

ST. PAUL

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Small container, timer, pre-written papers for ice breaker
- 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: ON THE SPOT, THE LIFE-CHANGE VERSION

Write out some of the questions listed below on scraps of paper (you may wish to add your own), fold them, and place them in an opaque container. Have the teens sit in a circle. One at a time, ask each teen to select a question from the container and speak on the topic/question selected.

YOU MAY WANT TO ALLOW FOR ONE “PASS” PER TURN IF A TEEN SELECTS A QUESTION THAT THEY ARE UNCOMFORTABLE SPEAKING ABOUT. FOR SMALL GROUPS, YOU MAY WANT TO TAKE MULTIPLE TURNS. FOR LARGE (OR TALKATIVE) GROUPS, YOU MAY HAVE TO TIME RESPONSES (FOR EXAMPLE, EACH PERSON HAS THIRTY SECONDS TO ANSWER).

- How does technology change your life? What device or machine would you not want to be without?
- As a child, when you were caught doing something wrong, how did you react? Did getting “caught in the act” prevent you from doing it again?
- If you had a near escape from a wild man-eating beast, how would it affect your outlook on life?
- What would you be willing to change about yourself or sacrifice for someone you really loved?
- If you suddenly inherited a fortune, what would you do with it?
- Can the music you listen to change your mood? Give personal examples.
- If you knew you couldn’t fail, what would you do?
- If an accident took away your ability to use your legs, how would it change your life goals?
- How do you think travelling the world would affect you?
- What is the most memorable encounter or meeting of your life?
- Describe an experience that changed your values.
- If your home burned down and you lost all your possessions, how would it change your life?

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: DAMASCUS ROAD EXPERIENCES

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.

- Have you ever heard the expression “a Damascus Road experience”? What does it mean?
- Have you ever had a “Damascus Road experience” – Something that instantly and dramatically changed your life?

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

- A “Damascus Road experience” is an idiom used to talk about a turning point in life or an experience that completely changes everything for us. People who use the expression today may not realize that it is referring to the conversion story of St. Paul, who met Jesus on his way to Damascus.
- Invite the teens to consider and share their own stories (they don’t have to be faith-related), of something that happened which totally changed how they saw themselves, God, the world, or how they wanted to live. This is a great opportunity to share a story of your own.

THE LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 15

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.

Saul of Tarsus was a real “hater”. He was educated, religious, and privileged, and he hated Christians. All his time and energy were spent hunting them down, seeking to kill as many as he could. Then one day, as he was travelling the road to Damascus (where he hoped to find and arrest more Christians), he was knocked to the ground, a light shone around him, and the voice of Jesus confronted him, saying, *“Why are you persecuting me?”*

This encounter changed his life. He became known as the Apostle Paul and instead of seeking to annihilate Christians, he poured himself out to build up the Church of Christ. By St. Paul’s own account this was not an easy mission:

“Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches”
(2 Corinthians 11:24-28).

While in prison, St. Paul wrote many of the letters to the early Christian churches that are a part of our canon of scripture today. Tradition tells us that he was martyred by decapitation. But we also know that he believed all of the hardship he encountered was worth it. He wrote: *“For my Lord’s sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him”* (Philippians 3:8-9).

Refer to 1 Corinthians 15:1-14, 20, 57-58.

(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 CORINTHIANS 15.)

(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).

Note: Before reading the text, note that it is from a letter written by St. Paul to the Corinthian Church.

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 does St. Paul describe himself?
- Why does St. Paul go to such trouble to list all of the appearances of the resurrected Christ?
- What does St. Paul want his readers to know?

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A few notes and reflections for reference:

- St. Paul describes himself as a faithful preacher of the word (vv1-7). He also describes himself as a witness to the resurrected Christ (v8). St. Paul is humble, recognizing the gravity of his past sin, when he says he is “least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (v9). Yet, St. Paul is a recipient of God’s grace, who has become a dedicated worker for the Lord (v10).
- Verse 12 tells us that some people in the Corinthian church were saying that there was no such thing as resurrection from the dead – for Jesus or for anyone else. St. Paul goes to great trouble to correct and clarify this error. He wants them to know that the evidence of Christ’s resurrection is not flimsy or based on a single account; rather there were many witnesses all able to testify to the same truth (vv5-8). Moreover, this event was absolutely foundational to the Christian faith, without which all of their hope and all of their labour would be “in vain” (v14, 58).
- St. Paul wants his readers to know that it is essential to their salvation that they “hold fast” to what was preached to them (v2). He wants them to be “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” and furthermore being confident that the work they undertake for the Gospel “is not in vain” (v58).

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.))

Take some time to write out, in your own words, the Gospel story. How has it changed your life? Ask God to help you to “hold fast to the Word”.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following collect.

O God, who, through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world: Grant, we beseech thee, that we, having his manifold labours in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (COLLECT FOR THE FEAST OF ST. PAUL, P. 283)

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 CORINTHIANS 15: OUR LABOUR IS NOT IN VAIN

¹Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,
²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

¹²Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain... ²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.... ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.