

# SET APART

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## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Mural paper, pens, markers, pencil crayons; stack of old newspapers and magazines, scissors, paper and glue
- 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: URBAN INTERSECTION

Bring in a generously sized piece of mural paper (or make one by taping smaller pages together), and have available some old/unwanted newspapers and magazines. Your teens are making a mural of a busy urban intersection. All of the illustrated persons who appear in the mural should be detailed characters, complete with thought-bubbles that show what they're thinking about. Ask your teens to try to create many illustrated characters that would be considered “normal” in this setting, plus one or two that might be a bit unusual or stand out in some way. Take a moment to ask the teens to describe what they've created.

FOR GROUPS OF FIVE OR LESS, ALLOW THE TEENS TO WORK TOGETHER DIRECTLY ON THE LARGER PAPER. FOR BIGGER GROUPS, SPLIT THE TEENS INTO TEAMS OF 3-5 AND ASSIGN EACH TEAM ITS OWN SECTION OF THE MURAL (YOU'LL HAVE TO DIVIDE IT INTO PIECES). FOR GROUPS OF MORE THAN 30 YOU MAY WISH TO HAVE MULTIPLE MURALS.

## 622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

## DISCUSSION: DEFINITION + DRIVE

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.

- How do you think your friends would describe you? What would they say defines you (your identity)? What would they say drives you (motivation or purpose)?
- Do you think they have a true sense of who you are? Why or why not?
- What factors have influenced your sense of identity and purpose in life? Does your relationship with God affect these things?

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

- *Hopefully the people who know you best would describe you accurately and charitably. They might point out your physical features, what you're good at, and how you like to spend your time. They might be able to say what sort of goals motivate you to work the hardest.*
- *Proverbs 18:24 says, “A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother”. Having a few close and trustworthy friends is a great gift in life. But it's possible to have many casual friends and still feel very lonely, like no one really does know, understand, and care for us. In order to gain the best*

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*sort of friendship, we may have to be vulnerable enough to allow others to actually know us, even if we worry that they may not be as impressed with us as we'd like them to be.*

- *Most of us would acknowledge the influence of our genetic make up, the people in our lives, and our personal experiences. Perhaps you've also been influenced by role models in media and broader culture. But as believers, our faith should come to influence every aspect of our lives. Our relationship with God transforms our sense of identity and purpose in life. This may take time, but if you allow him to work in your heart, you will find that you begin to stand apart from the crowd in ways that are obvious as well as in ways that are less obvious.*

## THE LESSON: 1 PETER 1

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

Way back in the book of Genesis, God called a man named Abram (later to be renamed Abraham) to leave behind everything he knew and to follow after him. As we look through the Old Testament, we find this recurring theme of God calling and reminding his people that they are to be *different*: “You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples that you should be mine” (Leviticus 20:26).

Do you remember the words of Jesus when he called his disciples? They, too, were called to leave everything behind and “follow”. The road was not going to be an easy one, in fact, Jesus said that following him would involve “taking up a cross”, but his disciples followed because they knew that it was better to travel a hard road with Jesus than to take any other path without him.

In each encounter, responding to the call to follow God requires something of us. It requires that we leave behind an allegiance to this world, and align ourselves with a holy pattern – God’s pattern. The relationship that he invites us into means taking on an identity and purpose characterized by holiness – by being set apart for God.

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In the first letter of St. Peter, the Apostle reiterates this call to his readers. He wants them to know that by God’s “great mercy” they have been given “a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” (1:3-4). Yet this amazing gift has some important implications for how they live.

Refer to 1 Peter 1:13-19.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS’ NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

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

- This passage uses several relationship-images to describe believers. Take a closer look at the references to our being children, exiles and ransomed people. Why do you think St. Peter is using these particular images?
- What does St. Peter say should (and should not) characterize believers?
- Why do you think he places such emphasis on the mind in verse 13?
- What ultimate goal does St. Peter want his readers to focus on?
- What does this passage mean for us today?

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A few notes and reflections for reference:

- St. Peter describes us as children of God the Father (v17), called to be obedient children (v14), and to take after our Father in character, being holy because he is holy (v16). He wants his readers to understand that this intimate relationship needs to be something that defines them and determines how they live. St. Peter also describes our time on earth as “exile” (v17) because he wants his readers to recognize that they no longer belong to the old things that formerly defined them, and that the world not our real home. We’re reminded too that we were ransomed by the sacrifice of Jesus and that it was no small inconsequential thing for us to be freed from the clutches of sin and brought into this new relationship (v18-19).
- Believers are to be alert in mind (v13), with hope set on eternal things (v13), obedient to God and holy like he is (v14), recognizing his authority regardless of what may be happening around us (v17), and grateful in the knowledge of how much has been done for us (v18-19). We are to separate ourselves from worldly passions which may have previously been a part of our lives (v14), and not return to a way of living that is common with those who do not know God (v18).
- St. Peter begins this passage with two phrases about the mind that believers are to have: prepared for action and sober. Both phrases suggest that we are to be alert and ready. The emphasis is reminiscent of other passages that warn us not to be “conformed to this world”, but to be “transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12:2); and to “train yourself for godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7). Oftentimes, before we fall into sinful words and deeds, the battle is lost in our thoughts, so we’re called to be alert and disciplined in that inner place.
- Verse 13 says, “set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”. St. Peter wants his readers to focus on the spiritual reality and goal of their life, rather than becoming distracted or derailed by whatever they may encounter along the way. Warren W. Wiersbe provides a helpful illustration for this, writing, “Just as an engaged couple makes all their plans in the light of that future wedding, so Christians today live with the expectation of seeing Jesus Christ”.
- This passage tells us that, as believers, our identity and purpose are found in God. Our lives should not look like the lives of those around us in the world, but rather they should point in every way to God’s character and to the hope that we have of being with him in heaven. If we’ve allowed worldly things to play too large a role in defining us, then we need to consider renewing our mind – perhaps by spending more time with God’s word, in prayer, and by being in the company of other believers.

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).)

**Take a moment to read through this general thanksgiving from Morning Prayer:**

*Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; But above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; For the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And we beseech*

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*thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; By giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen. (BCP PAGE 14)*

Each day this week, take a moment to pray with the words of the General Thanksgiving. If it helps, rewrite the prayer in your own words and using “I” instead of “we”. (For example, “Almighty and merciful Father-God, I am an unworthy servant, but I give you sincere thanks for all of your loving generosity to me...”.) Spend a bit of extra time meditating on the phrase “walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days”.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

*Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and ever. Amen. (COLLECT FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT, BCP PAGE 95)*

## 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 ONE OF THE THEMED PRAYERS FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the “Grace”, the final prayer in the booklet.

### 1 PETER 1: **WHO WE ARE IS BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS**

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup>but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup>since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” <sup>17</sup>And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup>knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup>but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.