

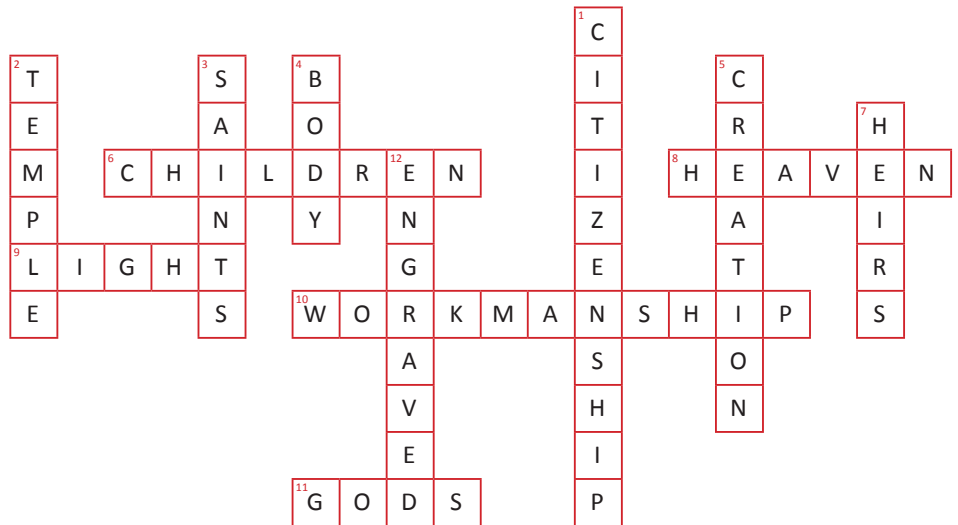
ENTER THE KINGDOM

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 - *note fifth page re ice breaker, you may want multiple copies*
- 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: CROSSWORD O’ CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

As the teens arrive, provide copies of the crossword puzzle (page five of the leader’s notes), and have them see how far they can get in the allotted time. They will need Bibles to look up the references given in the clues. If time allows, take the answers up together, otherwise set the crossword to one side and provide the answer key (to right) at the end of the lesson. Some of the verses will be familiar and others may be obscure. This is intended to act as a teaser introducing the topic of Christian identity.



FOR SMALLER GROUPS, YOU MAY EITHER HAVE THE GROUP WORK COOPERATIVELY ON A SINGLE COPY OF THE PUZZLE, OR WORK COMPETITIVELY AS INDIVIDUALS. FOR LARGER GROUPS, TRY DIVIDING THEM UP INTO TEAMS COMPETING TO ANSWER MORE THAN THE OTHER TEAMS BEFORE TIME’S UP.

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: MAKING IT OFFICIAL

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 we were to go out to the local park, and ask people to describe their “identity”, what sort of answers do you think we would get?

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- What are some changes to identity that people might experience in life? If they want to let others know about the change, what might they do to “make it official”?

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

- *People might describe their country of origin, they might describe their family or their job. They might describe the things they like to do or the people they like to spend time with. See what your teens come up with.*
- *When people immigrate to a new country and take on citizenship there is often a ceremony with an oath involved to mark this change. When people marry, they will go through a legal process and often a religious ceremony with vows in the presence of their community, and this may be followed by other changes in their name and status on various legal documents to reflect their new identity. A major change in occupation or a retirement might be celebrated with friends and colleagues. In general, especially if we are happy about the change taking place in our lives, we want to let others know and/or mark the occasion formally.*
- *Note: You may wish to end the discussion time by sharing Galatians 3:27-28, which says, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”.*

THE LESSON: ACTS 8

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.)

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).*

These are the words of the “Great Commission” given by Jesus to his disciples before he ascended into heaven. So the disciples were left with a task to do, and that task involved sharing the Gospel, baptizing those who believed, and instructing them in the faith so that they too would become strong disciples, ready to share in this mission.

But why baptize? Why not just preach and teach? Baptism is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” (BCP p. 550). It is a moment when we (or our parents on our behalf) make our new life official. Baptism declares “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness” (BCP p. 551), and that we have been “made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven” (BCP p. 532). Wow, right?

So baptism signals a new start for us as individuals within the Church. In Christ, we have a whole new identity, a whole new purpose. As St. Paul wrote: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come... Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17, 20).

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Let's take a look at a story from the book of Acts. Jesus had ascended into heaven. His disciples had been given the Great Commission to carry out. But fierce persecution against the believers had broken out and many of them had scattered. In spite of this, Philip and his friends were through with hiding. They had seen their resurrected Lord and knew that he was with them, guiding them in their mission.

Refer to Acts 8:26-39.

(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).

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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 does this passage tell us about Philip?
- What does this passage tell us about the Ethiopian eunuch?
- How do you think Philip explained the passage from Isaiah?
- How can we see God at work in this text?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *We aren't told how exactly the angel of the Lord appeared to Philip, but we do know that he received this message from the Lord and was obedient. When he saw this rich Ethiopian's chariot, did he wonder how he might be received? If he did, it didn't deter his obedience. The Holy Spirit nudged him to go closer, and Philip ran to do so. When he heard someone reading from the Hebrew scriptures he understood what he was meant to do. Philip was trained in the scriptures and was equipped to share the Gospel with confidence. After baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip was prompted to move on. He knew that he could trust God to take care of this new believer.*
- *Although we do not find out the name of the new convert in this text, we do find out a lot about him. He was an important court official for the queen of Ethiopia and was someone who believed in the God of Israel, having come to Jerusalem to worship. He had a copy of the book of Isaiah and was reading it with interest, but not understanding. He must have felt very alone in his truth-seeking, and was quick to invite Philip to explain to him the meaning of these things. This man was ready for the Gospel. No sooner had he heard the good news, than he wanted to take the next step, baptism. Though Philip had to leave quickly, this man went "on his way, rejoicing".*
- *The Ethiopian eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53, a passage sometimes called "the suffering servant", which points to the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins. Other verses from this passage are familiar: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities... All we like sheep have gone astray... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53: 4-6).*
- *Verse 26 tells us that Philip's movements were directed by God. "An angel of the Lord" sent him in a specific direction. God knew the Ethiopian man was there, ready to hear the Gospel, but needing someone to share it with him. God saw, God cared, and God sent Philip. The story leads us to wonder what happened next. What did the driver of the chariot think? What happened when the joy-filled newly baptized man returned home? Did he find someone to instruct him further? Did he share the Gospel with his friends? The text doesn't tell us, but it leaves us with a sense that we're only getting a snapshot of the story, a story that God was sovereign over before it even began, and long after the written record closed.*

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:

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Almighty and everlasting God, As thou hast promised in thy holy Word, saying, Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you: So give now unto us that ask; let us that seek find; open the gate unto us that knock; that these persons being stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may come to thy eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(ADAPTED FROM THE MINISTRATION OF HOLY BAPTISM TO SUCH AS ARE OF RIPER YEARS, BCP PAGE 533)

CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

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

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.

ACTS 8: ON HIS WAY, REJOICING

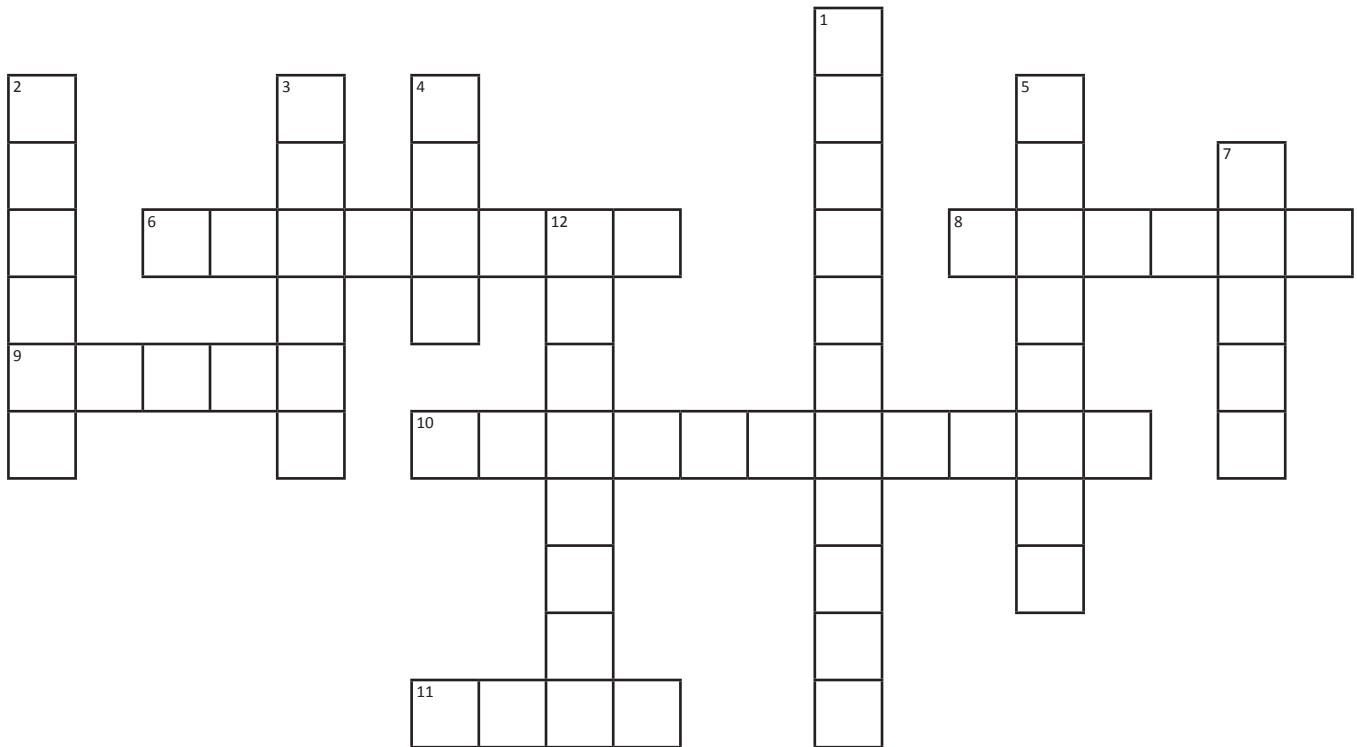
²⁶Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. ²⁷And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." ³⁰So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."

³⁴And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

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ACROSS

6. "Beloved, we are God's _____ now"
(1 John 3:2)
8. "Rejoice that your names are written in _____"
(Luke 10:20)
9. "Walk as children of _____"
(Ephesians 5:8)
10. "We are his _____"
(Ephesians 2:10)
11. "Now you are _____ people"
(1 Peter 2:10)

DOWN

1. "Our _____ is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20)
2. "Your body is a _____ of the Holy Spirit within you"
(1 Corinthians 6:19)
3. "You are fellow citizens with the _____"
(Ephesians 2:19)
4. "You are the _____ of Christ and individually
members of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27)
5. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new _____"
(2 Corinthians 5:17)
7. "Fellow _____ with Christ" (Romans 8:17)
12. "I have _____ you on the palms of my hands"
(Isaiah 49:16)