

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Paper, pens, markers, etc.
- 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: COMPASSION EMOJI

Ask your teens, alone or in small groups of 2-3, to design a “compassion emoji”, that is, a simple image meant to express sympathy or cheer someone up. If time permits, ask them to create a series of compassion emojis, instead of just a single image, for a range of occasions. Allow a short time for the teens to present their work to each other.

If you have the capacity, consider digitizing their creations so they can use them in texts, emails, etc. If not, encourage your teens to use the images they have created on handmade cards that can be sent to anyone they know who needs encouragement.

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: BEYOND DUTY

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 you are sick, how do you like to be cared for?
- Have you ever had to take care of someone else who was sick? What was it like? Were you good at it?
- Matthew 25:35-36 provides a list of good deeds that is sometimes called “the works of mercy”:
“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”
 If you had to choose one item from the list to give your time to, which one would you pick, and why?

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

- *The way that our parents have cared for us when we were sick, if they did so compassionately, can be a comforting memory for years to come. Perhaps your father has a special recipe for soup which he makes for you when you have a cold. Or perhaps your mother sets up a special sick bed for you where you can get her attention if you need help. Those who look after us when we are sick have the opportunity to meet our practical needs, but they also have the chance to do it in a thoughtful way that tells us that we are loved.*

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- *Caring for others when they are sick is not something that appeals to many of us. Perhaps you've been told to take care of a younger sibling and resented the time it took away from other things you'd rather have been doing. One important thing that we can learn from our own illnesses is to think and act compassionately towards others when they are unwell – in other words, to “do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31).*
- *The Church is called to participate in all of the acts of mercy. As individual members of the Church, we each have different gifts and roles to play, but we are all called to live compassionately and to care for those in need as if they were our beloved Lord. For most of us, this does not come naturally, but is rather a virtue that requires cultivation: to view others with compassion, and to do what is in our power to meet their need.*

THE LESSON: COMPASSIONATE SERVICE

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.

*“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food,
 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled”,
 without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?”
 (James 2:15-16)*

Florence was born to an upper-class English family in 1820, and educated by her father. She had a brilliant mind and an aptitude for a wide range of subjects, including philosophy and mathematics, yet it was the compassionate work of nursing that she was drawn to. At the age of 16, Florence first heard God calling her to a life of service, a call that would lead her to devote herself to the care of those who were suffering. In spite of initial opposition from her family, who believed that such an undertaking was beneath her, Florence was able to take two brief training courses in Germany, and after that put her nursing and administrative skills to good use in London.

*“Her lamp does not go out at night...
 She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.”
 (Proverbs 31:18, 20)*

It was in 1853, when the Crimean War broke out, that Florence really had the opportunity to shine. Reports reached London that injured soldiers were being treated in poor conditions with inadequate supplies and by incompetent staff. Florence's spirit was stirred. At the very same time as a letter was in the mail from Florence requesting permission to go to the notorious hospital site at Scutari (in Turkey), a letter from a government official was on its way to *her* with the request that she go. So with the official backing of the government, Florence was able to go to Scutari and to take with her a team of 38 nurses.

Florence's team was not well received by the officers responsible for medical care, and the conditions were every bit as appalling as reported. But only five days after they arrived, a massive influx of newly injured soldiers meant that there was no time to waste. Florence procured much-needed supplies. Her nurses cleaned the filthy facilities, and ensured that the patients were fed, washed and compassionately cared for. Florence herself was called admiringly “the Lady with the Lamp” because at night she would tirelessly wander through the wards, checking on the injured.

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A few years later, while still actively caring for injured soldiers, Florence became seriously ill. Her recovery was slow and the illness continued to cause her pain and fatigue for many years, but it did not prevent her from continuing to do good.

*“Blessed are the merciful.”
(Matthew 5:7)*

When the war ended, Florence’s work did not stop. The statistical data she had kept during the war, her practical knowledge, and her now-celebrated reputation, enabled her to do even more in the decades that followed. Florence wrote books on caring for the sick, she established schools for nursing and midwifery, and she worked to improve healthcare for the poor.

On her thirtieth birthday, Florence had written, “Today I am thirty – the age Christ began his mission... Now, Lord, let me think only of Thy Will, what Thou wilt me to do.” At the age of 65, Florence wrote, “Today, O Lord, let me dedicate this crumbling old woman to thee. Behold the handmaid of the Lord” (Kiefer, *Florence Nightingale*). She lived till the age of 90. Florence never married, but remained celibate, and dedicated her whole life to the service of God by caring for those in need. Her work and her influence revolutionized medical care in England, and her name has become a byword for mercy and compassion.

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: CHRISTIANITYTODAY.COM, “THE FAITH BEHIND THE FAMOUS: FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE” | BRITANNICA.COM, “FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE” | JUSTUS.ANGLICAN.ORG, “FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, NURSE, RENEWER OF SOCIETY” (JAMES E. KIEFER) | WIKIPEDIA.ORG, “FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE”.)

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

- What were some of the things that might have gotten in the way of Florence’s work?
- Why didn’t those things stop her?
- According to the brief prayers quoted from Florence’s writing, what role do you think Florence’s faith had in her life and work?
- What can we learn from Florence’s example?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Florence had many other options that she could have pursued. Her class and her family might have persuaded her that compassionate work was “beneath her”. The demanding and unpleasant nature of the work, the hostility she met with on arriving in Scutari, and the possibility of contagion were all things that might have deterred Florence from serving: but none of them did.*
- *Florence was highly motivated, and she believed that the compassionate work she was doing was in response to God’s call on her life.*
- *From these small excerpts of her writing, we know that Florence believed in God, and had a personal relationship with him. She prayed, and she sensed God’s direction. She wanted to serve him – when she was 16, and 30, and 65. With St. Mary, she wished to offer herself as a “handmaid of the Lord” (Luke 1:38).*
- *Like Florence, we can offer ourselves to God’s service and try to discern how best to serve. We can meet the work he gives us with dedication, with practicality as well as compassion, and we can remain committed in spite of opposition, unpleasantness and even age and illness.*

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 Florence 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 Florence, 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.