

SALT + LIGHT

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable “Litany” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: 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: KITCHEN DISASTER SLIDESHOW

Divide your teens into small groups of up to four. You (or a volunteer) will be a presenter showing an educational slideshow and each group in turn will have only a few seconds to create a tableau that matches the title that is read out. Here are a few ideas for slide titles:

- Never try to catch a falling knife
- If a fire starts in the oven, don’t open the door
- Don’t leave spilled food on the floor: slipping hazard!
- Don’t put metal in the microwave
- It’s a bad idea to use your finger to check whether something is hot
- Heating an electric kettle on the stove is a no-no
- Don’t mix up the salt and the sugar
- Avoid serving food to valued guests before you’ve tasted it yourself

IF YOU HAVE A SINGLE GROUP, THEN YOU MAY WANT TO ROTATE PEOPLE OUT TO ACT AS THE PRESENTER. IF YOU HAVE TWO OR THREE GROUPS, PLACE THEM IN SEPARATE “ZONES” OF YOUR ROOM WHERE THEY CAN SEE ONE ANOTHER’S TABLEAUS AND ALTERNATE BETWEEN GROUPS. IF YOU HAVE A LARGER GROUP AND/OR A SMALLER SPACE, TRY CLEARING A “STAGE AREA” AND AN AUDIENCE AREA. NUMBER THE GROUPS SO THEY KNOW WHO IS UP NEXT, AND HAVE THEM TAKE TURNS BEING ON STAGE.

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: “GOING BAD”

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 worst mistake you’ve ever made in the kitchen?
- Have you ever eaten something that was past its “best before” date? What happened?
- Our world often sees “progress” and “development” as unquestionably good. But C.S. Lewis wrote, “I have seen them both in an egg... We call it ‘Going Bad’”.
What are some examples you can think of where the world’s idea of “progress” might actually be “going bad”?

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

- If you did the ice breaker, it may have jogged some fun stories your teens can share, and perhaps you have one or two of your own.
- Left to themselves, our fridges and cupboards can turn into putrid science experiments which can make us sick if we try to eat from them. In order to prevent this from happening, we have to be actively throwing away things that are no longer good, and replenishing with things that are fresh and healthy.
- There are many current examples that could be brought up here. If you'd prefer to avoid getting into a discussion on contentious issues, you may prefer to cite examples drawn from harmful medicines and pesticides, or technologies gone awry that were initially hailed as wonderful and only much later discovered to be destructive.

THE LESSON: 1 PETER 3-4

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.

Jesus, speaking to his disciples, said this: "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).

The world we live in, left to itself, constantly slips towards decay and darkness (although this is not always obvious). But in the same way that salt fends off decay and light pushes back the darkness, we are called to be godly "change agents" wherever we find ourselves, preserving what is good and opposing what is evil.

Jesus goes on to say that salt must remain salty, and light must not be hidden. So in order to have the sort of influence we should on a downward-spiral-world, we must remain true to our identity as believers and allow our faith to show.

Renowned Anglican theologian John Stott put it this way:

"Like salt in putrefying meat, Christians are to hinder social decay. Like light in the prevailing darkness, Christians are to illumine society and show it a better way... Salt and light are not just a bit different from their environment. They are to have a powerful influence on their environment. The salt is to be rubbed into the meat in order to stop the rot. The light is to shine into the darkness".

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St. Peter wrote two letters to early Christians who were scattered throughout areas where persecution was ongoing. Under circumstances like these, who wouldn't be tempted to drop the whole "salt and light" thing, and just blend in? But St. Peter offers encouragement and advice, writing about the living hope that Christians have no matter what sort of trouble the world sends their way.

Refer to 1 Peter 3: 13-17, 4:7-16.

(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: 1 PETER 3:13-4:19.)

(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 are some indications in the text that St. Peter wants to prepare his readers for trouble?
- What sort of attitude does St. Peter want Christians to have?
- What encouragement does St. Peter offer?
- What part of today's text do you think is most helpful as we think about being "salt and light" in our own time?

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A few notes and reflections for reference:

- St. Peter is acknowledging that things are difficult and they are likely to get worse still (3:14, 4:12). He wants to encourage his readers to be virtuous so they can be certain that whatever persecution they experience it is not the result of bad behaviour (3:17, 4:15), but is actually suffering for Christ, something that he tells them they should not be surprised by (4:12).
- First of all, St. Peter wants the Christians to be good, so that it becomes clear that their opponents are bullies, not just judges (3:13,16-17, 4:15). He wants them to be wholly devoted to Christ, not ashamed of him (3:15, 4:16). He wants them to be ready for whatever comes, not frightened or anxious (3:14, 4:12), but hopeful and able to put that hope into words in a way that is gentle and respectful (3:15). He wants them to be sober and prayerful (4:7), loving each other and showing hospitality to other Christians (4:8-9), and using their spiritual gifts to serve the Church (4:10-11).
- St. Peter tells them that if they are suffering righteously they will be “blessed” (3:14, 4:14). Their suffering is something they share with Christ, binding them to him now and in future glory (4:13); the Spirit is with them (4:14), and to bear the name “Christian” is an honour (4:16).
- The question is a subjective one, so allow your teens some latitude in their responses. You may wish to probe further by asking what they think it might look like today for them to be ready to “give an answer” in a way that is gentle and respectful.

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 a concern they have about something that is progressing in the wrong direction, then ask them to share that 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 concerns mentioned on their lesson paper so they can remember them.

During this unit, we're going to focus our prayers on specific people – and issues affecting them – in our world.

Each day this week, take time to pray for each of the concerns on your group's list. Ask God to show you, your group, and other believers in the world how to be “salt and light” in order to counter the decay and darkness of these situations.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people which call upon thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(THE COLLECT FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY, BCP PAGE 123)

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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.

1 PETER 3-4: **SALT AND LIGHT UNDER PRESSURE**

3¹³Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

4⁷The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.