

2 OR 3 GATHERED

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Index cards, pens, 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: HOUSE OF CARDS

As teens arrive, give them a small stack of index cards and a pen. Each person should write their name on the first card, and on the other cards something they appreciate about the group (or about the parish). Start building a house by introducing a card of your own. Then, invite someone else to introduce one of their cards, attaching it to yours with tape in an upside-down “V” shape. One at a time, teens share what is on their card and add to the house. See how big you can make it!

FOR SMALL GROUPS, GIVE TEENS A LARGE STACK OF CARDS. FOR LARGER GROUPS, YOU MAY ONLY BE ABLE TO HAVE ONE OR TWO EACH. (FOR VERY LARGE GROUPS, SPLIT INTO GROUPS OF LESS THAN TWENTY).

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: NO PLACE LIKE HOME

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 do these sayings mean: “There’s no place like home”, and “Charity begins at home”? Do you think they are true? Why or why not?
- If your teens are able and if time allows, have them come up with a few other things people say about “home” and discuss them.

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

- *“There’s no place like home” suggests a sense of longing for home as the place you’d most like to be. This isn’t true for everyone because not all homes are characterized by love, peace and laughter. “Charity begins at home” means that people should take care of their family before getting side-tracked with anything else. The expression is certainly consistent with how scripture describes the love and respect that family members ought to have for one another. If a concern of a serious and current nature arises, pause to pray for that situation.*

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THE LESSON: PSALM 27

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.

We have a sovereign God who is merciful towards us, and we have been given the privilege of approaching him through what Christ did for us. God is our Deliverer, and the one who holds our identity and purpose in his hands. And he is the one who cares for our needs, at times meeting them through our fellow believers.

Sue Careless, in the second volume of her series, “Discovering the Book of Common Prayer,” wrote this: “Spiritually we are born individually as each of us entrusts our lives to Jesus. But we are each placed by our heavenly Father into a spiritual family that he has provided, his Church, to be nurtured and loved. It is true that some local churches, like some individual families, may fail to nurture and cause real harm. Then we do need to seek a better spiritual home. But to go it alone is not the answer. Remember that no earthly family or church is perfect. Still, if your local church is seriously dysfunctional, you may need to find another that can nurture you and help you share your gifts... We are a pilgrim people called to journey together, to encourage and uphold each other on the way to heaven”.

St. Paul referred to the Church as “the household of God”, and taught that we are “being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:22). And Jesus himself promised, “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:20). God is with us: aware of our needs, and providing us with all that is necessary for the journey.

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Psalm 27 is one of the many psalms written by King David. It is believed to have been written before he was anointed king, while he was being hunted by then-King Saul. The longing David expresses for the house of the Lord is easy to understand in light of his exile. Yet in spite of David’s circumstances, he knows he can trust God with both his present and his future.

Refer to Psalm 27.

(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 the indications in the psalm that David is facing challenges?
- What are the indications that he has hope?
- Where does that hope come from?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- David poses the question twice in the first verse: “whom shall I fear?” The remainder of the psalm paints a picture of many “adversaries”, “foes”, and “enemies” who are speaking falsely about him (v12), and seeking to harm him (v2-3, 12). He speaks of his need to be hidden, concealed, and lifted (v5). This is a man who has many, many reasons to be afraid: except that he is declaring his confidence that none of these things outweighs God’s ability to care for him.
- David writes, “my heart shall not fear” (v3). He declares with confidence that God will hide him, shelter him, conceal him, and lift him high (v5). He anticipates his head being lifted and being back in the tent of meeting where he can praise God (v6). The first part of v10 alludes to a proverb. It calls to mind Isaiah 49:15-16: “Can

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a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.” David is confident that even if his parents were to forsake him, God would not. Moreover, he is confident that God’s goodness and care of him is not just a matter for eternity but something he will experience “in the land of the living” (v13).

- *David’s hope is firmly rooted in his God. He calls him “my light and my salvation”, “the stronghold of my life” (v1). He longs to be in God’s house (v4, 6), he seeks his face (v8), and exhorts others – and perhaps himself also – to “Be strong... let your heart take courage” and “Wait for the Lord” (v14).*

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”**. Do you feel that you are a part of the “household of God” – not alone on the journey? If not, ask God to provide you with a Church, and one or two good Christian friends to accompany you on your way. Read Deuteronomy 31:6: **“Be strong and courageous... for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you”**. Conclude with a time of thanksgiving.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer.

Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy household the Church in continual godliness; that through thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve thee in good works, to the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (COLLECT FOR THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, BCP PAGE 254)

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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PSALM 27: **SEEKING THE HOUSE OF THE LORD**

¹The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ²When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. ³Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. ⁴One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple. ⁵For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

⁶And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all round me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord. ⁷Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! ⁸You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, Lord, do I seek." ⁹Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!

¹⁰For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in. ¹¹Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. ¹²Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence. ¹³I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! ¹⁴Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!