

WE ARE HIS

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: METAPHORS

Ask each of your teens to come up with an object that can be used as a metaphor or simile for your group in some way. They can find something from their own possessions, around the room where you meet, or if weather permits allow them to spend a few minutes outside to collect something. (Some examples: the group may be like a dandelion because it’s being transformed into something that will carry seeds into far-reaching places; or the group may be like a tissue because it’s good at helping out when someone is sad or sick). Give everyone a chance to share the metaphor they chose with the group. *Note: Even negative metaphors should be allowed. This exercise can provide you with insight into how each of your teens is experiencing the group.*

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: IN GOOD HANDS

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.

- Who are some of the people that we rely on to take care of us?
- What sort of things can they say and do to make you feel that you’re in good hands?
- Have you ever been in a situation when you felt you weren’t in good hands? What happened?

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

- *We are constantly in a position of needing to trust others who provide care for us in various ways, especially doctors and dentists, but in a broader sense parents, teachers, police, and anyone entrusted with authority.*
- *We generally feel we’re “in good hands” if we get a sense that the person providing us with help is competent to do their job and actually cares about us. Your teens may have stories to share, or come up with other qualities, such as kindness, gentleness, sensitivity, honesty, etc.*
- *Chances are, many of your teens have had experiences of feeling that they were in not-so-good hands as well as good hands. Perhaps they confided in a counsellor who seemed rushed and not to be listening. Or perhaps they had a medical test performed by someone who didn’t know how to use the equipment. If something arises of a current and serious nature, take a moment to pray about that situation.*

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THE LESSON: JOHN 10

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.

*That it may please thee to rule and govern thy holy Church universal in the right way,
We beseech thee, good Lord.*

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was sent to indwell believers, and the Church was born.

The first thing to know about “Church” is that the local building where people gather to worship is an imperfect visible expression of a deeper spiritual reality. When we talk about Church-with-a-capital-C, we’re talking about an *invisible* reality that transcends time and space and that encompasses all those who truly belong to Jesus.

Scripture uses a lot of metaphors in order to try to convey the mystery of the Church. We are the people of God, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are compared to “living stones” that come together to form a spiritual house. We are “salt and light” in the world. And we are the flock of God, cared for by the Good Shepherd, Jesus himself. All of these images (and there are many more!) help us to better understand who we are and the mission to which we are called.

When we read the petition at the start of this lesson, did you notice that we did *not* say “*the* holy Church universal”, but instead we said, “*thy* holy Church universal”? At the heart of our identity as the Church is the One to whom we belong.

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Today’s lesson comes from the Gospel of St. John, in which the author gives an account of the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus. In the passage we’re about to look at, Jesus had just healed a blind man – and some of the Pharisees were angry about that. Now these leaders were *supposed* to be the shepherds that cared for the flock of God, but Jesus is calling them out as frauds.

Refer to John 10:1-18, 27-30.

(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 10:1-30.)

(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.

- In speaking about the flock of God, how does Jesus describe those leaders who do not really care for the sheep?
- What assurances does this passage provide for those of us who are part of God’s flock?
- What difference does it make who we belong to?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Jesus is specifically responding to the Pharisees who did not care about the man that Jesus had healed, but this parable and others are also speaking in terms of “all who came before” (v8) – a broader group of supposed-to-be-shepherds who failed to care for the flock. They are compared to thieves and robbers (v1,7,10), strangers (v5), and hired hands who abandon their charges (v12-13).*

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- *Jesus is the real shepherd, not the others who don't really care. He knows us by name (v3). We will know his voice and follow him (v3-5,27). We will be saved (v9). We have a good shepherd who has laid down his life for us (v11,17)! He desires for us to have "abundant life" (v10) and will give us eternal life (v28). We belong to him (v12), and no one can "snatch" us out of his hand (v28,29).*
- *Who we belong to makes all the difference in the world! This is a passage that tells us that God knows us intimately and cares for us with a deep and self-sacrificing love. It also tells us that he is angry with those who have been entrusted with our care but have failed in that duty. It gives us the assurance that we are held securely in his hand, and are recipients of eternal life.*
- *Note regarding verse 16: Reading the New Testament makes clear that Jesus was sent first to the chosen people of Israel, the Jews, but that the flock of God was to be extended to include all believing Gentiles. This was a challenge at times for the Jewish disciples and members of the early Church as various other passages bear out. When Jesus refers here to "other sheep that are not of this fold" remember that he is speaking to a Jewish audience, before the establishment of the Church. The verse is referring to believing Gentiles who will become a part of the flock of God (as the modern Church demonstrates).*

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.))

As the Church, we belong both to Jesus and to one another. First, spend some time in thanksgiving for Jesus your Good Shepherd. But second, spend some time reflecting on how you view the "other sheep" that you are united with in the Church. Does your attitude towards them reflect Jesus' love? There are probably some people you are inclined to like and others that you are not. Ask God to help you to love his other sheep the way he does – especially those people you struggle to like.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

O God, who hast laid in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, upon whom alone thou dost build the living temple of thy Church: Grant unto the work of thine own hands continual increase of glory and spiritual strength, and daily make thy people more meet for the eternal tabernacle of thy rest in the heavens; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

(FROM THE OFFICE FOR LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE OF A CHURCH OR CHAPEL, BCP PAGE 680)

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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.

JOHN 10: "UNSNATCHABLE"

Jesus said, ¹"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." ⁶This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father...

²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one."