

MATERIAL THINGS

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Image or photograph, paper, drawing materials, tape
- 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: SCALING UP

Find a small image to use: it can be a photograph or a work of art, landscape or portrait – but something you don’t mind destroying. *If you’re able, tie your image in with “my favourite things” (discussion).* Cut it up into square pieces (the number of pieces depends on your group size, see below). Each person or group is assigned one small square of the cut image and one large square paper (a letter sized paper can be used if you cut off the end to make a square). The task is for them to recreate by hand the part of the picture that they are seeing, only “scaled up” to the size of their new sheet of paper. When time is up, gather in the “scaled up” pages and assemble them with tape. Compare whether the large version is a good replica of the smaller original. *It can be challenging to keep things in perspective when we “scale up”!*

FOR GROUPS OF TWO, SIMPLY CUT THE IMAGE IN HALF. YOU WILL NEED A LARGER AND MORE COMPLEX IMAGE THE MORE PIECES YOU WISH TO CUT IT INTO, SO YOU MAY FIND IT SIMPLER TO GROUP YOUR TEENS TOGETHER INTO PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS IF YOUR NUMBERS ARE GREATER THAN 12.

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: MY FAVOURITE THINGS

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 are some of your favourite things in the world? (Ask each teen to name at least three)
- Is it hard for you to share the things you like best with others?
- Do you find yourself wishing others would share what they have with you?

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

- *Note: While we may consider that there are “right and wrong” answers to these questions, try to keep the focus on allowing your teens to respond honestly so that the lesson can help them to see where they may need to grow.*
- *God made the material world and we are a part of it. He made it good, and it is filled with good things: plants, animals, food, sunshine, snow, music, laughter, and other people. “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving” (1 Timothy 4:4).*
- *We are taught to have a spirit of cheerful generosity (2 Corinthians 9:7), but some of us find this easier than others. One of the dangers we can fall into with regard to the blessings of the material world, is to hoard them for ourselves, ignoring the source from which they come and the purpose for which they are given. “As for the rich in*

MATERIAL THINGS

this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

- *There’s nothing wrong with asking God to bless you with material things, but there is something wrong with a spirit of envy, covetousness, and bitterness which can grow up in our hearts when we look at what others have and resent the fact that they have it and we do not. The consumerism of our culture means that advertising aimed at us is continually trying to create and grow this spirit in us so that we will compete, crave and buy. “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:26).*

THE LESSON: LUKE 19

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 give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth,
so that in due time we may enjoy them,
We beseech thee, good Lord.*

God made the material world – of which we are a part – and he made it good. Think of delicious foods, the beauty of nature, the affection of friends, and all of your favourite things. There are endless opportunities all around us to be grateful for the blessings of the material world.

The psalms remind us that, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it” (24:1). When we make our offering in the Communion service, we pray with the words of King David, “All things come from you, and of your own have we given you” (1 Chronicles 29:14). It’s important for us to remember that the material blessings we enjoy are not ours to hoard, but they are God’s, to be used in ways that honour him.

The Bible has a lot to say about money, because a wrong attitude towards it is one of the greatest temptations we face. St. Paul, writing to St. Timothy, said, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils”. *Why?* Because “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation”, and “it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith”. Instead, “there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world” (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

Refer to Luke 19:1-10.

(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 was Zacchaeus’ problem?
- How do you think he regarded money *before* he met Jesus?
- What was the difference between how Jesus saw Zacchaeus and how the grumblers did?
- How do you think Zacchaeus regarded money *after* meeting Jesus?
- With whom do you identify more: Zacchaeus or the grumblers?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *The people identified Zacchaeus as “a sinner”. Tax collectors were not only agents of the oppressive Roman regime, they were usually corrupt, charging more than they needed to and keeping the extra. This is what Zacchaeus*

MATERIAL THINGS

means when he said, “if I have defrauded anyone”. But though he was someone who had made really bad decisions, like the prodigal son, he wanted to return to a right relationship with God. We know this because he was following desperately after Jesus, even to the indignity of climbing a tree to see him. And when Jesus asked for hospitality, Zacchaeus received him “joyfully” (v6).

- Zacchaeus was “small of stature”. Perhaps money had become a way for him to gain an advantage over others. What we do know is that he wanted money enough to take it from others dishonestly. He was enjoying material things by means of theft. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matthew 6:24). Zacchaeus loved and served money.
- To Jesus, Zacchaeus was someone lost to be saved (v10). To the grumblers he was a sinner (v7), someone who had wronged them, and beyond redemption. Jesus did not envy or resent Zacchaeus. Nor did he call Zacchaeus to live in poverty. Instead, Zacchaeus made restitution for what he had stolen, and gave generously (“half of my goods”, v8) to the poor.
- The closed-fisted position that had been Zacchaeus’ before he met Jesus was changed. Instead, we have the sense that there is generosity abounding. He recognized his sin. He did not simply say, “I’ll give it back”, but rather he would quadruple the amount upon returning it. In addition to this, he would take from his wealth and share with those who had none. Now he is serving God rather than money, able to see that the material blessings of the earth are not his to hoard, but good things to be used in God’s service.
- Some of us may read this story and identify with the greed that made Zacchaeus pilfer money in the first place. Or perhaps we find it hard to share the things we feel we have earned and deserve. But some of us will identify with the crowd who did not want Jesus to give his time and forgiveness to someone like that. For those of us who tend to look with judgement on those who have more than we do, this story is a reminder that Jesus’ love does not exclude the “Zacchaeuses” of this world – and ours should not either.

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 praying again with the phrase “*Give us today our daily bread*”. Notice that we say, “Give us” and not “Give me”: Are there blessings that God might be calling you to share with others? Or, is a spirit of envy something you struggle with? If so, ask God to replace it with a spirit of gratitude for what he has given to you, and to help you love those you are tempted to resent. Read Luke 12:15,30: *Jesus said, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of one’s possessions... For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them.”* Conclude with a time of thanksgiving.

- AND/OR -

MATERIAL THINGS

Take some time to pray through this prayer.

Almighty God, whose loving hand hath given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honour thee with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of thy bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(PRAYER FOR FAITHFULNESS IN THE USE OF THIS WORLD'S GOODS, BCP PAGE 734)

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.

LUKE 19: THE PRODIGAL RICH MAN

¹Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ²And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. ⁴So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." ⁹And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."