

ABLE TO HEAL, ABLE TO FORGIVE

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: ONLY AGREEMENT

Note: In dramatic improvisation it's important for actors to accept suggestions that are offered by their fellow actors rather than rejecting them so that they do not halt the scene they're trying to built together.

In this standard warm-up activity, ask your teens to walk slowly around one another in the room. Start them off by offering a suggested action such as, “Let's walk like crabs” or “Let's greet one another like dogs”. Everyone in the group must respond with the words, “Yes, let's!” and then do what was suggested until the next suggestion is made.

Note: You'll want to allow your teens to come up with their own spontaneous suggested actions, but here are a few more examples, in case you need them to get things started: Let's pretend we're surfing, Let's hop on one foot, Let's pretend to mow the lawn, Let's all jog on the spot, Let's all act like mimes.

IF YOU HAVE SMALL OR SHY GROUPS YOU MAY NEED TO DO MOST OF THE SUGGESTING. FOR LARGER GROUPS, YOU MAY PREFER TO SPLIT THE GROUP INTO TEAMS AND HAVE ONE TEAM WATCH WHILE THE OTHER IS “ON STAGE”, THEN SWITCH.

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: REASONS FOR “NO”

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 you did the ice breaker: Were all of the suggestions offered good ones?
- Have you ever asked God for something to which he answered “No”? Why do you think he answered that way?
- Share the following quote with your teens and ask them to respond: **“We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be”**. - C.S. Lewis
What do you think Lewis meant?

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

- *(re Ice Breaker) Chances are some of the suggestions made in the ice breaker were not to everyone's liking. Give your teens a brief opportunity to give their opinions before moving onto the more serious discussion questions.*

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- *God does not always answer our prayers with “Yes”. Sometimes he responds with “Wait”, and sometimes he responds with “No”. Receiving a “No” response can be upsetting for us. We may wonder whether we did something wrong or whether God really cares. But we need to remember that this experience is not unique to us. St. Paul prayed for his “thorn in the flesh” to be removed and received a “No” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Even Jesus, in Gethsemane asked God to remove the cup of suffering from him (Luke 22:42). We do not always understand why God answers as he does, though “we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).*
- *It can be hard for us to understand why God allows us to experience pain, hardship, and suffering. But scripture reminds us that “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Romans 5:3-4). Like gold that is refined in a fire, our characters can be refined through suffering. As believers, we trust that God is in control and that he knows best, but we also know that this does not exempt us from the experience of suffering.*

THE LESSON: LUKE 5

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.)

On one occasion, when a man born blind came to Jesus for healing, his disciples asked the question, “Who sinned, this man or his parents?” You see, the disciples believed that the man’s illness was the direct consequence of a specific sin. Perhaps they were remembering the warnings of God’s judgement against sin found in the Law (Deuteronomy 28). But Jesus replied, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:2-3).

In the beginning, God’s creation was good in every way. Before human disobedience had entered the world, there was no sickness and no death. But we live in a world in which all kinds of harmful effects resulting from sin affect every one of us. We all experience sickness, suffering and death. God’s wonderful plan of redemption in Jesus Christ is the ultimate response to this.

Nevertheless, scripture exhorts us to pray for those among us who are sick. This does not mean we will always get the answer we would like. But in the moments when our circumstances make us *feel* hopeless, believers are to turn to the God who sees and cares, finding comfort and confidence in his character, knowing that he is faithful, and knowing that he is *able* to do anything, including heal the sick.

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During Jesus’ earthly ministry, there was an unfolding “epiphany” for his followers, as they began to understand who he really was. Let’s take a look now at one of the healing narratives found in the Gospel of Luke.

Refer to Luke 5:17-26.

(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.

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- What do we know about the man who was healed?
- What does this narrative tell us about the friends of the paralysed man?
- What was Jesus revealing about himself in this narrative?
- What are the different ways in which people responded to what they witnessed?
- What do you think this narrative can teach us that's relevant for our lives today?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *The man in the narrative was a paralytic and did not have use of his legs but had to be carried around on a bed. Jesus' words tell us that there was sin in his life that required forgiveness. When the healing occurred, the man responded to Jesus' instructions with obedience, "glorifying God" (v25).*
- *The paralytic's friends were proactive and persistent. In spite of obstacles, they were determined to bring their friend before Jesus. When the crowds proved too much, they let their friend down through the roof (v19). The very next verse tells us that Jesus "saw their faith" and responded with forgiveness (v20) and healing (v24).*
- *In this narrative Jesus was revealing who he was by what he had authority to do: to heal, yes, but also to forgive sins. The Pharisees understood that Jesus was claiming to be God. This is why they accused him of blasphemy (v21). His work was not just about physical healing which people could perceive was supernatural, but also about spiritual restoration which is vital not just in this life, but in the one to come.*
- *The Pharisees had come from all around to hear Jesus teach and to see what he would do (v17). Jesus understood their skepticism, even though it was unspoken, and he addressed it directly with clear reasoning. He wanted them to know that the authority that he had to heal and the authority that he had to forgive came from the same place. The crowds who witnessed this were amazed and "filled with awe" and responded by "glorifying God" (v26).*
- *Jesus understood the thoughts in the minds of the Pharisees and he saw the faith in the hearts of the paralytic's friends and in the paralytic himself. He perceives and understands what is in our hearts and minds too. Jesus has authority to forgive sins and to heal bodies. This is as true today as it was then. Like the friends in this narrative, we can bring those who are sick before Jesus in prayer.*

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))

We are invited to present our requests before God in faith, persisting in prayer, but also following the model of Jesus by saying "thy will be done". Continue to pray for the sick people that you know, using the prayers below to ask for their healing and for a spirit willing to surrender to God's will.

O Lord and heavenly Father, who dost relieve those who suffer in soul and body: Stretch forth thine hand, we beseech thee, to heal thy servants, and to ease their pain; that by thy mercy they may be restored to health of body and mind, and show forth their thankfulness in love to thee and service to their fellow men; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (PRAYER FOR THE RECOVERY OF A SICK PERSON, BCP PAGE 578)

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O Lord Jesu Christ, thou great Physician: Look with thy gracious favour upon this thy servant; give wisdom and discretion to those who minister to him in his sickness; bless all the means used for his recovery; stretch forth thy hand and, according to thy will, restore him to health and strength, that he may live to praise thee for thy goodness and thy grace; to the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

(PRAYER FOR A BLESSING ON THE USE OF MEANS, BCP PAGE 578)

O God our heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being: Grant to these thy servants grace to desire only thy most holy will; that, whether living or dying, they may be thine; for his sake who loved us and gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (PRAYER FOR SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD, BCP PAGE 579)

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 pray the words of the At-Home Challenge prayers with you, for the sick people of your parish, and for any other sick people they may know. You may wish to pause before or during the prayers to invite the teens to say aloud the names of those that come to mind.

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.

LUKE 5: COMPASSION + AUTHORITY

¹⁷On one of those days, as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralysed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, ¹⁹but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. ²⁰And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” ²¹And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ²²When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, “Why do you question in your hearts? ²³Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you’, or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? ²⁴But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralysed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.” ²⁵And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today.”