

# A PEACE WE CAN'T EXPLAIN

## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Popsicle sticks, strong tape
- 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: DESIGNER HOUSES

Bring in a quantity of popsicle sticks and strong tape. Divide your teens into teams of two to five and tell them that their challenge will be to build a designer house using the materials provided. Provide them with a set amount of time to plan and build their house. When the time is up, allow the teams to present briefly, and if you wish, select a winner.

FOR GROUPS OF THREE OR LESS, YOU MAY WISH TO ALLOW EACH TEEN TO DESIGN AN INDIVIDUAL HOUSE. FOR GROUPS OF MORE THAN 25 YOU MAY NEED TO RESTRICT YOUR DESIGN/BUILD TIME SO THAT THERE IS TIME TO PRESENT.

## 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 PAINFUL RENOVATION

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: what was the hardest thing about building your house?
- Ask your teens to close their eyes while you slowly read the following quote:  
*“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself”.* - C.S. Lewis  
 Can you relate to the idea that Lewis is talking about? Have you ever felt like you were undergoing a painful renovation? Is this idea helpful?

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

- Allow your teens a few moments to reflect on any challenges they experienced. Very likely one of them will be the unfitness of the materials they had to use.

# A PEACE WE CAN'T EXPLAIN

- Scripture says “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17), but the process of being made holy isn’t painless. Rather, “the Lord disciplines the one he loves” (Hebrews 12:6). Yet this painful renovation is worth it because we know that our ultimate destination is a glorious one (Philippians 3:20-21).

## THE LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 4

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 Prayer Book’s service of ministry to the sick opens with these words:

*“Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it.*

*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27).*

In times of trouble, sickness, sorrow and suffering, how can we expect to find *peace*? The answer is that we find peace by looking beyond ourselves. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you” (John 14:27). We find peace in recalling the character of God: that he is faithful, he is compassionate, and he is in control. We find peace in the presence of the Holy Spirit with us in our circumstances. And we find peace in the promise of our future life with Christ.

Scripture says, “We know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1). And believers can hold onto the revelation that one day God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more” (Revelation 21:4).

+++

Several of the epistles in our New Testament are referred to as the Apostle Paul’s “prison letters” because they were written by him to the churches while he was imprisoned in Rome. The letter to the Philippians, sometimes called “the epistle of joy”, was one of these prison letters. Today we’ll look at one small but potent passage found in this letter.

Refer to Philippians 4:4-9.

(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 cause for rejoicing do we have?
- We all have sources of anxiety. What are we *not* supposed to do with them? What are we supposed to do instead?
- Why does it matter what we think about? What should the mind’s focus be?
- What are some things in this passage that point us to our future home?
- What do you do when you are anxious about something? Have you ever tried stopping your worry in its tracks by offering it to God and focusing on him?

# A PEACE WE CAN'T EXPLAIN

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- Verse 4 tells us to “Rejoice in the Lord”. When our thoughts are turned to our Lord, we remember that we have a reason to be joyful, a reason to praise. In the broader context, the Apostle Paul has just finished reminding his readers that “our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself” (Philippians 3:20-21).
- We all have circumstances in life that invite worry, but we are not to indulge in a pattern of thinking that ruminates on fear about the future. Instead, we are to offer the circumstances that trouble us to God “by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving”. This is a deliberate shift in focus for us. Rather than focusing on our own fears and causes for fear, we are focusing on a God who loves us and who is in control. This becomes a source of great peace. And this peace acts in a way that protects us.
- Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind”. What we choose to dwell on has a transformative impact on our attitude, perspective, and living – for good or for ill. Paul wanted his readers to focus their minds on God and on those things that point towards him: the imminence of God’s return (v5), a relationship with him in prayer (v6), the characteristics that reflect God’s nature (true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, worthy) (v8), and the saints whose lives and teaching set an example (v9).
- Verse 5 points us to the “Christian hope” with the words “the Lord is at hand”. This is a reference to the end of the world as we know it when “we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The mention that our God of peace “will be with you” (v9) reminds us of that same future. The reference to a peace that “surpasses all understanding” (v7) likewise calls to mind those realities that are beyond our ability to grasp with our senses in the here and now.
- Take a moment to allow your teens to consider how this passage could apply to their own lives in the moments when they are prone to worry, and perhaps share a story of your own.

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. Pray in particular that they would know God’s peace that passes understanding. Continue to ask God to show you how you might be able to minister to them.

*God of all grace and power: Behold, visit, and relieve these thy servants; look upon them with the eyes of thy mercy, give them comfort and sure confidence in thee, defend them in all danger, and keep them in perpetual peace and safety; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.* (PRAYER FROM THE MINISTRY TO THE SICK, BCP PAGE 577)

# A PEACE WE CAN'T EXPLAIN

---

## 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.

---

## PHILIPPIANS 4: **REJOICE. PRAY. THINK. LIVE.**

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practise these things, and the God of peace will be with you.