

MESSENGERS

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pieces of paper, pens
- Copies of the downloadable “Litany” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- 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: HANGMAN, THE BAD PLANET VERSION

This is another alternative version of hangman, again with a bit of a twist. Instead of drawing a stick figure of a man, have your teens complete a rough sketch of our planet (complete with continents to allow for eight turns, see sample diagram at right) for this planet-themed activity.



Ahead of time, write out some of the following scriptural phrases on scraps of paper. The teens take turns selecting one of the scraps and drawing out the lines on a board that correspond to the letters of the words in the phrase they have selected (excluding the reference). They should write in full the words “WORLD” and “EARTH” wherever they occur. The other teens take turns guessing letters and try to guess what the full phrase is. Each time they guess a letter which is not there, part of the planet (the outline or one of the continents) gets drawn until they have no more guesses left.

- Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (James 4:4)
- Do not love the world or the things in the world (1 John 2:15)
- Do not be surprised that the world hates you (1 John 3:13)
- The wisdom of this world is folly with God (1 Corinthians 3:19)
- The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness (John 3:19)
- Do not be conformed to this world (Romans 12:2)
- The earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed (2 Peter 3:10)
- Set your minds not on things that are on earth (Colossians 3:2)

FOR LARGE GROUPS, PLAY IN TEAMS. FOR SMALL GROUPS PLAY AS INDIVIDUALS AND TAKE MULTIPLE TURNS. YOU MAY WANT TO ASSIGN BONUS POINTS IF THE TEENS CAN GUESS WHAT PART OF SCRIPTURE THE PHRASE COMES FROM.

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: “BEAM ME UP” MOMENTS

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following question.

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.

- Describe a time when you wished you could just be “beamed up” and out of the situation you were in. What ended up happening?

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

- This is a great chance to share a story of your own. Everyone has moments and seasons of life which are embarrassing, disappointing, or downright unpleasant. These are the moments when we wish we could melt into the ground or be miraculously removed from the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Perhaps you've had the experience of being saved out of a situation like this, or otherwise struggling through it to find that there was some value in having faced it head on. Sometimes it can be hard to see what good came from our facing difficulty, and we can wonder why God did not answer our prayers with a decisive "yes". If something of a current and serious nature occurs, take a moment to pray about the situation.

THE LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 5-6

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.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people" (1 Timothy 2:1). The Litany, at its heart, is an intercessory prayer, and one that responds to this mandate. With the words of the Litany, we pray for the Church, for ourselves, and for the world.

It may seem natural to pray for ourselves, for those we love, and for the Church to which we belong. But have you ever wondered why we bother to pray for the *world*? After all, haven't we been called *out* from the world? Isn't this the place that Jesus said hates him and hates those who belong to him? Aren't we aliens and strangers here, longing for the day when we'll go to our true home? Speaking of which, why doesn't God just take us there *now*?

The prayer that Jesus prayed shortly before his arrest and crucifixion offers us some insight. He said: *"I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me... the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one... As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world... so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me"* (John 17:9-23).

Did you catch that? There's a reason why we're still here, even though we don't *belong* here. God didn't give up on us: he sent Jesus to save us, and his Spirit remains with us. In the same way we have been sent to the world, to bring a message of hope to those who do not yet believe: that God our Saviour "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). We're here because the world is our mission field.

Refer to 2 Corinthians 5:6-11, 14-6:10.

(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: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-6:10.)

(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 concerns does St. Paul have for the Corinthians?
- What does this passage tell us about God?
- What does it tell us about the world?
- What does it tell us about our mission here?

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A few notes and reflections for reference:

- St. Paul knows that a judgement is coming (5:10), and that now is the time in which it's possible for the Corinthians to respond (6:2) to the good news. He is anxious to persuade both them and all those he encounters to be reconciled to God – both through his example and his testimony. He is worried that they might choose not to be reconciled to God. He is very concerned that his example not create obstacles to belief for others (6:3) – to this end he is “all in” – holding nothing back in his commitment to the mission (6:4-10).
- God has gone the full distance to reconcile people to himself, yet many still cling to their rebellion (5:18-21). St. Paul's passion is a reflection of God's passion. He is motivated – and controlled – by the love of Christ (5:14), a love that gives everything so that others may receive the good news.
- The passage reiterates for us the great love that God has for the world: inspiring the work of Christ so that reconciliation might be possible (5:19-21) – for us, and also for others.
- Like St. Paul, we may find ourselves wishing that God would just “beam us up” so that we can be “away from the body and at home with the Lord” (5:8), but instead we should make it our aim to please God (5:9), persuading others (5:11), living for Christ rather than for ourselves (5:15). We are here as a new creation (5:17): an example for others. Moreover, we are God's ambassadors, having been entrusted with this message to make an appeal on his behalf (5:19-20).

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))

Give your teens a moment to think of someone they know who is not a believer, then ask them to share that one name with the group. (For groups of more than ten, you'll want to break into smaller groups.) Each person in the group should write all the names mentioned down on their lesson paper so they can remember them.

During this unit, we're going to focus our prayers on specific people in our world.

Each day this week, take time to pray for each of the unbelievers on your group's list. Ask God to make their heart like “good soil” that is ready to receive his Gospel, and ask him to give courage and wisdom to you, your group, and other believers in sharing the good news with them.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

Blessed Saviour, who didst look with compassion upon the multitudes: Raise up, we beseech thee, faithful men to seek and find thy sheep dispersed and lost, that they may be saved for ever; who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

(PRAYER FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH (3), 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.

2 CORINTHIANS 5-6: MESSENGERS OF RECONCILIATION

5⁶... We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

¹¹Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience... ¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6¹Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ²For he says, "In a favourable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favourable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. ³We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸through honour and dishonour, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.