

REPENTANCE

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- 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: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: “METANOIA”

Write this word on your board: *metanoia*. Ask the teens to see how many words they can come up with by rearranging some or all of the letters.

DEPENDING ON YOUR GROUP, YOU MIGHT ASK THE TEENS TO WORK INDIVIDUALLY ON THEIR OWN PAPER OR IN TEAMS TO COMPETE FOR THE LONGEST LIST, OR HAVE THEM WORK ALL TOGETHER.

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: HYPOCRISY VS. SINCERITY

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 is hypocrisy?
- What is the best way to avoid being hypocritical?
- Is it ever hypocritical to say, “I’m sorry”?

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

- *Hypocrisy is about pretence: pretending to believe one thing, while really believing something else; or pretending to be one sort of person, while really being a different sort altogether. Christians are especially at risk of becoming hypocritical if we are not humble enough to acknowledge that though we strive to live in a certain way, we don’t always succeed.*
- *The opposite of hypocrisy is honesty and sincerity, so the best way to avoid the hypocrisy trap is to be humble and sincere about what we believe and about who we are. That’s tougher than it sounds because it means answering honestly when someone asks a question – even if the answer isn’t one that’s expected or that will be applauded.*
- *Humans have the ability to lie. So when we apologize, there’s always the chance that we are lying, acting like we regret something we’ve done in order to smooth things over or make people think well of us, when in reality, we may be ready – even intending – to do the same thing again.*

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THE LESSON: MATTHEW 21

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 us true repentance; to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances;
 and to endue us with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, to amend our lives according to thy holy Word,
 We beseech thee, good Lord.*

St. John the Baptist was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus by calling the people of Israel to repentance. This was his message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). That word “repent” comes from the Latin translation of the Greek word “*metanoia*”, and when St. John the Baptist used it, he was not just calling the people to confess their sin and say “sorry”. *Metanoia* means a change of heart and mind that results in a changed life.

We spend a lot of time talking about repentance because it’s so easy for us to be hypocritical about it: saying one thing with our mouth, and not really meaning it in our hearts. This is why we ask God in the Litany to “give us *true* repentance” – the sort that results in amending our lives according to his word.

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During Jesus’ ministry he had many encounters with groups of hypocritical religious leaders. Pretending to be sincere and respectful, they would approach him asking questions, all the while trying to trick him. But Jesus knew what was in their hearts, just as he knows what is in ours.

Refer to Matthew 21:23-32.

(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 does this passage tell us about the chief priests and elders?
- Why do you think Jesus held up the “tax collectors and prostitutes” as an example?
- Which son in the parable do you identify with most?
- Is there hope for the second son?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *These men had rejected John’s call to repentance, refusing to acknowledge him as a prophet. They were also rejecting Jesus, actively working to oppose him and trying to catch him with tricky questions. Jesus’ parable shows that they are like the second son, who wants to be seen as doing the right thing, but who does not actually do it.*
- *While the religious elites stood aloft, pretending not to need to repent, these sinners who were acutely aware of their sin, went to John, repenting sincerely, and received his baptism. They experienced real forgiveness as a result of their real repentance: this should have inspired the religious leaders to follow suit, but it did not, to their shame.*
- *Most of us can sympathize with both sons. We’ve been in that position of agreeing to do something and then not following through – perhaps simply because we get tired or busy. And maybe we can also understand saying “No” to something that we later think better of and do anyway. Remember that the parable isn’t there to condemn us because our parents told us to clean our bedroom and we didn’t do it. It’s there to point us to the larger issue of responding to God with true metanoia.*

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- *The second son in the parable chose the wrong path, the path of lying to his Father and rejecting his instructions. But the example of the first son proves that it's not too late to change his mind and really do what he said he was going to! If we have put off sincere repentance, it's not too late – do it now! “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” (Hebrews 3:13).*

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”. Ask God to examine your heart, to help you to know what you should repent of, and then to repent of it in a spirit of sincerity. Read 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. Conclude with a time of thanksgiving.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer.

Almighty God, by whose providence thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of thy Son our Saviour, by preaching of repentance: Make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching, and after his example constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(COLLECT FOR THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, BCP PAGE 278)

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.

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MATTHEW 21: **CHANGE YOUR MINDS**

²³And when Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” ²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

²⁸“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterwards he changed his mind and went. ³⁰And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterwards change your minds and believe him.