

IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

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
- 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: ACCORDING TO... SIMON

Choose one person to act as the leader (“Simon”). The leader goes through a series of actions beginning with the words “Simon says *do this*”. The rest of the group must imitate the actions. Occasionally, the leader will give an instruction without beginning “Simon says” and then the group must not follow. The leader’s goal is to “catch” those who are following when they shouldn’t, who are then eliminated from the round.

IF YOU HAVE A SMALL GROUP, LET EACH TEEN TAKE A TURN ACTING AS THE LEADER. FOR LARGER GROUPS, STICK TO ONE LEADER AND PLAY TILL MOST OF YOUR GROUP HAS BEEN ELIMINATED..

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: WHO SAYS?

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.

- Make a quick list together of things your teens believe to be “right” and things they believe to be “wrong”. When the list is complete, ask them how they decided which things belonged in which category.
- Whom do you trust to set boundaries for you right now? What about later in life?

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

- *Modern western culture invites us to be our own measure of morality. The pervasive attitudes of relativism and secular humanism can influence the thinking of believers too when we are not firmly rooted in time with God and God’s people. God created the world and everything in it, including us. He is the ultimate judge of what is right and what is wrong. God’s character and his will for us define true morality, and all this is revealed in holy scripture.*
- *Chances are your teens will think of parents and teachers. Perhaps they also have friends and older siblings or mentors in their lives who come to mind. These are people who care about us and who have wisdom that we trust to keep us safe. As we get older, we do not lose the need for the boundaries of morality and trusted advisors. If we are believers, then we must look to God’s word to tell us how we ought to live.*

IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

THE LESSON: GENESIS 39

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 3: SPECIAL OCCASIONS" BY SUE CARELESS.)

The marriage service opens with these familiar words: "Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this Congregation..." Did you catch that? *God is witness to the marriage vows!*

No matter where we go in life, God sees us. Scripture tells us plainly: "No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). God knows whether we are honouring our promises or whether we're trying to see what we can get away with. He knows whether we are living in obedience to him or living in defiant rebellion. And this applies to every one of us: married and single, believing and unbelieving. God sees, he knows, and he cares.

Knowing that all we do is seen by our Creator should motivate us to live righteous lives. But remember this: should you ever find yourself at rock bottom, having made all the wrong decisions, don't despair. The same passage that reminds us that we're exposed to God's sight, goes on to say this: "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

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Perhaps you're familiar with the story of Joseph in Genesis. When he was still very young, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and taken to a foreign land. Even in those difficult circumstances, surrounded by strangers who did not believe in his God, Joseph remained faithful. Neither did God forget about him, but used him in marvellous ways. Today we're just going to look at one very small part of Joseph's story.

Refer to Genesis 39:1-10. (*If time permits, you may wish to read all of chapter 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).

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 had actually happened to Joseph here? How would you have been feeling in that situation? What was Joseph's attitude?
- Check out the number of times the first paragraph refers to "the Lord". Why do you think that is?
- If Joseph had done what Potiphar's wife wanted, who would have been "injured"?
- Check out verse 9. Joseph identified adultery as a sin "against God". Why?
- How did Joseph choose to respond to temptation?
- Does anyone know what happened next in Joseph's story?
- What can we learn from Joseph's story and example?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Joseph had been betrayed by his own brothers and sold as a slave. He'd been taken away by a group of strangers (Ishmaelites) and sold to an Egyptian official. Under these circumstances it would be understandable if he felt angry, sullen and hopeless. But Joseph took on his new life conscientiously.*

IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

- We are told specifically that the Lord was with Joseph (v2, 3), and the message is repeated that God was actively blessing Joseph so that whatever he did succeeded (v 3, 5). Even though it may seem like Joseph was alone and abandoned by God, that was not the reality of the situation. The reality was that God was present with him, watching over him, and blessing him.
- Adultery is a sin that “injures” those involved in it and that ripples out to cause harm to their relationships with others. It certainly harms the spouses of the adulterers and any children in the home. But it also disappoints and grieves all those who care for them and want to see them live righteous lives. Hebrews 13:4 says “Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous”.
- All sin is offensive to God. Psalm 5:4 says, “You are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you”. Like Joseph, David also recognized this after committing adultery and murder, when he said “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Samuel 12:13). Sin not only damages human relationships, but it also damages our relationship with God.
- Joseph wasn’t naïve about what was going on. He understood what Potiphar’s wife was after and he was determined not to sin. He was very clear with her that he would not do what she wanted. He spoke to her in persuasive words about loyalty to her husband, words that should have roused her conscience as well (v8-9). When the harassment continued, Joseph refused to listen to her or to be with her (v10). He refused to put himself in a position where it would have been easy to slide into compromise.
- Frustrated with Joseph’s refusal to commit adultery, Potiphar’s wife falsely accused him of rape and he was put in prison. But again we find “the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison” (Genesis 39:21). Eventually Joseph ended up as an advisor to Pharaoh and saved the people, including his own family, from starvation during a lengthy famine. Joseph’s choice not to sin had very real negative repercussions, yet those repercussions were not the end of the story. Even in prison, God was with him, blessing him and making a way forward.
- Joseph is an amazing example for us of a man who knew that all of his life was lived in God’s sight – even if life took him to a strange land, to slavery, and to prison. In all of this, Joseph chose to be faithful and to live in a way that honoured God. He was never out of God’s sight, never beyond God’s intervention and blessing. We, too, can seek to live with an awareness that God sees us and cares for us. We, too, can seek to be obedient in everything, no matter where we find ourselves.

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).)

The following wonderful prayer is taken from the Family Prayers section of the Prayer Book. Try praying the words of this prayer each morning this week. Pray through it slowly, one phrase at a time, thinking about each

IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

part of it as you read. If there are specific “cares and occupations” that you want to bring before God, take the time to do that.

O heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray thee so to guide and govern us by thy Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our daily life we may never forget thee, but remember that we are ever walking in thy sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(A PRAYER FOR REMEMBRANCE OF GOD’S PRESENCE, FROM FAMILY PRAYERS, BCP, PAGE 731)

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.

GENESIS 39: NEVER FORGOTTEN BY GOD

¹Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. ²The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. ⁴So Joseph found favour in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ⁵From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. ⁶So he left all that he had in Joseph’s charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. ⁷And after a time his master’s wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, “Lie with me.” ⁸But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. ⁹He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” ¹⁰And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.