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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: UNPLUGGED

Clear a “stage area” and have two of your teens begin by acting out a scenario where both of them are robots with cords connecting them to a power source. To get things started, you may want to suggest some details for the skit: a location, robot roles, and a crisis (for example, two cleaning robots working in a fancy hi-tech hotel discover a crime). When they’ve had sufficient time to establish a bit of a story, either of them may get “unplugged” and wind down into a freeze position saying, “Oh no, I’ve been unplugged!” When this happens the actors freeze and a member of the audience replaces the unplugged actor and continues with the play till the next unplugging happens.

IF YOUR GROUP IS VERY SMALL YOU MAY WISH TO PARTICIPATE YOURSELF SO THERE CAN BE A ROTATION OF ACTORS IN AND OUT. FOR LARGER GROUPS, YOU MAY WISH TO SPLIT SO THAT MORE PEOPLE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE BEFORE THE ALLOTTED TIME IS UP.

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: FOLLOW THE LEADER

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.

- Have you ever been in charge of a group?
- Did you like getting to be the “leader”? Why or why not?
- If you ran into a problem, how did you handle it? If you handled it well, what helped you? If you didn’t handle it well, what could have helped you to do better?

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

- *Perhaps your teens have captained a team, babysat younger children, or been left in charge when a teacher leaves the room.*
- *Many of us enjoy being the one in charge because it gives us the chance to have things our way, and to exert authority over others – although if we focus on these things we will not be good leaders because we will be using leadership for our own ends instead of for the benefit of those we lead. We may have found that the responsibility of being in charge made us anxious; perhaps we had to lead a group that was not supportive of our leadership and made it difficult for us to do our job. Becoming a good leader takes work!*

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- Chances are, what could have helped the most would be support and guidance from an experienced leader. For example, if you were babysitting and a child got hurt, you may have called the parents or someone else with experience to help you figure out where to find a first aid kit and how to use it.

THE LESSON: JOHN 15

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.

To give to all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, true knowledge and understanding of thy Word; and that both by their preaching and living they may set it forth and show it accordingly, We beseech thee, good Lord.

The Anglican Church is served and led by three kinds of ministers: bishops, priests, and deacons. In their various roles, these ministers lead us in worship, teach and preach the Gospel, provide pastoral care to the flock, preside over the sacraments, and offer examples for us in godly living. This is a tall order and St. James cautioned his readers, saying that those “who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (3:1).

In a similar way, the service of consecration for bishops offers this exhortation: “Be to the flock of Christ a shepherd, *not a wolf*; feed them, *devour them not*”. That may strike you as a peculiar thing to say in a moment when we are celebrating new ministry. But while we offer gratitude for those who serve the Church, we also recognize that not all who do so represent the Good Shepherd faithfully. As a community, we need to support, encourage and pray for our leaders to help them truly follow after the example of Jesus.

The petition from the Litany recognizes the central importance of right preaching and holy living in our ministers, both of which flow from being plugged into the Word, Christ himself. In the Gospel of St. John, Jesus calls his disciples to “*abide in him*” (15:4), a call that is most urgent for those who lead others in the faith, so that they can say with St. Paul, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Refer to John 15:1-17.

(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 think it means to “abide” in Jesus?
- What are the consequences of abiding in Jesus?
- What warnings are given for not abiding in Jesus?
- This applies to all of us, but we’re speaking about ministers today. Why do you think it’s especially important for Church leaders to be abiding in Jesus?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- Jesus first invited his disciples to “come” and “follow” but now he is calling them to a deeper form of communion, to remain or “abide” – and not with him but in him We do this chiefly through spending time in the word of God, in prayer and in worship. “Who would, after seeking the King’s palace, be content to stand in the door, when he is invited to dwell in the King’s presence, and share with Him in all the glory of His royal life? Oh, let us enter in and abide, and enjoy to the full all the rich supply His wondrous love hath prepared for us!” (Andrew Murray, “Abide in Christ”)
- If we abide in Jesus, we will “bear fruit” and we will also experience pruning so that we can bear even more fruit (v2); presumably this may be an uncomfortable process, bringing to mind the words in Hebrews that, “the Lord disciplines those he loves” (12:6). The Gospel of John speaks of Jesus as “the Word” so it is natural that in verse 7 he should draw a direct correlation between abiding in Jesus and his word abiding in us. We begin to be “in sync” with him in such

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a way that our prayers are impacted and become more efficacious. The fruit that we bear is also a proof that we are genuine; as St. James says, “I will show you my faith by my works” (2:18). Abiding in Jesus leads us to fulfill his command of self-sacrificing love (v10-13), and bestows fullness of joy (v11). A relationship shift is going on from the time when the disciples were followers who did not fully understand what was happening, to a deeper communion, a friendship with a mission for which they have been chosen and are being equipped (v15-17).

- *The warnings are severe: if we are not abiding in Jesus then we will not bear fruit, we will be ineffective (“without me you can do nothing”, v5), and we will be “thrown away” (v7). Jesus wants us to know that he is our source of life and that we cannot have life apart from him.*
- *If ministers are not deeply immersed in the word, in prayer and in worship of Jesus, then neither their preaching nor their living will be empowered by him. Since the roles they have undertaken represent Jesus to his Church, the stagnation of being “unplugged” from that source of life will have consequences not just for themselves but for those they’ve been sent to serve in love.*

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).)

Every day this week, pray by name for the deacons, priests and bishops who provide spiritual leadership to your parish. Begin by praying with the words of the petition in the Litany and then add your own prayers, and/or other prayers from the Prayer Book and from scripture.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who hast purchased to thyself an universal Church by the precious blood of thy dear Son: Mercifully look upon the same, and at this time so guide and govern the minds of thy servants the Bishops and Pastors of thy flock, that they may lay hands suddenly on no man, but faithfully and wisely make choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred Ministry of thy Church. And to those who shall be ordained to any holy function give thy grace and heavenly benediction; that both by their life and doctrine they may set forth thy glory, and set forward the salvation of all men; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO ARE TO BE ADMITTED INTO HOLY ORDERS, BCP PAGE 46)

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.

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JOHN 15: **RELATIONSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Jesus said, ¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷These things I command you, so that you will love one another.