

DERAILED

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Envelopes, paper and pens
- 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: MESSAGES ALONG THE WAY

For each teen, prepare an envelope with their name on it. Give each teen several small pieces of paper and something to write with. Have them write a few words of encouragement to each person in their group. It can be something they admire or a favourite verse, but it must be positive. The notes are then placed in the appropriate envelope and given together to the recipient.

IN ORDER TO ALLOW EACH PERSON TO RECEIVE A GENEROUS PILE OF ENCOURAGEMENTS WITHOUT GOING OVER THE AVAILABLE TIME, BREAK LARGER GROUPS INTO GROUPS OF LESS THAN TEN. TEENS MUST FIRST WRITE MESSAGES FOR THOSE IN THEIR OWN GROUP. IF THEY FINISH EARLY THEY MAY WISH TO ADD TO SOME OF THE ENVELOPES IN OTHER GROUPS.

THE LITANY: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson (below) 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: WHAT DO WE NEED IN ORDER TO KEEP GOING?

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 do you do to get yourself back on track when you’re feeling unmotivated or distracted (for example with studies or another goal)?
- If someone wanted to help motivate you, what would be the best thing to do? What would be the worst thing?
- If you’re trying to help motivate a friend, can you think of anything that could go wrong – for you?

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

- *Distractions and obstacles are a normal part of life, so most of us create strategies to help ensure we make it to our goals. For example, it could be helpful to remember the big picture of why you’re doing something. Maybe you find a new time or location in order to stay focussed on a task if there are too many distractions around you. Or perhaps you look for a friend to hold you accountable by giving you a call and asking whether you’ve accomplished what you set out to accomplish.*
- *Encouragement is one of the best ways to motivate someone else. But sometimes someone might be able to help in practical ways like removing distractions, providing an incentive, or even a word of reminder if you’re beginning to veer off-track.*

DERAILED

- *Someone who is trying to help keep someone else on-track could be seen as bossy or a bully, even if their intentions are to help, not hurt. You might become discouraged if your efforts don't work. But you also might get drawn into the same distractions and behaviours that you're trying to help your friend get out of.*

THE LESSON: GALATIANS

The first part of the lesson 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 bring into the way of truth all who have erred and are deceived,
We beseech thee, good Lord.*

No Christian is perfect. We all know what it is to struggle, to stumble, to suffer setbacks or perhaps even to get derailed entirely in our spiritual lives.

Today's petition invites us to pray for those who are in error and deceived – believers whose faith has gotten off-track in some way. Maybe you know someone who has stopped going to church, begun to dabble with false teachings, or fallen into sinful behaviour. Perhaps you've heaved a sigh and asked yourself, "What can I do about it?"

St. Paul's letter to the Galatians is a great case study for us. In it he shares about how he had to confront St. Peter on an issue that was causing major difficulties for the early Church. Some of the Jewish Christians were excluding the Gentile Christians and telling them they had to become Jewish first, and Christian second. Take a look at how St. Paul handled those who were "in error": both St. Peter and the derailed Galatian believers.

Refer to Galatians 2:11-14, Galatians 4:16-20, Galatians 6:1-2, 9-10.

(IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE BOOK OF GALATIANS MORE FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ A LONGER PORTION OF TEXT.)

(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 was the error that St. Paul needed to address? Why do you think he chose to deal with St. Peter publicly?
- How would you describe St. Paul's feelings: Regarding St. Peter? Regarding the Galatians?
- As people who want to follow the example of St. Paul, what are the possible warnings in this passage? What are the encouragements?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Note: Parenthetical notes have been added to the ESV text in the handout in order to help clarify the meaning of 2:11, so that your teens know that by "Cephas" St. Paul is referring to St. Peter, and the issue was that St. Peter was in error (which the ESV translates "stood condemned").*
- *The text tells us that St. Peter had changed his behaviour and begun avoiding Gentile Christians after "certain men came from James". Instead of standing up for the Gospel, he was being influenced by this group in the wrong direction and his example was leading others in the wrong direction as well. This was a widespread problem in the early Church and it needed to be nipped in the bud. St. Paul confronted St. Peter about this behaviour and at least a part of their confrontation was public. It was not only important for St. Peter to know that this needed to change, but those who had been misled by his conduct needed to know it too.*
- *It's probably fair to speculate that St. Paul was concerned and even angry about St. Peter's behaviour because he saw that it was having far-reaching harmful effects. In the paragraphs that follow, St. Paul goes out of his way to describe his deep concern for the Galatian Gentiles, who had been convinced that they needed to return to the teachings of the Old Testament law (for example, by being circumcised). St. Paul, in chapter 4, describes a*

DERAILED

very close relationship with the Galatians. He calls them “my little children” and says he is perplexed about their spiritual confusion and worried for them with a childbirth-like anguish (4:11,19-20). “In reproving others, we should take care to convince them that our reproofs are from sincere regard to the honour of God... and their welfare” (Matthew Henry).

- In Galatians 4:16, St. Paul asks whether the Galatians have begun to consider him an enemy because he told the truth. This is something we all fear when we tell someone something they may not want to hear. But if we truly love them, as St. Paul loved the Galatians, then we need to risk it. The false teachers had flattered their way into the confidence of the Galatian Gentiles (4:17), making it necessary for St. Paul to appeal to both the established relationship he had with them and his apostolic role. We also need to be cautious that we do not become tempted by the same error that has derailed our friend (6:1). Influence can work in two directions! This may be a factor in Jesus’ instructions to take someone along if a second confrontation becomes necessary (Matthew 18:15-17).
- We can be encouraged in the knowledge that the struggles we experience are not new: God has given strength to his saints to face difficulties before and he will do so again. The example of St. Paul can help us as we seek to cultivate an attitude of loving concern for those we know who may be “in error”. Notice the positive exhortations from chapter 6, especially verse 9: “let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap [a harvest], if we do not give up”!
- Note: There are numerous texts in the New Testament that issue warnings to believers who are “backsliding” or falling away from the Christian faith. It’s important to remember that we do not have a window into the soul of any other human being to know whether or not their faith is genuine: only God knows for sure. We do know that these people are precious to God and so we should seek him in prayer on their behalf. If your teens express anxiety over their own salvation, point out to them that their anxiety reflects a real wish not to be separated from God, which speaks volumes. Encourage them to pray through their doubts and remind them of Philippians 1:6 “I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ”, and John 10:27-28, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand”.

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))

Spend some time at home considering what dangers you see for your own life of faith and offer them to God. Next, consider others who you think may be getting “derailed” and offer them one by one to God, asking him to work – maybe even through you – to bring them home to himself.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness: Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s

DERAILED

religion, that they may forsake those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(THE COLLECT FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER, BCP PAGE 193)

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.

GALATIANS: **OPPOSE ERROR, RESTORE GENTLY**

2¹¹But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned [his actions were clearly wrong]. ¹²For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”...

4¹⁶Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. ¹⁸It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, ¹⁹my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! ²⁰I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you...

6¹Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ... ⁹And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.