

OVERFLOW

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Snack ingredients for ice breaker
- 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: PREPARED JUST FOR YOU

Plan ahead by choosing a food type (suggestions below) and picking up ingredients. In teams, challenge your teens to use the ingredients you've provided to create a treat for the other teams. Allow them a short time to create their snacks. Allow each team the chance to present what they've prepared and the other teams the opportunity to sample and score them on how enjoyable the creation is.

The simplest food types will be no-bake snacks such as trail mixes and sundaes, but if time and your facilities permit you may also challenge them with more complex ingredients and the opportunity to use a microwave, stovetop and/or oven.

FOR GROUPS OF THREE OR LESS, HAVE YOUR TEENS WORK AS INDIVIDUALS. FOR GROUPS OF FOUR TO EIGHT, BREAK INTO PAIRS, AND FOR LARGER GROUPS, HAVE THE TEENS WORK IN TEAMS OF THREE OR FOUR.

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: HONOURING GUESTS

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.

- Have you ever been a guest somewhere? Did you enjoy yourself? Why/why not?
- Have you ever hosted a friend at your home? What did you do to prepare for your guest?
- What do you think the best host in the world would be like?

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

- *Most of your teens will have had experiences of visiting family or friends for a meal or an overnight stay. Hopefully those experiences were good ones where their friends gave some thought to their comfort and enjoyment. If the experiences were not good, ask them to consider why. We can learn from the insensitivities of others how to be sensitive and thoughtful ourselves.*
- *When a friend comes to stay, you must think about where they will sleep and what you will offer them to eat. You may also plan some activities to do together, or if they are from out of town take them to see some local attractions that will be of interest.*

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- *The best host would be one who considers your needs and your comfort. A host who knows you well will be able to plan around any allergies or dietary needs that you have so that your visit is pleasant. They will be able to choose activities that will be enjoyable and interesting for you – whether outdoor activities or local sites, movies or music. They will want to ensure that you are safe and feel welcome, with a good place to sleep and good food to eat. Most of all, they will spend time with you, talking and listening and demonstrating love in word and deed.*

THE LESSON: PSALM 84

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.)

Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

Believers cherish a longing to be “at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). When we think of our eternal home, we know it will be a place where we are loved, a place where we can be confident that we belong – because Jesus has gone to great lengths to prepare it *for us*. We know most of all, that it will be a place without sin and sorrow, and characterized by the presence of our Lord.

When believers establish a home, that place can be an earthly foretaste of our eternal home, and a blessing that overflows to become a blessing to others too. What does this look like? In a word, hospitality. A couple joined in holy matrimony are blessed with one another. In many cases, that blessing will overflow into the blessing of children. But the Christian home should also be a place that overflows with the blessing of hospitality. Married or single, we can all witness to the Gospel by inviting others into an experience of a loving place prepared just for them.

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The Psalm we’re going to look at today speaks of a longing to be in the house of the Lord. The writer was referring to the temple, the place where the Lord’s presence was found. Today, we worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), knowing that the presence of the Holy Spirit is with us wherever we are – in church, at school or work, and in the home as well.

Refer to Psalm 84.

(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.

- Can anyone tell us what “Selah” means?
- What does this Psalm tell us about what God is like?
- What are some of the blessings specifically mentioned in this Psalm?
- What do you think the psalmist is getting at with his reference to the sparrow and swallow in verse 3?
- Psalm 84 speaks of a deep longing to be where God is. Is this something you can relate to? If so, does this longing inspire you in any way?
- What are some ways we can remember and honour God’s presence in the places where we live?

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A few notes and reflections for reference:

- “Selah” is a word we find often in the psalms and is a musical notation which is left untranslated. It is believed to refer to a division or a musical interlude. It is a prompt for readers to pause to reflect and praise God in light of what has just been read (or sung).
- God is alive (v2), and the place where he dwells is lovely (v1). He is strong and generous (v11), and a source of great blessing. This Psalm uses several titles for God: He is the Lord of hosts (angelic beings), King and God, God in Zion, God of Jacob, and Lord God.
- Those who dwell in God’s house are inspired to sing his praise (v4). They are blessed because they are continually in his presence. Those whose strength is in God and who trust in him find in him their “sun and shield”, who bestows “favour and honour” (v11). Verse 11 reminds us that God is like a good and generous father (see Matthew 7:7-11). Notice that there’s a contrast with worldly ideas of what blessedness might look like – a long life or a prestigious position are not to be preferred to the humblest place in the presence of God (v10).
- Sparrows and swallows are small, modest birds of little value. Yet they have value in God’s sight, and those that make their homes in his presence are the envy of the psalmist. Remember that Jesus, in the Gospels, said, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:29-31).
- The psalmist’s longing is less about the physical space (the temple) and more about being in the presence of God. Believers know the privilege of being constantly in God’s presence, though we may not live in a way that honours that. We can choose to make time each day for prayer, scripture reading, and contemplation. Some of us may have even found that the times we set aside for these things have begun to seem too short. We wish we could spend more time being consciously in God’s presence than we are able to. This can inspire us to set aside time throughout our days and weeks to turn off our devices and focus on the Lord. It can inspire us to make time to pray and speak about God when we are together with other believers. It can also inspire us to make our homes places that remind us of God’s presence.
- Are there things in your home (or your room) that are not honouring to God? Perhaps it’s time to get rid of them. Consider your books, the artwork on your walls, the music you listen to: do they draw you into God’s presence or away from it? When our homes do reflect God’s presence in our lives, then inviting others into that space can become a means of witness.

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 blessing is included at the conclusion of a little service called “Thanksgiving after Childbirth”, designed for when a newborn child is welcomed into a family. But think for a moment of all those you welcome into your home: each one of them was lovingly made by God. Ask God to help you offer hospitality with what you

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have – whatever that may be – as a way to love and serve him in this life. As you say the blessing, consider treating it as a prayer you could offer for those who visit your home as you send them on their way again.

Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you. The Lord bless you, and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and evermore. Amen.

(BLESSING FROM THE THANKSGIVING AFTER CHILD-BIRTH, BCP PAGE 575)

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.

PSALM 84: **WHERE GOD DWELLS, BLESSING OVERFLOWS**

¹How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

²My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

³Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,

where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

⁴Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! *Selah*

⁵Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

⁶As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.

⁷They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.

⁸O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*

⁹Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!

¹⁰For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

¹¹For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favour and honour.

No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

¹²O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!