

GOD IS GENEROUS

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Paper and pens
- 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: JEHOVAH JIREH

Write this phrase on your board (if you have one, otherwise on a piece of paper): “Jehovah Jireh”. Ask the teens to see how many words they can come up with by rearranging the letters.

Tell your teens at the close of the activity that this is a Hebrew transliteration of one of the names for God found in the Old Testament which means “The Lord provides”. (It is also sometimes transliterated as “Yahweh Yireh”).

DEPENDING ON YOUR GROUP, YOU MIGHT ASK THE TEENS TO WORK ON THE WORDS INDIVIDUALLY ON THEIR OWN PAPERS OR IN TEAMS TO COMPETE FOR THE LONGEST LIST, OR HAVE THEM WORK ALL TOGETHER.

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: LIKE THAT

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.

- How would you like other people to describe you? Or, what sort of qualities do you hope other people see in you?
- Of the qualities mentioned, which ones could be used to describe God?
What are some qualities (not yet mentioned) that describe God and which we should strive to emulate?
What are some qualities that are unique to God?

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

- *There’s a good chance that many of your teens will hope their friends describe them in complimentary terms, listing their positive physical attributes, mentioning the things that they are good at and their social, athletic or academic accomplishments. Hopefully they also give some thought to the sort of character traits they want others to see in them: things like kindness, loyalty, courage, etc.*
- *When we think about virtuous or godly character, it is a type of character that points to God. If we are kind, then we hope that our kindness can be a human reflection of the amazing kindness of God. If we are generous, then we*

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hope that our generosity in some way reflects that of God. There are some attributes of God that we as humans cannot aspire to, such as his omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and immutability. But we may seek to reflect our Lord in wisdom, faithfulness, goodness, justice, mercy, grace, love and holiness to name a few.

THE LESSON: PSALM 34

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.)

There are times in our lives when gratitude is the most natural thing in the world, and we are overflowing with God's praises because of his generosity to us. But there are also times in our lives when it can be an emotional struggle to "offer up a sacrifice of praise" (Hebrews 13:15).

Many of the messages in our modern world teach us to believe that we deserve the best of everything, but scripture teaches that our sin makes us *unworthy*. Whatever gifts we receive from God are not earned but are instead evidence of God's generosity and goodness. This means that we have a great deal to be grateful for, both in good times and in bad times. It is for this reason that the General Thanksgiving (found in the Prayer Book's service of Morning Prayer) begins with an acknowledgment of God's goodness, and our own unworthiness.

No matter what we're going through today, we can give thanks to God for the material world, that is, for "our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life" (BCP p. 14). No matter what we're going through today, believers can thank him for his spiritual provision in Jesus Christ: the "means of grace" and the "hope of glory" (BCP p. 15). No matter what we're going through today, God is *good*, and we know that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17).

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The psalms form the ancient "prayer book" of Israel, and even today they can help us to express the full range of human experience and emotion, while orienting our hearts and minds to God. These prayerful poems remind us continuously that God is good. The psalm we're about to look at was written by David during a time of his life when he was in danger from many enemies (1 Samuel 21: 10-15).

Refer to Psalm 34: 1-8.

(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 are some clues that suggest that this psalm was written by someone whose life wasn't always easy?
- What does this passage tell us about what God is like?
- How does the psalmist respond to God's goodness, and how does he want his readers to respond?
- What challenge or encouragement can we find in this passage?

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A few notes and reflections for reference:

- The psalmist says that the Lord “delivered me from all my fears” (v4), he speaks of the “humble” and “poor” (v2, 6), of those who need to be saved from “trouble” (v6). Almost every verse recognizes that life contains the need for deliverance. When we recognize the turbulence of life, then the first verse is all the more powerful – affirming that praising and blessing the Lord can be “continual” and “at all times”.
- The Lord is good (v8). His name is worthy of exaltation (v3). Those who look to him are “radiant” (v5). His goodness is seen in the way in which he hears, delivers and saves (v4, 6, 7).
- The psalmist responds to God’s goodness by taking everything to him in prayer and in praise, and inviting others to “taste and see” that God is good. The psalmist “sought the Lord” (v4). We are exhorted to “fear him”, “look to him” and “take refuge” in him (v 7, 5, 8). Then, with the psalmist, we will see that God is good (v8), and join in blessing him, praising him, boasting in him, sheer gladness, and exalting his name (v1, 2, 3).
- The heart of this passage is v8: that we can “taste and see that the Lord is good”. This is good news. God’s goodness is something we believe in, but it can also be experienced. This is the testimony of someone (David) who has been through good times and bad times and found that God’s goodness remains unchanged. God is a refuge when things are difficult and a constant reason to give thanks and praise.

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).)

If you did the “At-Home Challenge” in lesson 1, this prayer will be familiar to you. Again, this week, take a moment each day to pray with the words of the General Thanksgiving from Morning Prayer. Pause after the words “blessings of this life” and add the specific blessings that come to mind for which you are thankful.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, We thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks For all thy goodness and loving-kindness To us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; But above all for thine inestimable love In the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; For the means of grace, And for the hope of glory. And we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, That our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, And that we show forth thy praise, Not only with our lips, but in our lives; By giving up ourselves to thy service, And by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, To whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen. (GENERAL THANKSGIVING FROM MORNING PRAYER, BCP PAGE 14)

CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

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Before closing, read out the words of the General Thanksgiving, pausing after the words “blessings of this life”, and ask your teens to add aloud any specific blessings that come to mind for which they are thankful.

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.

PSALM 34: **THE LORD IS GOOD**

¹I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

²My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad.

³Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!

⁴I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.

⁵Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.

⁶This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

⁷The angel of the Lord encamps round those who fear him, and delivers them.

⁸Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!