

WATER/SPIRIT

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Paper, pens, markers, pencil crayons, 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: INNER/OUTER PORTRAIT

Provide the teens with paper and something to draw with. Their challenge is to draw a self-portrait, divided in half vertically. On the one side they should draw themselves as they appear on the outside, and on the other side they should draw metaphors or create labels for what is going on “inside”. You may need to provide them with a few concrete examples: Do their eyes see others through a lens of love? Perhaps they could draw some heart-shaped glasses on the metaphor-side. Are they someone who doesn't like to be “out-and-about”? Perhaps they could draw concrete blocks on their feet. If they are believers, ask them to give particular thought to expressing this on their portrait.

Allow those who wish to present and explain their finished sketches to do so, but let them know they can keep the sketches private if they wish. Encourage them to be as thorough and honest as possible.

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.

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: GETTING TO KNOW THE INNER YOU

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 would you describe your “inner” qualities? Do you think other people can see these things in you?
- How do your inner qualities affect your “outer” life?
- What do you do when you want to get to know someone better? How long does it take before you feel like you've succeeded?

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

- *Character and passions differ from person to person. Hopefully the fruit of Spirit has a place in the qualities that we possess (“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”. Galatians 5:22-23). Those who know us best or who have had the chance to spend time with us should have a sense of these inner qualities, even if they are not readily obvious to strangers.*
- *Our inner qualities make a difference to our outward behaviour – our words and actions. These values affect everything from the priorities that govern what we choose to wear, to how we spend our time, to the way that we treat others, etc.*
- *What is true for us is also true for others. We cannot always know what someone else's inner qualities are without getting to know them, spending time with them, learning about the connection between their inner and outer self. Getting to know someone takes time. Many of us are reluctant to be vulnerable with new friends, so it can take time before we achieve real understanding.*

WATER/SPIRIT

THE LESSON: JOHN 3 + 19

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.

(IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO HELP RESPOND TO QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE RAISED DURING THIS UNIT, WE RECOMMEND "DISCOVERING THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: A HANDS-ON APPROACH, VOLUME 2: OUR LIFE IN THE CHURCH" BY SUE CARELESS.)

All journeys have a starting point. For Christians, the starting point is the “rebirth” that happens when we repent of our sin and turn to Jesus Christ in faith. It is this spiritual reality that we celebrate in baptism.

Before Jesus’ earthly ministry began, John the Baptist came on the scene calling people to repent of their sin and be baptized with water. He said, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Luke 3:16). John was preparing the way for Jesus, letting people know that something unprecedented was about to take place. But it wasn’t until Jesus died and rose again that Christian baptism came to symbolize more than simply a washing from sin, but also being buried and raised again with Jesus through faith, born again to new life in God, and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

In some traditions, including the Anglican tradition, children born to believing parents are baptized as infants in anticipation of them making the faith their own, something they still must do when they reach an age of understanding. The fledgling believer is then given instruction in the faith (“catechesis”) to equip them on the road ahead, and afterwards “confirmed” with a liturgy of prayer and the laying on of hands. Though the traditions within the broader Christian family vary, we are united in seeking to recognize and celebrate the “inward and spiritual grace” of a new life in Christ.

+++

Spiritual things can be hard for us to wrap our heads around. Scripture tells us that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). But we are flesh-and-blood people and we’re better at understanding what we can see and touch. Jesus knew this about us. It was one of the reasons he so often spoke in parables, using familiar things to help us understand the things that are beyond what our senses can grasp, like our need to be “born of the Spirit”.

Refer to John 3: 1-21, 19: 38-40. **Note that many events take place between these two passages, and the second one takes place after the crucifixion and death of Jesus (but before his resurrection).**

(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.

- What do these passages tell us about Nicodemus?
- What are some of the illustrations and allusions that Jesus uses in John 3?
- What do you think Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand?
- How does this text relate to us today?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews (3:1). He was a leader and deeply religious. He was part of a group of people who were used to being looked up to and having authority in religious matters. Many of those in Nicodemus’ cohort did not welcome Jesus or his teaching. But Nicodemus went to Jesus “by night” (3:2). He wanted to have a one-on-one talk in order to better understand. From his first statement Nicodemus addressed Jesus with respect and confidence calling him “Rabbi” or “Teacher” and acknowledging that he came from God and that God was the source of the signs Jesus had performed (3:2). But even though Nicodemus would have been well educated in the Hebrew scriptures, his understanding was imperfect, earning him a gentle rebuke from Jesus*

WATER/SPIRIT

(3:10). Nicodemus struggled to understand the spiritual reality that Jesus was explaining and yet he continued to ask questions (3:4,9). We know that Nicodemus’ understanding blossomed because he was there, honouring the Lord’s body with Joseph of Arimathea after the crucifixion (19:39).

- Jesus starts by talking about being “born again”. In this passage “water” describes the natural birth of human infants, but in order to see the kingdom of God, something else is needed, a second, spiritual birth (3:3-6). The spirit is like wind; in fact the Old Testament Hebrew word ruach means both spirit and wind. We cannot see the Spirit, but we can see evidence of the Spirit at work in those who have been born again. Jesus goes on to explain that he is God’s Son, sent from heaven to save the world (3:13-18). To illustrate this he alludes to an Old Testament story (3:14). In the original story (Numbers 21:4-9), the people of Israel had sinned and were dying under the attack of fiery serpents. But when they repented, they were given a bronze serpent on a pole which they could look upon and live. Finally, Jesus speaks in terms of light and darkness. Many people cling to the darkness because it conceals their sin, but Jesus is the light. If we will choose truth, we will come to him in belief and repentance and be saved (3:19-21).
- Jesus wanted Nicodemus to come to know who He, Jesus, was. He wanted him to believe so that he could have that new and everlasting life. It’s encouraging to note that even though Nicodemus seemed a bit slow in understanding (3:4, 9), he did come to follow Jesus, even risking discovery and backlash from the other Pharisees in order to care for Jesus’ body and provide it with a good burial (19:39).
- Like Nicodemus, we all have the opportunity to turn to Jesus in repentance and belief and be born again, born of the Spirit. If we will do so, we will be saved and have eternal life (3:16). Like Nicodemus, we can then continue in our journey with Jesus at our side, growing in grace and understanding throughout our new life.

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))

During this unit, we’re going to take some of the prayers that come from the liturgies of Baptism and Confirmation and pray them for one another as a reminder and a renewal of commissioning.

Spend some time reflecting on and praying with the words of this prayer:

We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate these persons with thy Holy Spirit, to receive them for thine own children by adoption, and to make them members of thy holy Church. Grant that, being now born again, and made heirs of everlasting salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, they may continue thy servants, and attain thy promises; through the same Lord Jesus Christ thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

(FROM THE CONFIRMATION SECTION OF THE MINISTRATION OF HOLY BAPTISM TO SUCH AS ARE OF RIPER YEARS, BCP PAGE 539)

CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

WATER/SPIRIT

Before closing, ask the teens to listen quietly while you pray the words of the At-Home Challenge prayer over them.

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.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.

JOHN 3 + 19: **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN**

3¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." ³Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

⁹Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgement: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

19³⁸After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. ³⁹Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. ⁴⁰So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.