

MARTIN OF TOURS

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: CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

This is an alphabetical word game. Ask the teens to be seated in a circle and have them clap their hands to form a slow rhythm. (*If keeping a rhythm hinders instead of helping, then skip it!*) The first person begins by saying, “A rich miser died and was sad to leave behind: _____”, inserting a word that begins with the letter A (some examples might be an atlas, apple tree, arachnids). The next person in the circle must repeat the A-word, but add a B-word. For example, “A rich miser died and was sad to leave behind, an atlas, and a boomerang”. The exercise continues around the circle till all the letters of the alphabet have been used. The words chosen don't have to fit together, they must only begin with the correct letter.

FOR SMALL GROUPS YOU MAY END UP GOING MULTIPLE TIMES AROUND THE CIRCLE. TO ADD AN ELEMENT OF COMPETITION FOR LARGER GROUPS, ANYONE WHO GETS STUCK OR TAKES TOO LONG IS ELIMINATED UNTIL THERE REMAINS ONE WINNER.

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: THE MEANING OF “ENOUGH”

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 your most valuable possessions? Why are they valuable to you?
- Have you ever felt that God was prompting you to share or give something away? What did you do?
- Share with your teens the following quote, and then invite comments on it:
“There are two ways to get enough: one is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less.” – G.K. Chesterton

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

- *We tend attach significance to the things we own because of the people who gave them to us, the comfort or convenience they provide to us, or memories of love that we associate with them. Sometimes we may value possessions because we feel that the possessions themselves make us seem more valuable – advertisers work hard to make us believe the lie that our worth is defined by the clothing we wear and the cars we drive.*
- *This is a great opportunity to share a personal story. The more we view material blessings as God's rather than ours, the easier it is to obey the Holy Spirit's prompting when we're asked to share those blessings.*

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- *Our natural tendency is to compare ourselves with others who have more than we do. But envy will never lead us to contentment! And the desire to obtain more and more can become a never-ending cycle. On the other hand, when we are living gratefully no matter what our circumstances, we find that we can say with St. Paul, “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content” (Philippians 4:11).*

THE LESSON: WILLING TO SHARE GOD’S BLESSINGS

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.

*“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”
(Genesis 1:31)*

At the same time as the monastic movement was forming in the desert, many theologians of the faith were fighting to define and defend Christian doctrine, particularly in response to popular pagan philosophies and false teachings of that day. Some of these pervasive philosophies (such as gnosticism) said that the material world, the human body, and human emotions were all evil. This false view of creation had a strong influence, and Christian teachers had to work hard to remind believers of the goodness of God’s creation.

Those who fled to the desert sought to live simple, disciplined lives focused on godly obedience, but it was not uncommon for harsh ascetic practices to creep in. Yet while some monks did get caught up in withholding good things from themselves to an extent that today might seem shocking, others managed to keep the focus on a right view of material things: God’s blessings to be shared freely.

*“Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none,
and whoever has food is to do likewise.”
(Luke 3:11)*

Martin was born in the early fourth century in Sabaria (modern-day Hungary). As a teenager, he was pressed into joining the army by his father. From a young age, and against the will of his unbelieving parents, Martin decided to become a Christian and looked forward to the day when he would be baptized. It was many years before he was able to leave the army and pursue a life devoted to his faith.

During this time a famous incident occurred. Martin came upon a beggar while he was in the city of Amiens in northern France. He stopped, cut his cloak in half and gave half of it to the man. But that’s not the end of the story, because Martin stayed and spoke with the man, sharing the Gospel with him. This story, which was related to Martin’s biographer by the beggar himself, goes on to tell that the beggar became a Christian and was later seen leading a devout life. Following this incident, Martin had a dream in which Jesus appeared wearing the half cloak he’d given away and telling his angels, “Martin, still just a catechumen, has clothed me in this garment”.

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God
so that at the proper time he may exalt you.”
(1 Peter 5:6)*

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After his baptism, Martin spent some time under the teaching of Hilary of Poitiers, and then moved outside of the city of Tours (France) where he became a solitary monk. He was soon joined by disciples seeking his instruction, and some years later was asked to become bishop of Tours.

Maintaining a monastic lifestyle while fulfilling the duties of a bishop was no easy feat, but it was a priority for Martin, and one that he maintained in one form or another throughout his ministry. Many miracles were attributed to Martin, and he is also remembered as a missionary who established monasteries throughout the villages of France as a means of spreading the Gospel. Martin's biographer and friend, Sulpicius Severus, wrote of him, "Never was there any word on his lips but Christ, and never was there a feeling in his heart except piety, peace, and tender mercy". Martin died of a fever at the age of 80, surrounded by his community.

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: DAVID FARMER, "OXFORD DICTIONARY OF SAINTS" | JUSTO GONZÁLEZ, "THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY, VOLUME 1" | SULPITIUS SEVERUS, "THE LIFE OF SAINT MARTIN", TRANS. ALEXANDER ROBERTS | 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.

- How do you think Martin viewed material things?
- How do you think others would have responded to the cloak-cutting incident?
- Do you think Christians today have too great a tendency towards asceticism or towards hoarding?
- How can Martin's example challenge us today?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Martin saw his cloak as an opportunity to share not just his clothing with the beggar, but also to share the Gospel. We know that the establishing of monasteries throughout the French countryside could not have been done without resources, and in fact many of these establishments also served the communities in a wide variety of areas, including health care. Martin saw everything as an opportunity to serve Christ joyfully by serving others.*
- *The beggar was clearly very moved by the gesture, and Christian friends saw it as a saintly act, but chances are that random passers-by would have thought it was very strange to demonstrate such concern for a stranger that one would treat one's cloak this way.*
- *Many Christians in the west today are very similar to the surrounding culture in how we view the material world. The attitudes inspired by gnosticism and stoicism have long since faded from popularity and for the most part we are not inclined to try to withhold healthful things from our bodies. Yet discerning a godly attitude towards material blessings can be a real challenge for Christians in this day and age. As Richard J. Foster wrote, "Christian simplicity...allows us to see material things for what they are – goods to enhance life, not to oppress life. People once again become more important than possessions... Simplicity sets us free to receive the provision of God as a gift that is not ours to keep and can be freely shared with others."*
- *Martin's example can challenge us to think of other people as more valuable than material possessions. We can begin to think about our possessions as blessings to be placed in God's service and shared. This doesn't mean that we no longer get to enjoy material things, but rather it challenges us not to hold onto them with a possessive heart.*

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 Martin that you find edifying, inspiring or instructive:

Throughout this week, spend some time prayerfully reflecting on the phrase you've chosen. Decide on one concrete action you can take this week based on your reflections.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following collect.

O God, our heavenly Father, who by thy Son Jesus Christ didst call thy blessed Apostles and send them forth to preach thy Gospel of salvation unto all the nations: We bless thy holy Name for thy servant Martin, and we pray thee, according to thy holy Word, to send forth many labourers into thy harvest; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF A MISSIONARY, P. 314)

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.