

# HARVESTERS

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## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- *Note: The opening activity requires advance planning and may require some supplies*
- 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

## OPENING ACTIVITY: ROLLING UP OUR SLEEVES

Find some practical work in your parish that your teens can do together for a brief period of time. For example, you might arrange for them to do some weeding outside (if weather permits), clean a bathroom, or polish some brass. If these sound a bit too messy, there may be simple administrative tasks they can help with for the office. Keep in mind that you’ll need to ensure that you have suitable supplies ready for whatever task you select!

## 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: OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

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 are some jobs you think you could never do? - Or would never *want* to do? Why not?
- Have you ever worried that God might ask you to do something really challenging? Maybe even something that requires sacrifice?

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

- *Let your teens have some fun coming up with a list. We all have strengths and weaknesses, so it stands to reason that we are not all going to be good at the same things. Someone who makes a fantastic engineer may make a dreadful event planner. Or someone who makes a great waitress might be dreadful at welding. In a similar way, a job that one person loves another person may find unpleasant, boring or stressful. Sometimes in a group there are jobs that no one really enjoys (perhaps cleaning the toilets) and that gives us a chance to serve one another by offering to take up the jobs that others avoid.*
- *Sometimes God does ask us to step outside of our comfort zone. He does ask us to take on difficult tasks, or walk away from sin that separates us from him (which we may not want to do). And we are called to model our lives after his: this means choosing the way of self-giving love, even when it means getting our hands dirty, denying ourselves certain things or risking embarrassing ourselves.*

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## THE LESSON: MATTHEW 9-10

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.

*To send forth labourers into thy harvest; to prosper their work by thy Holy Spirit; to make thy saving health known unto all nations... We beseech thee, good Lord.*

The Church has a mission; that is, we have a job to do. Our “work” is to bring glory to God through our lives and our worship, to build one another up in the faith, to show Christian love to those we encounter, and... *to tell others about Jesus.*

Some of the last recorded words of Christ to his disciples were about this evangelistic mandate: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). And, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ can be something that makes us uncomfortable, but it is a mission that all believers are called to. It can be helpful to keep in mind that Jesus has promised his presence and the empowering of the Holy Spirit as we go about this work. Moreover, it is *his* work and we have the honour of participating in it, so we should never feel that the task is solely dependent upon our efforts. As the psalmist wrote, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain” (Psalm 127:1).

Refer to Matthew 9:35-38, 10:5a, 14, 16-20, 26-31.

(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: MATTHEW 9:35-10:33.)

(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 is Jesus talking about when he refers to the “harvest”?
- What is Jesus’ attitude towards the crowds that he encounters?
- What warnings and assurances does Jesus offer as he sends out the disciples?
- What direction can we take from this passage as we consider our own role in sharing the good news of Jesus?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *In many of his parables, Jesus offers agricultural metaphors for his kingdom and for the gathering of souls into it. But the crux of the matter here is that the souls need to be told about Jesus before they can come to him. As St. Paul puts it, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” (Romans 10:14-15) It’s interesting to note that immediately following Jesus’ words suggesting that the disciples pray for God to send workers out into the harvest, he actually sends them out. So praying about the harvest may have unexpected results!*
- *Jesus’ response to the crowd was compassion. He saw them as “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (9:36). They needed the Good Shepherd, Jesus himself. In spite of the difficulties mentioned in chapter 10, Jesus speaks of the harvest as “plentiful” – the problem requiring prayer is that the “labourers are few” (9:37-38). There are more people who need to hear the message of Christ than there are people willing to share it.*

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- *Jesus is clear about the fact that some people won't listen (10:14), and others will be hostile (10:16-17). The Holy Spirit will be with the disciples, helping them to find the words in difficult moments (10:19-20). They are to go about proclaiming the truth no matter what comes, knowing that their souls are in God's hands (10:26-28) and they are precious to him (10:29-31).*
- *We can remember Jesus' compassion for those who need to know him and if we do not have that compassion ourselves, we can ask him to grow it in us. We can take encouragement from the assurance that the Holy Spirit's presence will go with us and empower us, even though we may feel like the task of speaking is not something we're good at. And we can draw inspiration from the work of the disciples and Christian missionaries down through the ages who have had such passion for the Gospel that they have willingly placed their lives in danger so that they could share the saving message of Jesus.*
- *Note: If you read the passage uncut, your teens may have questions about Jesus' instructions to the disciples to go only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:6). This is not unique to this passage, but points to a progression in the message of the Gospel. Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel, so it is not surprising that the message of the promise fulfilled needed to begin there. You'll notice, however, that Jesus showed kindness and grace to the Gentiles of faith who sought him out during that time. After his Ascension, we are told that the mandate has been expanded. It is going to go "to the ends of the earth"!*

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))

A few times this week (and every day if you can manage it), go for a walk around your neighbourhood and pray specifically for God to visit the community and the lives of the people who live and work there, drawing them to himself. Pray for the households you know something about as well as those you don't. Listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

*Almighty God, who by thy Son Jesus Christ didst give commandment to the Apostles that they should go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: Grant to us whom thou hast called into thy Church, a ready will to obey thy Word; and fill us with a hearty desire to make thy way known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

(PRAYER FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH, BCP PAGE 41)

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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.

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## MATTHEW 9-10: **HARVEST AND HARVESTERS**

**9**<sup>35</sup>And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; <sup>38</sup>therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest"...

**10**<sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them... <sup>14</sup>"And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town..."

<sup>16</sup>"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup>Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, <sup>18</sup>and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup>When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. <sup>20</sup>For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you..."

<sup>26</sup>"So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. <sup>27</sup>What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. <sup>28</sup>And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup>But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.