

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- 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: THE TRIUMPH OF US

Have your teens write a story together that features each one of them in a heroic role – named by name. For large groups, break into groups of six or less to ensure everyone is able to contribute. Each group only needs to name the members of its own group but it is a bonus if they can work others into their story also. Have them present their story to you (and each other if you have multiple groups).

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: THE FINISH LINE

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’s the greatest victory you can remember achieving? How did it feel? Was it easy? Did you have set backs? What motivated you? What goals are your working towards right now?

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

- *Our victories don’t have to be flashy, heroic ones to “count”. They can be simple academic achievements (getting an “A”), or relational (making a difficult apology to someone), or personal (getting up a bit earlier to fit something new into your routine). Most of our “victories” require effort to achieve, but are all the sweeter for the work they required. This is a great opportunity to share a story of your own.*

THE LESSON: REVELATION 21-22

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 strengthen such as do stand; to encourage the faint-hearted;
to raise up those who fall; and finally to beat down Satan under our feet,
We beseech thee, good Lord.*

We live in difficult times. Our world is a fallen place and we ourselves are full of imperfections – both as individual believers and churches. It can be difficult to remember the amazing reality of the invisible Church – that victorious Bride of Christ that transcends time and space to encompass all those who truly belong to Jesus – especially if we are discouraged, distracted, or disappointed with the imperfections of the churches we have known.

But we hold on to hope in spite of these challenges, because we know that victory is certain and that after “a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (2 Peter 5:10), and that “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet” (Romans 16:20).

Though we are pilgrims in a hostile land, we know to whom we belong and where we are headed.

“So in these in-between times, when we are ashamed of [the Church’s] failings here on earth, or fearful when we see her maligned by the world and cruelly persecuted, we are still to love her and help her, remembering her glorious birth in Jerusalem and anticipating her glorious consummation in the heavenly Jerusalem, of which we will be a living part, if we are faithful to the end... remember, only the devil wants you to focus solely on the here-and-now and forget your glorious past and your even more glorious future” (Sue Careless).

+++

In the Book of Revelation, St. John shares with us his beautiful vision of the Church victorious: the new Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, and the destination towards which we press on!

Refer to Revelation 21:1-5, 9-11, 22:1-5, 17, 20.

(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: REVELATION 21-22.)

(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 images described in this passage are challenging for us to understand? Why do you think that might be?
- How does this description of the Church compare with our experience of church today?
- What promises from this text give you the greatest sense of hope?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Like most apocalyptic scriptures, this passage is rich with imagery that strives to convey something that is simply beyond anything we have ever experienced or imagined. We can grasp the concept of a passionate love through the eyes of a bridegroom on seeing his bride: this is how much we, the Church, are loved. We have experienced city life here on earth, but we have never experienced a city without death, illness, pain, sorrow and sin! We have never experienced a city that is so characterized by God’s presence and the delight of his people!*
- *The Church is beautiful and beloved by God. Ephesians 5:25-27 says, “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish”. Our visible churches today often disappoint us, being comprised of sinful people, but hopefully we have also experienced blessing in spite of these failings and seen glimmers of the invisible Church, the victorious Bride that we are becoming.*

- *This passage tells us God will dwell with us (21:3), and that we are beloved, like a bride (21:2), and belong to him (22:4). We are cherished, and the one who loves us will remove all sorrow and pain from us (21:4, 22:2). His presence will permeate and illuminate our being (22:5), and we will reign with him (22:5). Our needs will be satisfied (22:17) and we should have confidence in the knowledge that we are in the hands of the one who made us, redeemed us, and has promised all of these things.*

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))

Assign your teens "prayer partners" for the coming week – if numbers are odd, then join in. (Depending on your group, you may wish to allow them to select their partners themselves.)

Every day this week take at least ten minutes to speak with your assigned prayer partner (in person, or via phone or video chat). Share prayer requests and pray aloud for one another.

- OPTIONAL -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

Raise up, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

(THE COLLECT FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT, BCP PAGE 102)

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.

REVELATION 21-22: **OUR GLORIOUS DESTINATION**

21 ¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” ...

⁹Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal...

22 ¹Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever...

¹⁷The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price...

²⁰He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!