

# AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

## 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: THE MOOD OF THE SEA

In groups of 3-5, ask the teens to create a brief musical piece meant to evoke the changing moods of a restless sea, which then must be performed for the group (or for the leader if there is only one group). They may create lyrics if they wish. They can mime the use of instruments or make use of whatever props they can find around them. Give them a brief amount of time to come up with their musical performance and then present.

IF YOU HAVE MULTIPLE GROUPS, YOU MAY WISH TO ASSIGN THEM DIFFERENT MUSICAL STYLES (FOR EXAMPLE, CLASSICAL, COUNTRY, RAP, ETC.) TO ADD TO THE CHALLENGE AND ENSURE THAT EACH GROUP HAS SOMETHING UNIQUE TO PRESENT.

## 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: ABOUT RESTLESSNESS

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 felt restless? How would you describe that feeling?
- What do you think a restless person needs?

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

- *A restless mood can be connected to anxiety or boredom. When we say we are “restless” we generally mean that we are not content, unable to focus and irritable, wandering aimlessly from one thing to another, with nothing able to satisfy us.*
- *A restless person may be able to overcome their mood by getting some exercise, by committing their whole focus to a single task, or by prayer. Allow your teens to come up with whatever suggestions occur to them, regardless of whether they arrive at solid conclusions, since the discussion's purpose is to lead into today's lesson.*

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## THE LESSON: A RESTLESS HEART FINDS REST

Lessons 13-42 follow a slightly different format from previous lessons. The story of the saint being studied is interspersed with verses from scripture that provide added perspective. You may prefer to read the lesson text aloud together as a group, or ask the teens to read it silently to themselves.

*“There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”  
(Luke 15:10)*

*“You (O Lord) have made man for Yourself and restless is the human heart until it comes to rest in You”. Chances are, you’ve heard these words before. They were written by Augustine sixteen centuries ago – a man who knew all about the restlessness of the human heart.*

Augustine was born in a city called Tagaste (in modern-day Algeria in North Africa) to a devout Christian mother and an unbelieving father. Though his mother pleaded and prayed for him to come to faith and lead a moral life, Augustine spent most of his youth doing just the opposite. He took a mistress, and experimented with many of the philosophies and false religions that were popular in his day. He was over thirty years old when his restless heart took him to Milan. It was there that he met and came to be mentored by Ambrose (who is also a saint in the Church’s calendar).

Augustine’s famous autobiography, “Confessions”, tells of his struggle to leave behind his life of sin. It goes on to tell the story of his hearing a child’s voice one day directing him to read from St. Paul’s epistle to the Romans, where he found these words: *“Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy”* (13:13). After reading these words of scripture, Augustine wrote, “I wanted to read no further, nor did I need to. For instantly, as the sentence ended, there was infused in my heart something like the light of full certainty and all the gloom of doubt vanished away”. Augustine became a Christian and was baptized at the church in Milan at the Easter Vigil in 387.

*“Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge  
after the image of its creator.”  
(Colossians 3:10)*

All of the different things Augustine had tried in his earlier life had failed to satisfy him, but he knew that his new faith in Christ required more than nominal adherence. Augustine, like many of his contemporaries, was deeply affected by Athanasius’ biography of the early monk and desert father, Anthony. After his baptism, Augustine planned to live a life influenced by monastic ideals. He parted with his mistress, sold his property, and together with some friends back home in Northern Africa, began to live a communal life of simplicity, study and devotion.

*“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined,  
what God has prepared for those who love him.”  
(1 Corinthians 2:9)*

All that he had previously experienced in life equipped Augustine in a unique way to defend and build up the faith. He was ordained and became bishop of Hippo (in Algeria), where he remained until his death at the age of 76. During those decades, Augustine preached and wrote extensively. He also convened three councils (in 393, 397, and 419) to ensure that works which were not scripture weren’t being read as such in the churches, a move that helped to curb false teachings and clarify the New Testament canon of scripture for future

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generations. Augustine's theological insights have had immeasurable impact throughout the centuries, but especially during the Reformation, and his works are still widely read today.

The life of Augustine began as the story of a prodigal, who threw off the faith he'd been taught in pursuit of pleasure and egotism. But this prodigal who came to the Father in humble repentance, was then transformed into a saint, and was used powerfully for the building up of the Church.

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: SAINT AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO, "CONFESSIONS", TRANS. E.B. PUSEY | DAVID FARMER, "OXFORD DICTIONARY OF SAINTS" | JUSTO GONZÁLEZ, "THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY, VOLUME 1" | GERARD SAMPSON, "LAYMAN'S BOOK OF SAINTS".)

Then ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- Do you identify with Augustine? In what way?
- Before his conversion, what was holding Augustine back?
- Who (or what) were the biggest influences in Augustine's life? Do you have any similar influences in your life?
- What do you think Augustine expected his new Christian life to be like?  
Do you think he would have been surprised by his legacy?
- What can we learn from Augustine's example?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *Depending on where your groups' responses to the first question lead, you may wish to pause here to pray for any teens that share about their own struggles with faith.*
- *Augustine was restless. He wanted to experience all that life and the world had to offer. He was looking for something, but he wasn't sure what it was. Augustine wrote that as a young man, he would sometimes pray, "Lord, help me to be pure, but not yet!" He knew that he'd have to give up immoral living and he wasn't sure he wanted to. In the end, it was not enough for him to experience momentary pleasures and persuasive arguments: his deepest desire was for something real and true, and so he let go of his former distractions in order to take hold of Christ.*
- *We know that Augustine was greatly influenced by his mother Monnica, who prayed for his conversion across many years. Some of us may have parents or other relatives who faithfully pray for us in this way. He also found a mentor in Ambrose of Milan, and inspiration in the biography of Anthony of Egypt. Perhaps we also have been blessed with spiritual mentors and the chance to read inspiring biographies.*
- *When we hold on to our old lives of sin, in part it is because we are failing to trust that God has something better for us – something beyond what we can possibly imagine. Scripture tells us that God is able to work in "all things" to bring about good (Romans 8:28), so that even Augustine's previous wanderings became something that God could use for good.*
- *There's a lot that we can take from Augustine's example, but hopefully the first lesson we can learn is to come to God in repentance, trusting in his goodness and in his ability to take us as we are and transform us into saints.*

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.

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## 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))

Review today’s lesson. Choose a line of scripture or a phrase from the story of Augustine that you find edifying, inspiring or instructive:

Throughout this week, spend some time prayerfully reflecting on the phrase you’ve chosen. Close your time of reflection with a prayer of gratitude for the witness of Augustine.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following collect.

*O God, our heavenly Father, who didst raise up thy faithful servant Augustine to be a Bishop in thy Church and to feed thy flock: We beseech thee to send down upon all thy Bishops, the Pastors of thy Church, the abundant gift of thy Holy Spirit, that they, being endued with power from on high, and ever walking in the footsteps of thy holy Apostles, may minister before thee in thy household as true servants of Christ and stewards of thy divine mysteries; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.* (SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF A BISHOP, P. 312)

## 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.