

CHARLES SIMEON

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: HOW PROVOKING!

All of the teens except one – who is “it” – strike poses as statues. They must be perfectly still. The teen who is “it” is not allowed to touch or tickle the statues, but has to try to make them laugh, smile, or otherwise break their pose. If a statue moves at all, then s/he is out for that round. The last statue still standing wins the round.

SMALL GROUPS WILL HAVE MORE ROUNDS, AND YOU MAY NEED TO TIME HOW LONG THE STATUES ARE ABLE TO KEEP FROM MOVING TO DETERMINE A WINNER IF YOU HAVE GROUPS OF LESS THAN THREE. FOR LARGER GROUPS, YOU MAY DESIGNATE MORE THAN ONE PERSON TO BE “IT” AT A TIME, AND STATUES THAT HAVE BEEN CAUGHT MOVING MAY HELP TO TRY TO CATCH THE OTHERS AS WELL.

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: RESPONDING TO OFFENCE

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.

- If you did the ice breaker: Was it difficult for you to keep yourself from reacting to the “provoker”?
- When something upsets or offends you, how do you usually react?
- How do you think you *should* respond?

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

- *For most of us patience does not come naturally. When someone pushes our buttons, saying or doing something that we find upsetting or offensive, we can easily become angry. Often, if we do not stop ourselves, we can react by lashing out with our words or even with a violent action. If we do react in a spirit of anger, the result is usually one that causes more damage and which we may come to regret. It requires self-control to force ourselves to pause, consider, and then respond in a way that is constructive.*
- *As Christians, we want to be like Jesus, “turning the other cheek” (Matthew 5:39). We want the fruit of the Spirit to be evident in all our interactions. That means being loving, joyful, peaceable, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled (Galatians 5:22-23). The next time someone provokes you, try taking a deep breath, and repeating the “fruit” list to yourself before you respond.*

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THE LESSON: PATIENT ENDURANCE

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.

*“Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?”
(Psalm 85:6)*

The nineteenth century was a time of revival in the Church of England. Passionate “evangelical” leaders began to emerge, calling people to genuine conversion, immersion in the study of scripture, and a “newness of life” marked by holiness and social concern. The names of John Wesley and George Whitefield had become well known, but though their ministries had seen remarkable growth, many Anglicans considered evangelical enthusiasm to be dangerous to the establishment and disruptive to a form of religion that had become comfortably complacent.

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”
(Proverbs 9:10)*

Charles was the youngest of four sons born to an unbelieving father. The family was wealthy and Charles was sent to an exclusive boarding school where he had the reputation of being vain, and where he was surrounded by vice. Following this, Charles attended Cambridge University, where he was told that he would be required to attend services of Holy Communion. This created a sense of panic in Charles’ heart, as he feared committing the sacrilege of receiving communion in an unworthy manner. He wrote, “Conscience told me that Satan was as fit to go there as I” (Moorman, *History*). For this reason, he began to try to prepare himself through reading, repentance and prayer.

The “crash course” that Charles put himself through resulted in a genuine spiritual awakening. He came to realize that Jesus’ sacrifice for sin had made possible his redemption. Charles’ personal failings did not disappear overnight, but he moved forward in his faith in a spirit of humility and serious devotion. These habits of holiness fostered in him a patient endurance that was to be much needed in the hardships that he would encounter in his life and ministry.

*“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,
for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.”
(James 1:2-3)*

In his early twenties, Charles was appointed to serve as vicar at Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge. But no sooner had Charles been appointed to his new position than he found he was facing an uphill battle. The parishioners did not want this “evangelical” for their vicar, the teachers did not want him for a colleague, and students were openly hostile. Picture this: parishioners with “rented pews” refused to attend church themselves, and actually locked their pews so that no one else could sit there. When Charles tried to add seats in the aisles so that attendees could sit instead of standing, his churchwardens threw the chairs out into the churchyard. Students shouted and rioted in the streets to disrupt the services, throwing rocks, eggs and filth at Charles when he was coming and going. He recalled being surprised on one occasion when a fellow of his College chose to walk a short distance with him. The opposition Charles experienced continued for over 30 years.

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Although these difficult years were long, eventually Charles’ patient endurance began to win people over. Charles drew comfort and inspiration from the humble example of Jesus. In due course people saw the witness of Charles’ life. They saw that he lived simply, giving much of his income to the poor. They saw, too, how he “turned the other cheek” – year after year. Eventually, the parishioners stopped locking their pews and attendance at the church grew. Charles had the opportunity to mentor students in the faith. He founded missionary societies, and gained a reputation for his strong biblical preaching. On receiving an inheritance, Charles set up a fund to help bring about more evangelical appointments in Anglican parishes.

Throughout his life, Charles remained unmarried and celibate, an intentional choice which enabled him to remain in his position at Cambridge and devote himself to the ministry to which God had called him. He died at the age of 77, having ministered for more than fifty years in that one place. On the day of his funeral, shops closed their doors and people crowded the streets. The once despised preacher ended his life in honour, and his legacy continues to inspire believers to this day.

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: CHRISTIANITYTODAY.COM, “CHARLES SIMEON: EVANGELICAL MENTOR AND MODEL” | BRITANNICA.COM, “CHARLES SIMEON” | JUSTO GONZÁLEZ, “THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY, VOLUME 2” | JOHN MOORMAN, “HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND” | JOHN PIPER, “BROTHERS, WE MUST NOT MIND A LITTLE SUFFERING: MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE OF CHARLES SIMEON” | JOHN STOTT, “JOHN STOTT ON CHARLES SIMEON AT TAYLOR UNIVERSITY”.)

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

- Why do you think Charles did not just leave when he encountered opposition?
- What were some of the choices that Charles made which built his character and witness?
- What evidence can we find in Charles’ story that God was at work?
- What can we learn from Charles’ example?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Charles was a man who did not take the things of God lightly. He had been entrusted with a ministry, and he intended to be faithful in seeing it through. He reflected on the humble sacrifice of Jesus and found comfort and inspiration to carry on spite of the opposition that he faced.*
- *Charles tried to maintain a spirit of Christ-like humility and pursued habits of serious devotion. These things helped him to endure difficulty patiently. From his prayer, study of scripture and from his humility flowed everything else. He lived simply. He gave to the poor. He used the inheritance that came to him to bring more evangelical clergy into the Church. He mentored students in the faith. He founded missionary societies. And he preached the scriptures faithfully.*
- *The incredible transformation in the response to Charles between the start of his ministry and its end decades later is a credit to Charles, but it is also evidence that God was at work, using this saint’s perseverance to change people’s hearts and build up the Church for generations to come.*
- *Charles was an example in his holy living, faithful preaching of scripture, and social concern. But perhaps most relevant for us today was his patient endurance while experiencing hostile opposition. Like Charles, we can take Jesus as our example and humbly carry on in obedience to God’s call – come what may.*

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 Charles that you find edifying, inspiring or instructive:

Throughout this week, spend some time prayerfully reflecting on the phrase you've chosen.

Discuss your reflections with a friend or a group of friends, and together commit to a concrete action you can take this week.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following prayer.

O God, who by thy Holy Spirit hast given unto one man a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge, and to another the gift of tongues: We praise thy Name for the gifts of grace manifested in thy servant Charles, and we pray that thy Church may never be destitute of the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF A DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH, POET, OR SCHOLAR, P. 317)

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.