

PRESENT WITH US

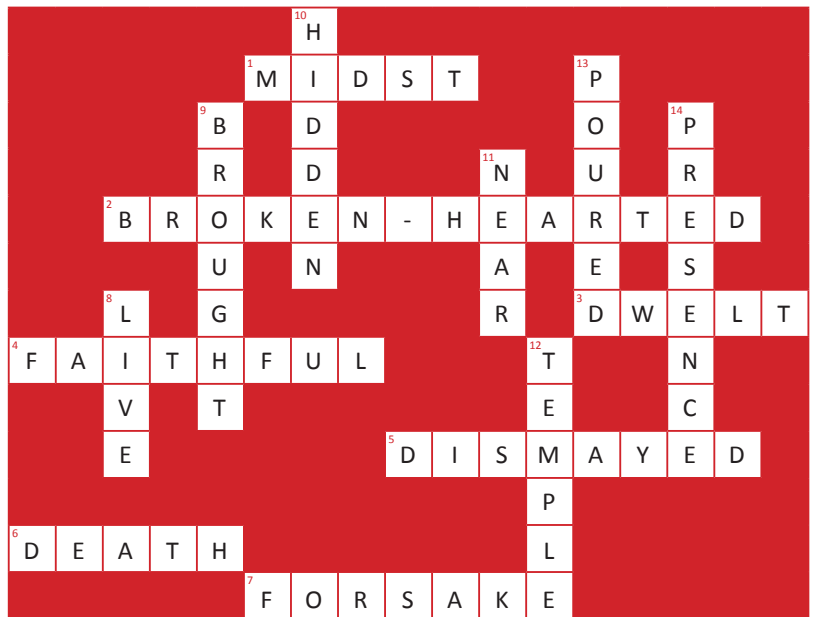
CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- 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: A COMFORTING CROSSWORD

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 provide a sense of how throughout scripture we learn about God’s compassionate presence with his people.

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: A FRIEND WHO “GETS IT”

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 is a “platitude”? Can you think of some examples?
- When you’re going through a difficult time, what sort of person do you want to be with?
- What do you think it means to “weep with those who weep”? Is that something you find challenging?

PRESENT WITH US

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

- A platitude is something that people commonly say which has lost real meaning. Sometimes people use platitudes to avoid awkward silences or when they do not know what to say. Though platitudes may be technically true or well-intentioned, when we say them casually to someone who is suffering, it can show that we do not recognize the depth of their struggle. A few examples include: “What’s meant to be will be”, “Everything will look better tomorrow”, “God has a plan”, “Everything happens for a reason”, and “This too shall pass”.
- When life seems bleak and hopeless, most of us long for a friend who understands, someone with whom we can cry and express all that is in our hearts, someone who will have the patience to listen, to care, and to speak words of hope – not just a brisk platitude before walking away.
- Romans 12:15 says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep”. We are called to be the sort of friend who is able to accompany others in their seasons of grief. This isn’t something that comes naturally to most of us, and we all sometimes say the wrong thing. Nevertheless, choosing to take time to listen and show genuine care for those who are in pain – whether physical or emotional – is one of the works of mercy to which we are called (Matthew 25:35-36).

THE LESSON: MATTHEW 6

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.)

If you have ever participated in the “Stations of the Cross” during Holy Week, these words will sound familiar to you:

*O Saviour of the world, who by thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us;
Save us, and help us, we humbly beseech thee, O Lord.*

This is a prayer that reminds us that our Saviour suffered and died for us. He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). It’s appropriate that we also repeat this prayer with those who are sick, because it reminds us powerfully that *our Lord understands suffering*.

Scripture tell us that “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses”. Therefore we are called to confidently “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). Moreover, “the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26).

The poet Malcolm Guite put it this way: “He weeps with you and with you he will stay”, and though your suffering may take you through experiences of doubt, depression and despair, in the end “You find your God beside you on his knees”.

What does all of this mean? It means that we are not alone. We have a God who understands completely what we are going through, the best possible friend to be present with us when we suffer.

+++

The text we’re going to look at today is from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of St. Matthew. As you read through the text, consider the way in which Jesus himself lived out this teaching.

Refer to Matthew 6:25-34.

(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).

PRESENT WITH US

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 did Jesus mean when he referred to “the Gentiles” in this passage?
- What did Jesus understand about his hearers?
- What did Jesus want his hearers to understand about God?
- How did Jesus live out this teaching?
- When is this teaching most relevant for us?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *The Gentiles were non-Jews, so when Jesus referred to them at this time he simply meant that the people who did not believe in or follow God were always anxiously seeking after earthly things. Those who knew God should live differently as a result of their knowledge – they should live in a spirit of trust.*
- *Jesus understood that we experience anxiety about every aspect of our lives and futures, especially about our physical needs. In fact, we can become so consumed with our worry about these things that we move our focus away from God and forget to seek after “the kingdom of God” and “his righteousness” (v33).*
- *Jesus referred to God as “your heavenly Father” (v26,32). God knows what we need, he is able to provide for our needs, and we are valuable to him. Jesus wanted his hearers to recognize that they could trust God to care for them rather than placing their trust in material things.*
- *Jesus exemplified trust in God the Father. He said, “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day” (John 6:38-39). He knew that obedience had a cost, but that it also had a purpose. Obedience took him to Gethsemane and Calvary, but ultimately God raised him from the dead.*
- *We most need to reflect on this passage when we are at our most anxious. It is when we worry about our physical needs and health that we must remember that our heavenly Father loves us and can be trusted to care for us. This doesn't mean that things will always be easy or smooth, but that in the end we can be confident that “the Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18).*

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).)

Continue to pray for those known to you who are sick, this week using the prayer below. Ask God to help you to know how best to “weep with those who weep”.

Almighty God, giver of health and healing: Grant to these thy servants such a sense of thy presence that they may have perfect trust in thee. In all their suffering may they cast their care upon thee, so that, enfolded in thy love and power, they may receive from thee health and salvation according to thy gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (PRAYER FROM THE MINISTRY TO THE SICK, BCP PAGE 580)

PRESENT WITH US

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 prayer with you, for the sick people of your parish, and for any other sick people they may know. You may wish to pause after the words, “thy servants” 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.

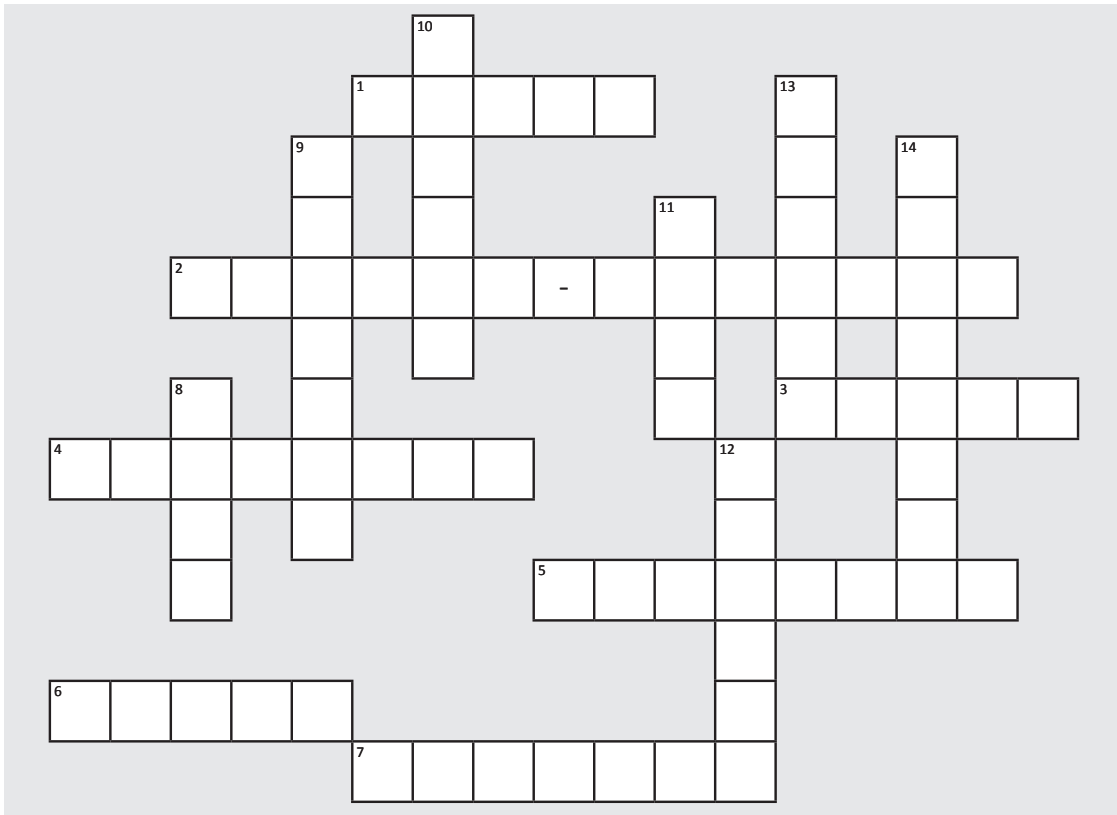
Then finish with the “Grace”, the final prayer in the booklet.

MATTHEW 6: TRUST YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

PRESENT WITH US

A COMFORTING CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. "The Lord your God is in your _____" (ZEPHANIAH 3:17)
2. "The Lord is near to the _____ - _____ and saves the crushed in spirit" (PSALM 34:18)
3. "The Word became flesh and _____ among us"
(JOHN 1:14)
4. "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the _____ God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments"
(DEUTERONOMY 7:9)
5. "Do not be frightened, and do not be _____, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (JOSHUA 1:9)
6. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of _____, I will fear no evil, for you are with me"
(PSALM 23:4)
7. "I will never leave you nor _____ you" (HEBREWS 13:5)

DOWN

8. "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also _____ with him" (ROMANS 6:8)
9. "I bore you on eagles' wings and _____ you to myself"
(EXODUS 19:4)
10. "For you have died, and your life is _____ with Christ in God" (COLOSSIANS 3:3)
11. "The Lord is _____ to all who call on him" (PSALM 145:18)
12. "Do you not know that you are God's _____ and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 CORINTHIANS 3:16)
13. "God's love has been _____ into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (ROMANS 5:5)
14. "He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his _____"
(2 CORINTHIANS 4:14)