

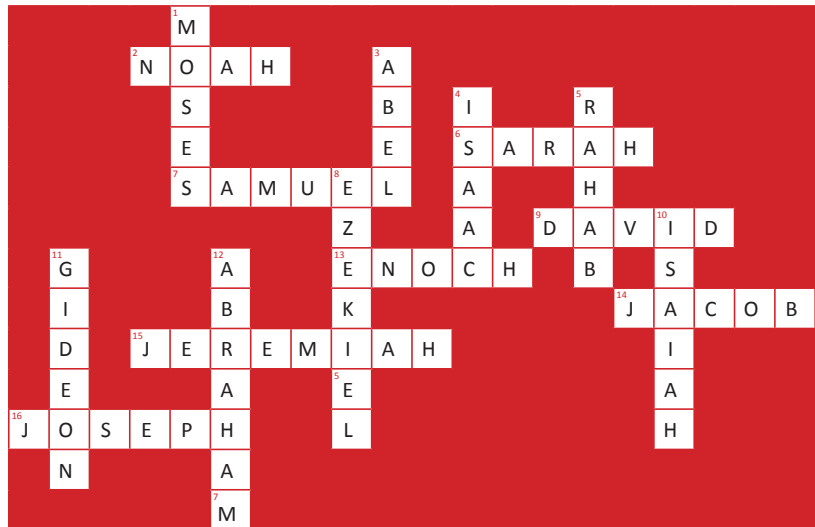
THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

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*
- 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: CROSSWORD O’ THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

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. Challenge your teens to see if they can complete the crossword using just Hebrews 11. If that’s too difficult, allow them to look up the verse references given with the clues.



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: THE (VERY) LONG GAME

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.

- Which saint from scripture do you admire the most? Why? Would you want to meet him or her if you could?
- What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?
- Share the following quote and ask your teens to respond: **“Long after you and I are gone, God will still be at work—and many of the things we prayed for will finally come to pass”.** - *Billy Graham*

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

- Scripture is filled with examples of those who went before us in the faith. They experienced triumphs and failures, but in the end those who qualify as good role models are the ones who clung to God in spite of everything. Hebrews 11 contains a long list of some of these admirable saints (a few of whom are named in the ice breaker). Most of the time we would be eager to meet anyone that we admire, but in some cases we may be intimidated by someone else's accomplishments and sheepish about our own obscurity. In heaven, the focus will be on Jesus and on what he has done for us all. The people who belong to God – people from every time and place – are family, and today's "faithful" will one day be with those in heaven who went before!
- Chances are, we'd like people to say that we were a "good" person who accomplished admirable things. We may never have thought about whether the people who come after us consider us an example in the faith. It's an idea worth pondering because our ultimate goals have an impact on the choices we make each day.
- The story of God's work in the world is much, much bigger than our small piece in that story. It can be hard for us to think about "the long game" – things like planning for retirement while young – but it can be harder still to think about a "long game" that extends beyond our lives on earth. There is a challenge in Billy Graham's observation to remember that God's work is bigger than our role in it, and our faith, patience, and humility need to be bigger too.

THE LESSON: LUKE 16

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.)

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord"
- Revelation 14:13

When we speak of "the faithful departed" we are talking about believers who have died in the faith. This saintly group spans continents and centuries, and it is a group which today's believers anticipate one day joining. The Prayer Book's burial service celebrates the great company of saints that have gone before, the hope of the resurrection, and eternal life in heaven, *because it is a burial service for believers*. Physical death "has different significance for the believer and the unbeliever" (Erickson, *Christian Theology*). So, understanding the solemnity of these things, we pray, "Make thy servants to be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting" (BCP p. 598).

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Jesus told many parables. These were relatable stories that revealed truth about God and his kingdom. The parables were often told in response to a question or a situation that was unfolding on the spot. The parable we're about to look at today was told in the hearing of Jesus' disciples as well as the Pharisees. The Pharisees were rich, powerful and strictly religious. They were not known for their compassion, and Jesus was often compelled to point out their hypocrisy. Jesus had come "to call sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32), rather than to congratulate those who (mistakenly) believed they had nothing to repent of. Today's parable invites us to consider who truly belongs in the company of the saints.

Refer to Luke 16:15, 19-31.

(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).

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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 do you notice about this parable that is unusual?
- Who are the saints mentioned in this parable? How are they connected?
- What key points do you think this parable is making? How do you think this applies to us today?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *This parable is unusual in the detail that it provides. We are even told the name of the poor man that it follows, Lazarus, whose name means "God is my help". Many of Jesus' parables are clear allegories where the story illustrates a spiritual truth. Think of the parable of the sower, for example, in which the soil represents those who hear the word (Matthew 13:1-9,18-23). By contrast, in this parable we are given a window into a narrative which, if not historical in nature, could be.*
- *Abraham, the great Patriarch of the faith, plays a key role in the parable. Moses, who wrote the books of the Law, and the Prophets, who called the people back to the Law, are both mentioned. The naming of these saints was significant. These were important figures who would have been held in great respect by the Pharisees – they were people with whom they would want to associate themselves. But when it came to the matters of true repentance and compassionate living, the Pharisees often did not follow after their heroes. We know very little about Lazarus, other than that he was poor and sick, and that his life was filled with struggle. We do know that he belonged to the company of the faithful because when he died he was "carried by the angels to Abraham's side" (v22). "We must remind ourselves that the rich man was not condemned because he was rich, nor was Lazarus saved because he was poor. Abraham was a very wealthy man, yet he was not in torment in Hades. The rich man trusted in his riches and did not trust in the Lord" (Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary).*
- *The words spoken by Jesus to the Pharisees just before the parable was told are important to note: "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God" (v15). Like the rich man in the story, the Pharisees had the benefit of the Law and prophets to tell them how they should live. The rich man lived a self-indulgent life and did not regard the suffering of Lazarus outside his gate. Had he listened to the Law and prophets, he would have known his need to humble himself in sincerity before God and to care for the poor. The verdict given in verse 31 is resounding: "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead". In other words, everything necessary for the rich man and his family to come to true faith had already been given. This is a sobering thought. It reminds us that now is the time to choose to place our trust in God.*

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 today's reading left you aware of a need to confess, take time to do that. Rest assured that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Then, take some time to thank God for the example of those believers who went before us. Ask him to help you to

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live in such a way that a faithful example is left for those who come after. Close your time with the following prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who hast opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, and art the peace and light of those who rest in thee: In company with thy holy Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs, and with all the faithful departed, we praise and glorify thee for the fulness of joy which thou givest to all who put their trust in thee; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen. (FROM THE ORDER FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD, BCP PAGE 599)

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.

LUKE 16: GOD KNOWS YOUR HEART

¹⁵And Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God...”

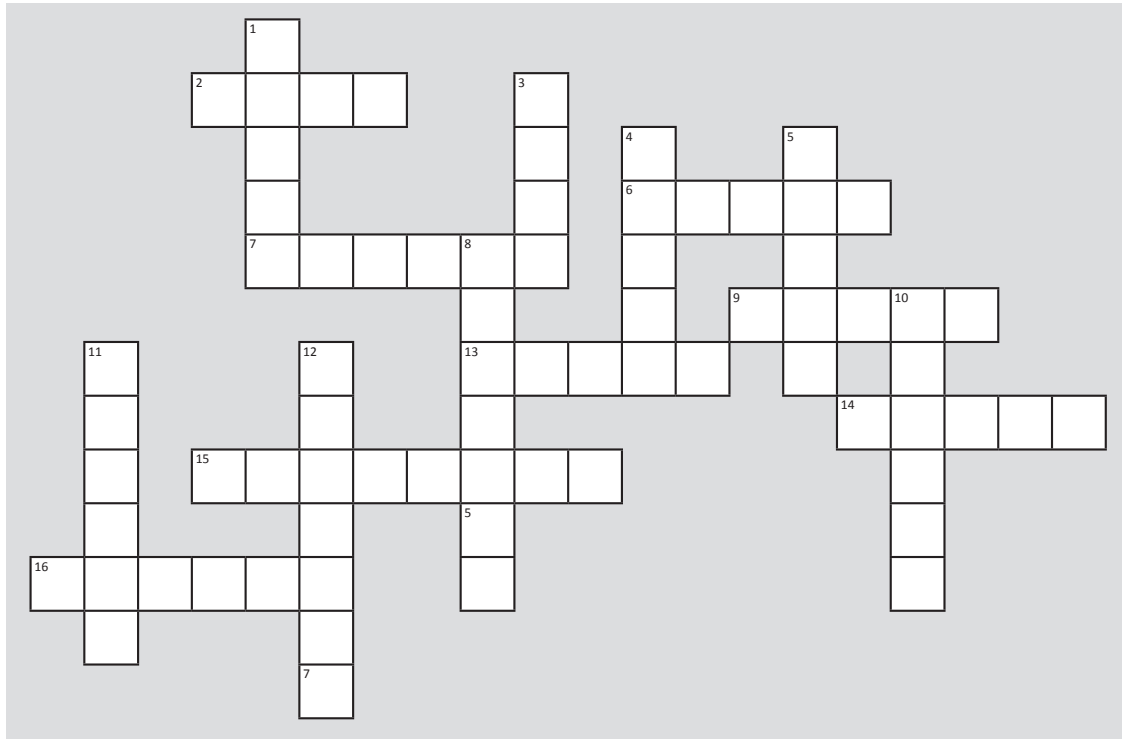
¹⁹“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

²⁰And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ ²⁵But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not do so, and none may cross from there to us.’ ²⁷And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— ²⁸for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ ²⁹But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

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“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation... who through faith subdued kingdoms... stopped the mouths of lions... escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong... Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain **a better resurrection...**” - HEBREWS 11



ACROSS

2. _____ did all that God commanded him (GENESIS 6:22)
6. About this time next year, and _____ shall have a son (GENESIS 18:14)
7. No Passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of _____ the prophet (2 CHRONICLES 35:18)
9. Then _____ said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword... but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts” (1 SAMUEL 17:45)
13. _____ walked with God, and he was not, for God took him (GENESIS 5:24)
14. Then _____ awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it” (GENESIS 28:16)
15. That the word of the Lord by the mouth of _____ might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia (EZRA 1:1)
16. But the Lord was with _____ and showed him steadfast love (GENESIS 39:21)

DOWN

1. Then _____ stretched out his staff towards heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail (EXODUS 9:23)
3. And the Lord had regard for _____ and his offering (GENESIS 4:4)
4. And _____ went out to meditate in the field towards evening (GENESIS 24:63)
5. Only _____ the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live (JOSHUA 6:17)
8. The word of the Lord came to _____ the priest (EZEKIEL 1:3)
10. Then Hezekiah the king and _____ the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed because of this and cried to heaven (2 CHRONICLES 32:20)
11. Then _____ perceived that he was the angel of the Lord (JUDGES 6:22)
12. God tested _____ and said to him, “ _____!” And he said, “Here am I” (GENESIS 22:1)