

PROVIDENCE

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: “HALT” HAIKUS

Explain briefly that “HALT” is an acronym sometimes used to help people be aware of times when they may need to pause, reflect and receive care. “HALT” stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely, and Tired. It is often used in addictions recovery, but is useful for everyone in recognizing that there are particular times when they may be more likely to make poor decisions. Divide your teens into groups or pairs and ask each to choose one of the four words and write a haiku poem based on that word. Allow a few minutes for this and then have each group present their poem.

IF YOU HAVE ONLY ONE GROUP OR PAIR, THE GROUP MAY WISH TO WRITE A HAIKU FOR EACH OF THE FOUR WORDS.

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order for service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

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: GETTING THROUGH

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 you like when you're hungry, angry, lonely or tired?
- What is it like to be discouraged?
- When was the last time you felt really discouraged? What happened?

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

- *Many of us become more impulsive and less self-controlled when we're feeling hungry, angry, lonely or tired. It is during those weakened states that we are most likely to say and do things that we regret.*
- *Perhaps being hungry or angry or lonely or tired has had a cumulative effect and we've simply reached the end of our tether. Feeling discouraged generally means that circumstances have caused us to lose hope. We may begin to see everything through a negative lens and may need some outside help to shake it off.*
- *If anything of a serious or current nature arises, take a moment to pray for those in your group who are facing discouragement.*

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THE LESSON: 1 KINGS 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.

Let's recap. Who are we? We are a people with a good, unchanging God. We are a people who trace our roots back to the teachings of the apostles. As the Church, we are built on the solid foundation of Jesus and our future is secure in God's hands.

Even though we know these things, life can be difficult and we can become discouraged along the way. So, what help do we have *right now*? The answer is providence: God's attentive care that protects and provides for us. He has promised never to leave us or forsake us, and he keeps that promise in several ways. God has given us his indwelling Holy Spirit. He has drawn us into the fellowship of believers (the Church), and though we do not often talk about them, his angels are actively at work on our behalf. God knows and cares about what we're going through and he knows what it's going to take to get us to the place we need to be.

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There are many wonderful stories in the Old Testament about a man named Elijah. We only have time today to look at one small part of his story, but first, here's what you need to know: Elijah was a prophet in Israel during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Scripture tells us that this pair "did evil in the sight of the Lord" – more than any of the monarchs who went before them. It was Elijah's job to speak the words of God to them: words of judgment that they did *not* want to hear. Because Elijah obeyed God, he was hunted by this powerful couple. But even though things were far from easy, Elijah did not have to do it all on his own.

Refer to 1 Kings 19:4-10.

(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.

- How do you think Elijah was feeling when he got to the cave?
- Was Elijah the only one who had remained faithful to God?
- What does this passage tell us about God?
- How can this story help us today?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *We know that Elijah was tired and discouraged. He had been through a lot. Even before he arrived, an angel was sent to feed him, because God knew that the journey would be too much for him. You can tell from Elijah's words that he felt a sense of despair. He had seen a great deal of destruction and he felt like his enemies had won.*
- *Elijah thought he was the only faithful one left. He felt totally alone. But God informed him that there were 7000 people who had also remained faithful. And Elijah was given the task of anointing new kings and a new prophet. Even though he thought he was alone, he wasn't, and God would continue to use him to make things right.*
- *God knows our limits and he cares for us. He sent an angel to provide for Elijah because he knew he was reaching his limit. The encounter on the mountain tells us that God is powerful, and yet he is gentle and personal. He*

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engages in a dialogue with Elijah. He listens to what Elijah has experienced and is feeling, and he responds with a solution. God cares about what happens with his people as a whole, but he is also concerned about Elijah personally. God knew what Elijah needed and he was able to provide that by letting him know that he was not alone, that God would set things right, and that Elijah would be allowed to pass on the torch to a new prophet, Elisha.

- *In the letter to the Romans, St. Paul refers to this story, and to the fact that although Elijah thought he was the only faithful person left, there were actually many others. In Romans 11:5, we read, “So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace”. Elijah was not alone. The faithful in St. Paul’s day were not alone. And we are not alone either. We serve the same God that Elijah did: one who is powerful and kind. He knows what we need on the journey, and he is going to help us get through.*

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))

Imagine that God is calling you by name and saying, “What are you doing here?” Take a moment to consider your answer. Where are you in your life and faith? What has brought you to this place? How do you feel about your past, your present and your future? Have you become discouraged in your faith? Ask God to remind you of who he is, and of the care that he has for you.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

O Lord, who never failest to help and govern them whom thou dost bring up in thy stedfast fear and love: Keep us, we beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(THE COLLECT FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, BCP PAGE 219)

CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

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”, the final prayer in the booklet.

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1 KINGS 19: **NEVER BEYOND GOD'S CARE**

⁵And Elijah lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.” ⁶And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.” ⁸And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

⁹There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁰He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” ¹¹And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. ¹²And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. ¹³And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁴He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” ¹⁵And the Lord said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. ¹⁶And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. ¹⁷And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. ¹⁸Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”