

KINGDOM

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk; pencils and pieces of paper
- 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: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: UNSCRAMBLE

Write out the following scrambled words for the teens to unscramble together as they arrive. Give them pencils and pieces of paper to use in their attempts to rearrange the letters. *If they are quick to unscramble the words and time allows, ask them to come up with as many alternate endings as they can think of to the well-known phrase “Keep calm and...”.*

DEPENDING ON YOUR GROUP, YOU MIGHT ASK YOUR STUDENTS TO WORK ON THE WORDS INDIVIDUALLY ON THEIR OWN PIECES OF PAPER AND COMPETE FOR SPEED, OR HAVE THEM WORK TOGETHER ON DIFFERENT WORDS AS TEAMS.

- (Allegiance) CLANEGILAE
- (Empire) EPRIEM
- (Duty) TYDU
- (Faithfulness) THUNLAFFISSE
- (Loyalty) YYTOLAL
- (Domain) NIAMOD
- (Fealty) LAYFET
- (Realm) LERAM
- (Devotion) VETONOID
- (Sovereign) INGVERSOE
- (Bonus: “Keep Calm And Carry On”) KCAC OEAN ANE LDRPM RY (5 words)

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: UNFAVOURABLE CONDITIONS

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.

- Are there certain goals that you never seem to get around to pursuing? What are they? What keeps you from going after them?
 - C.S. Lewis wrote, “If we let ourselves, we shall always be waiting for some distraction or other to end before we can really get down to our work... Favourable conditions never come.” What do you think he meant? Do you agree?
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A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):

- We all tend to have things we'd like to do but can't seem to move ahead on. Perhaps it's really buckling down on your studies, saving up to buy a car, learning to play an instrument, being nicer to your siblings, getting more exercise, praying more, starting a garden. It may be that we have difficulty finding the time or that we keep thinking it would be better to wait till the weather improves, or after that trip we're looking forward to, or simply "tomorrow", but sometimes these are temptations that can cause us to put off indefinitely things that are really important. This is a great chance to share a personal story.
- Lewis is underlining the fact that our world is constantly in a state of flux and always filled with deterrents and obstructions. He says, "Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice. Human culture has always had to exist under the shadow of something infinitely more important than itself... Life has never been normal.... It is only our daily bread that we are encouraged to ask for. The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received". If something is important to us, or if it is our duty, then we ought to begin today and not tomorrow!

THE LESSON: MATTHEW 13

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 hasten thy kingdom: We beseech thee, good Lord.

Jesus loved to speak in parables. There was nothing like a story to help convey complex truths about God in a way his hearers could relate to. Many of these parables were about the "kingdom of God". What *is* the kingdom of God? Jesus would answer this question by saying, "I'll tell you what it's *like*."

The kingdom of God starts small and grows exponentially: it's like a mustard seed that way (Matthew 13:31-32). God invites us into his kingdom and we have a choice to make: just like guests invited to a wedding feast (Matthew 22:1-14). The workers of the kingdom are expected to treat others with the same mercy they have been shown: like a servant whose debt has been cancelled (Matthew 18:23-35). And there is eager and vigilant anticipation of the King's return: like a wedding party waiting for the bridegroom to appear (Matthew 25:1-13).

Those of us who belong to the Church are like seeds, with the kingdom of God planted in us, growing and bearing fruit. As Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21). But that's not all there is to the story. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come", because we do not live in a world that acknowledges the kingship of Jesus. So we look forward with longing to the return of the King and an eternal kingdom in which his will is truly done. And in the meantime, we've got a job to do.

Refer to Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.

(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 does this parable tell us about Jesus?
- What does it tell us about his kingdom right now?
- What does it tell us about his kingdom in the future?
- How does this parable make you feel (for example, anxious, encouraged, motivated, etc.)?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- "Son of Man" was a Messianic title that Jesus used to refer to himself. It recalled prophecies of the Old Testament and pointed to the fact that he was both fully divine and fully human. The kingdom is his kingdom, and he is the one who

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has begun to plant its seeds in the hearts of believers. Jesus knows that his work is opposed and that there are agents of harm in the mix, but again, he is patient, willing to allow time before the uprooting takes place. Why? Because he does not wish to harm those who are growing up into the kingdom (v29).

- Note: The “tares” or “weeds” are thought to refer to a noxious plant called darnel (or “false wheat”), which looks very similar to wheat in the early stages of its growth, but which has poisonous seeds and attracts pests and diseases. It can be very difficult to tell the two plants apart until almost ready for harvest. There are other parables as well, that suggest we may be surprised to find out who belongs to the “wheat” and who belongs to the “weeds”: but at the harvest this will be made clear.
- The parable tells us that right now those who belong to Jesus and those who are hostile to him are mixed in together, sometimes indistinguishably. The kingdom is in a formative stage where perfection has not yet been reached. As “sons of the kingdom” we can expect to encounter “sons of the evil one” and the impacts that spring from their presence, both in the world as well as in our churches.
- This mixed up situation with its toxic influences is not permanent. Jesus has promised to return and to take those who are his home to himself where we will “shine like the sun in the kingdom” of the Father – unimpeded by the attacks of the enemy.
- To those who know themselves to belong to Jesus, these words are hope-filled. They tell us that Jesus understands the struggles we currently face and promises a future where justice will be done and we will live in the fullness and perfection of his kingdom. But for some of us, the parables and passages that speak of a coming judgement may be distressing. These parables can also motivate us: and sometimes motivation requires that we be made uncomfortable. What can they do to motivate us? We can tend to our own spiritual life, praying to God to continue the work he has started in us, and we can ask him to use us to reach others around us. “It is a serious thing... to remember that the dullest, most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations – these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.” - C. S. Lewis (“The Weight of Glory”)

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))

Each day this week find or write a prayer for someone different in your parish. After taking time to pray it through slowly and sincerely, send that person a text or email to let them know you've prayed for them.

- AND/OR -

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Take some time to pray through this prayer.

Most merciful Father, we beseech thee to send down thy heavenly blessing upon thy Church in this Parish, that all its members may dwell together in unity and brotherly love. Keep far from us all self-will and discord. Endue thy Ministers with righteousness, and enable them faithfully to dispense thy holy Word and Sacraments, to bring again the outcasts, and to seek the lost. Grant that we may so receive their ministrations, and use thy means of grace, that in all our words and deeds we may seek thy glory and the advancement of thy kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(PRAYER FOR THE PARISH (FROM FAMILY PRAYERS), BCP PAGE 736)

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.

MATTHEW 13: GROWING UP IN THE KINGDOM

²⁴Jesus put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' ²⁸He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

³⁶Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." ³⁷He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴²and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.