

ENTER THE FAMILY

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- A ball of yarn
- 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: KIND CONNECTIONS

Ask your teens to sit in a circle and explain the activity to them so that they know what's coming. Start off by holding one end of the yarn and throw the ball to someone across the circle. When they have caught it, you must say something kind to or about them. That person must then hold their part of yarn and throw the ball to someone else, saying something kind to or about them, and thus creating a web with the yarn. Make sure that everyone is included. If time permits go around more than once; then see if they are able to “rewind” the ball of yarn by remembering what was said to them and throwing the ball to the person they received it from.

FOR GROUPS OF MORE THAN ELEVEN, YOU MAY WISH TO BREAK INTO TEAMS (IDEALLY BETWEEN SIX AND TEN) TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE GETS INVOLVED.

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: WILL YOU CHEER FOR ME?

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.

- What does it mean to “cheer for” someone in life? Give examples.
- If you could have anybody at all cheer for you in your life, who would it be, and why? Are there people in your life you feel able to rely on to cheer for you?

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

- *When we talk about cheering for someone, it immediately conjures up an image of fans at a sporting event, who are enthusiastically calling out words of support and encouragement to their team. Scripture actually uses this imagery when it describes the inspiration that we ought to have from the example of the saints who have gone before us (Hebrews 12:1). In life, we have the opportunity to encourage and support one another to remain faithful and thrive in our faith. In order to do this, we need to be in community with one another, knowing about the struggles and triumphs experienced by our Christian family so that we can “rejoice with those who rejoice” and “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).*

ENTER THE FAMILY

- *There's no right or wrong answer to this, but it's worth noting that we tend to want the support and encouragement of people that we admire and respect. Sometimes God sends people our way whom we would not have expected or wished, to cheer us on. When this happens we sometimes undervalue them or take them for granted. As a Christian family, we have the responsibility of cheering for one another.*

THE LESSON: ACTS 10-11

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.)

Baptized believers have a duty to cheer for one another. When we celebrate a new life in the Church, it reminds us of our own story: the gift of our salvation, the solemnity of our commitment, and the mutual responsibility we have to one another as family in Christ. Listen to what the Prayer Book liturgy has to say to the Christian witnesses at a baptism:

"Forasmuch as these persons have promised in your presence to renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him: you must remember that it is your part and duty to put them in mind, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession they have now made before this Congregation, and especially before you their chosen Witnesses. And you are also to call upon them to use all diligence to be rightly instructed in God's holy Word; that so they may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world" (BCP p. 540).

Though these words are specifically directed to the individuals committed to walk alongside the newly baptized throughout their lives, all believers should hear in them a call to care for our brothers and sisters in Christ. And remember, not only must we care *for* them, but also receive care *from* them, since now we belong to one another in the Lord.

+++

The early Church faced a serious challenge. Among those who had come to the faith were Jewish believers, who had worked hard to lead holy lives according to the Old Testament law, and who recognized Jesus as their promised Messiah. But there were also Gentile (non-Jewish) believers, who came from cultures and had practices that the Jewish believers found objectionable. How could these siblings in Christ live together harmoniously? This challenge was not solved overnight. Let's take a look at one part of the story in the Book of Acts.

Refer to Acts 10:34-35, 10:44-11:4, 11:15-18.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READING FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGE FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ IT IN ITS ENTIRETY: ACTS 10: 34 THROUGH TO ACTS 11: 18.)

(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 are some of the things noted in this passage that Christians have in common?
- What are some of the things noted in this passage that may differ among Christians?
- How did the Jewish Christians respond to the news that the Gentiles were also to be included in the Gospel?
- What can we learn from the example of Peter and the Jewish believers?

ENTER THE FAMILY

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- The passage refers to those who fear God and do what is right (10:25), who have heard and accepted the word of God (10:44, 11:1), experienced “repentance that leads to life” (11:18), believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (11:17), have received the gift of the Holy Spirit (10:44, 11:15), and ultimately receive Christian baptism (10:48).
- Highlighted in the passage as not making a difference to whether someone might become a Christian is whether they are Jewish or Gentile (10:45), circumcised or uncircumcised (11:3), or of any nationality at all (10:35).
- The Jewish believers had not expected this to happen, and we find that those who witnessed it were “amazed” (10:45). This Gentile mass conversion runs parallel to the Jewish Pentecost described in Acts 2. Those who had not been present heard about it later and were critical of Peter for having associated with Gentiles at all (11:2-3). However, once they understood what had happened they “fell silent”; their criticism stopped and instead they “glorified God” (11:18). This is worth further reflection. The Jewish believers went from wanting total separation to accepting and cheering for their new siblings in the faith. This change was brought about because they recognized that it was a work of God and his clear will for the Church.
- Peter recognized God at work after receiving a vision (Acts 10:1-33), and witnessing the experience of salvation and the divine gift of the Holy Spirit among the Gentiles when they heard the Gospel. Even though this was surprising, Peter did not waste time grumbling, but accepted the development with joy, arranging for their baptism and acceptance in to the Christian family. In a similar way, the Jewish believers in Jerusalem were understandably skeptical until the matter had been explained. But once they too understood that genuine conversion had been confirmed by God’s gift of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles, they were ready to cheer for their new family members – and responded by glorifying God. Like Peter and the Jewish believers, we need to exercise discernment, asking reasonable questions based on what we understand the Gospel to be. But also like them, we need to be ready to recognize when God is at work and rejoice with the angels when new brothers or sisters who had been lost are found (Luke 15:32).

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:

O Lord, We ask that these persons who have been received into the Congregation of Christ’s flock, and signed with the sign of the Cross, hereafter shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ’s faithful soldiers and servants unto their life’s end. Amen. (ADAPTED FROM THE MINISTRATION OF HOLY BAPTISM TO SUCH AS ARE OF RIPER YEARS, BCP PAGE 537)

ENTER THE FAMILY

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 10-11: FROM STRANGERS TO FAMILY

10 ³⁴So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him..."

⁴⁴While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷"Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ⁴⁸And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

11 ¹Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ²So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ³"You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." ⁴But Peter began and explained it to them in order "... ¹⁵As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."