall a situation in which we desperately needed someone to speak or act on our behalf. Perhaps the helper appeared or perhaps not. This is a great opportunity to share a story of your own.*
- *Note: The prevalence of bullying and ongoing efforts to change the social climate in schools means that this is probably a topic your teens have discussed frequently in formal settings. While it’s important to challenge teens to take the road of being someone who helps, today’s discussion is intended to lead into a lesson on the role that Christ plays as our helper: something we desperately need, and something that involves sacrificial love on his part.*

## THE LESSON: HEBREWS 7-8

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.

*By thy heavenly Intercession... Good Lord, deliver us.*

Scripture tells us that Jesus was raised from the dead and appeared to his disciples over a period of 40 days before ascending into heaven. On several occasions Jesus warned them that he would not always be with them, but had to return to the Father. Why? Didn’t he say, “it is finished” on the cross? Hadn’t he already accomplished all that was necessary?

Jesus is not like someone who gets hired to do a job and then walks away when it’s finished. The work of our deliverance is an ongoing commitment carried out by one who loves us and has promised to see it through to completion. So why did he leave? Well, we know that Jesus left so that he could send the Holy Spirit to us; we know that he is preparing a place for us so that we can be with him; and we know that he is now seated in a place of authority at the Father’s right hand – *interceding for us*. (To “intercede” means to intervene on behalf of someone.) So Jesus is actively working on our behalf!

How does this impact our daily lives? It should encourage us. Scripture tells us that even though our lives are filled with challenge, “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). That doesn’t mean we won’t mess up. But “if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). An advocate is someone who speaks up on behalf of another person. And what is this Advocate like? He is a high priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, “one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). So, in Christ, we have the best possible advocate, mediator, intercessor and defender. No matter what we are facing, we can take it to him.

Refer to Hebrews 7:23-8:2.

(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 do you know about the Old Testament (OT) priests? What was their job? (What clues can we find about it in today’s text)?

# INTERCESSOR

- What are some ways in which Jesus’ priesthood is different?
- Have you ever thought about Jesus as your advocate? How might this change how you pray?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *The priests made sacrifices to God on behalf of themselves as well as the people (to atone for their sins). The author of the letter to the Hebrews spends several chapters explaining how the OT system of sacrificing animals was insufficient, and how Jesus Christ is superior to the priesthood of that system. He gets into a lot of fascinating details, but today’s text just gives us a snapshot. A broader reading of the context in Hebrews fleshes this out more (Hebrews 6:19-10:23).*
- *Jesus is set apart from the human priests of the OT in many ways: in his permanence, his perfection and his position. The former priests were only active during their human life and there were many of them (7:23). Jesus’ priesthood is forever (7:24). What the OT priests had to do repeatedly, Jesus did once for all. He was both the perfect priest and the perfect sacrifice (7:27). Whereas the human priests were “weak” (7:28), Jesus is perfect, “holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners” (7:26). Jesus’ intercessory work is ongoing, and “able to save to the uttermost” (7:25). Moreover, unlike the OT priests, Jesus is “exalted above the heavens” (7:26), “seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven” (8:1). He is in a position of authority and intimacy with the Father.*
- *Hopefully this knowledge of our great high priest will encourage us to bring everything to him in confident prayer, knowing that he loves us so much and that nothing is beyond 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).)

Scripture is filled with prayers and praises in the form of poetry and songs. During this unit, try your hand at song-writing; drawing inspiration from the love God has for you, made evident in the work of Jesus Christ.

Spend some time this week writing your own song of praise inspired by the intercessory work of Christ.

*(Stuck? Spend some time instead reflecting on the words of this hymn penned by Joseph M. Scriven (1819-1886): “Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer! Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer!”)*

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

*Assist us mercifully, O Lord, in these our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation; that, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they may ever be defended by thy most gracious and ready help; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

(THE COLLECT FOR ROGATION DAYS BEFORE ASCENSION, BCP PAGE 198)

# INTERCESSOR

---

## 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.

---

## HEBREWS 7-8: **OUR INTERCESSOR FOREVER**

**7**<sup>23</sup>The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, <sup>24</sup>but Jesus holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. <sup>25</sup>Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

<sup>26</sup>For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup>He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

<sup>28</sup>For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.

**8**<sup>1</sup>Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup>a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.