

JOHN KEBLE

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: CURIOUS CAUSES

Divide your teens into groups of 2-5 and ask each group to come up with a brief promotional skit based on a “curious cause” that people might choose to advocate for. You may wish to provide a few examples, such as a society to encourage fancy moustache growing or a group protesting the negative portrayal of spiders in the media. Give them a few minutes to come up with a cause and a promotional skit that is as entertaining as they can make it. If you have multiple groups, allow them to perform for one another. If you only have one group, allow a longer performance time.

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: A DIFFERENT KIND OF ACTIVISM

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.

- When people are passionate about a cause, what sorts of things might they do?
- What are the “causes” that you care most about? Why are they important to you?
- Does our faith affect the causes we care about?
Does it affect the way in which we choose to advocate for those causes?

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

- *People who are deeply concerned about an issue will usually begin by making personal changes in their own lives, and will then often seek to influence others, including governments. More radical forms of activism can include protest, civil disobedience, and acts of violence in order to try to bring about the desired result.*
- *This is a great opportunity to share about causes that are important to you. If your teens are reluctant to identify causes they feel concerned about, ask them instead to talk about causes that are important to people they know (friends, family, etc.).*
- *If our faith is foundational to our sense of identity and purpose in life, then it will have an effect on what we care about and the causes to which we are motivated to give our time. Not only does our faith inform our worldview and our priorities, but it also tells us that the way in which we work towards our goals matters. We must seek to honour God in both our goals themselves, and in how we try to advance them.*

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THE LESSON: WORSHIP THE LORD IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

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.

“Be angry and yet do not sin... give no opportunity to the devil.”
(Ephesians 4:26-27)

The Reformation had begun as an “in house” critique of the Roman Catholic Church, but snowballed into a hard political and theological separation between Catholics and “Protestants” – as the Reformers came to be called. The movement swept through the western world, bringing changes too swift and drastic to be ignored. But while Reformers were convinced that these changes were right and good, others believed them to go too far, to be destructive of the Church’s unity, and theologically erroneous. A “Counter-Reformation” followed in which Catholics clarified, affirmed, and defended their beliefs. Though the period sparked many constructive meditations and arguments from writers and theologians, it also involved harsh retaliatory persecution and war in some regions. In England, where a “middle way” was sought, writers of both the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Resurgence continued to inspire believers.

“A wise son hears his father’s instruction.”
(Proverbs 13:1)

John Keble was born in England in 1792 and home-schooled by his father, who was a scholar and a priest. From his parents, John learned to love the writings of the saints of previous ages, and especially the writers who had lived during the Catholic Resurgence in seventeenth century England. John was himself a brilliant scholar and won a scholarship to Oxford University at the age of 14.

John followed in his father’s footsteps, becoming a priest and taking on a tutoring position at Oxford. Six years later his mother died, and John took up the post of priest at a rural parish which allowed him to be near his father, turning down more prestigious appointments in order to remain there. Then, on the death of his sister, he became curate in his father’s church and remained close by till his father’s death.

During those years, John kept up a correspondence with friends and continued to assist some of the students he’d tutored at Oxford. Though John was not extroverted or ambitious, those who knew him looked up to him with great admiration. In 1827 John published a collection of poetry on the Christian calendar, a work intended to draw believers deeper into a practice of prayer and devotion. This book, titled “The Christian Year”, was an immediate success, and not long afterwards John was made professor of poetry at Oxford.

*“The hour has come for you to wake from sleep...
So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.”*
(Romans 13:11-12)

At this time the integrity of the Church was being undermined on multiple fronts. Government interference in Church matters was causing alarm, as was a general erosion of conviction, devotion and holiness among both clergy and laity. John was deeply concerned about this state of affairs and believed action was called for. On July 14, 1833, John preached a sermon in a chapel at Oxford on the theme of “National Apostasy”, which marked the starting point of what came to be known as “the Oxford Movement”.

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John's concerns were shared by many others, including E.B. Pusey and John Henry Newman, who came together in an effort to respond to a range of political, theological and pastoral issues. Together they published ninety "tracts" or pamphlets pointing people back to the faithful catholic teachings which were held by the early, undivided Church. They wished to re-ignite among believers a daily practice of prayer, and regular participation in Holy Communion. They also wanted to provide an explanation for matters of belief and practice which were at risk of being misunderstood or undermined. Those who identified with this "Oxford Movement" came to be known as "Tractarians".

*"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."
(BCP Psalm 96:9)*

John retired from Oxford in 1841, but continued to serve as a country vicar until his death at the age of 74. The movement which he helped to begin went on to have a lasting impact on the beauty and reverence of liturgy in Anglican churches, bringing about a fresh appreciation for the historic Christian tradition and the ongoing relevance of monastic vocations. It also inspired a new generation of "Tractarians" with a passion for "slum ministry" to devote their lives to bringing the beautiful and holy presence of Christ into the dark, impoverished neighbourhoods of industrialized England.

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: ANGLICANHISTORY.ORG, PROJECT CANTERBURY, "JOHN KEBLE" AND "BEFORE AND AFTER THE OXFORD MOVEMENT" (MARY I.M. BELL) | BRITANNICA.COM, "JOHN KEBLE" AND "OXFORD MOVEMENT" | JUSTO GONZÁLEZ, "THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY, VOLUME 2" | PUSEYHOUSE.ORG.UK, "WHAT IS THE OXFORD MOVEMENT?")

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

- What sort of concerns was John motivated by?
- What did John do in response to his concerns?
- Do you think people today would consider this an effective strategy?
- What was the impact of John and the Oxford Movement's "activism"?
- What can we learn from John's example?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Family was important to John. His parents played a key role in his education and spiritual formation, and he wished to honour them in how he lived as well as care for them in their times of difficulty. John also passionately cared about the wellbeing of the Church and the devotional lives of believers. He wanted to see Anglicans enter more deeply into a practice of prayer and devotion. He wanted to work against the interference of the state in Church matters, and the secularism which had begun to erode the integrity of Christian belief and practice.*
- *John discussed his concerns with other like-minded believers. He wrote a book of poetry on the Christian year, which would be a tool for private devotion. John and his friends also wrote a series of tracts which specifically sought to educate, encourage and persuade others on the matters which concerned them.*
- *The idea of seeking change through a book of poetry and a series of tracts may sound strange in an age of publicity stunts and angry protest, yet almost 200 years later the impact of this seemingly over-polite movement can still be seen.*
- *The Oxford movement brought about a new appreciation for beauty, reverence, and the Christian tradition in liturgy, as well as stirring up monastic vocations and inspiring new generations of priests to bring the presence of Christ into troubled neighbourhoods.*
- *We can learn from John's quiet humility, his devotion to his family, and his commitment to work towards the concerns that God had placed on his heart in a thoughtful and conscientious manner.*

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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).)

Review today's lesson. Choose a line of scripture or a phrase from the story of John 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 John, 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.