

HOMESICK

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Paper, pens or pencils
- 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: YOU’D BE MISSED

Prior to the class, prepare blank cards (or folded papers) with the name of one of your teens on each followed by a heading like, “So glad you’re here. If you weren’t, you’d be missed”. Each teen receives something to write with. For each person in the group, have your teens write an encouragement or something that would be missed if that person weren’t around. Messages should be sincere and *must* be positive, even if the message is just something like “I’d miss your smile” or “I value having you here”. The teens get to keep their cards at the end of the exercise.

If there are teens who are not in the group anymore (for example those who have left for post-secondary education), add cards for them so that the teens can write messages, but replace the header on the front of the cards with “We miss you” or something similar. These can later be sent to the intended recipients.

IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, DO TRY TO HAVE EACH PERSON WRITE TO EACH OTHER PERSON EVEN IN LARGER GROUPS. FOR SMALLER GROUPS, ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO WRITE MORE OR TO WRITE SEVERAL THOUGHTS FOR EACH PERSON.

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: WHAT YOU’D MISS THE MOST

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.

- Have you ever been homesick? What did you miss the most about home?
- What are the things and who are the people in your life right now that you would miss the most? In the case of people – have you told each of them lately how much you value them?

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

- *Perhaps you have been away at summer camp and found that you missed the sense of security that came from knowing that your parents were in the next room. Or perhaps you’ve visited friends overnight only to find that you just wanted to sleep in your own bed, pursue your own interests, or follow familiar routines. This is a great chance to share a story of your own.*
- *The phrase “you don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone” speaks to how many of us take our blessings for granted... until we are no longer able to enjoy them. This can be true for “chapters of life” as well as for possessions and loved ones. There may come a day when you miss being in school, living in the same house as your siblings, playing with a family pet. Sometimes these blessings, which are temporary in nature, can be overlooked.*

HOMESICK

We should regularly “count our blessings” and express gratitude to God for them. In the case of the people in our lives that we love, we should let them know how much we value them. None of us knows the future, nor when the chance to say those words may be past.

THE LESSON: GENESIS 45+50

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.)

Have you ever been homesick? Being away from the ones that we love is never easy, whether it is short-term or long-term, by choice or by necessity. The experience can leave us feeling alone, lost, and helpless. In such times we must stay rooted in our faith, and we must entrust to God the people we love, knowing that he loves them even more than we do. We don’t always get to find out why God allows painful separations in our lives, but if we will trust him then one day we will see that he’s been working through it all for our good and his glory.

+++

You may have heard Joseph’s story before. It’s an incredible one. He was born into a large, competitive family, and he was his father’s favourite son. His brothers resented him and when they got the chance they sold him to traders in a caravan that carried him far from all that he’d known. Joseph ended up a slave in Egypt. But repeatedly throughout Joseph’s story, scripture tells us that the Lord was with him. Serving in the house of a powerful Egyptian, *the Lord was with him*. Wrongly accused and sent to prison, *the Lord was with him*. And when he was summoned from prison to the King’s court, *the Lord was with him*.

When Joseph was 30 years old, he entered the service of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and was made governor over the land. He had been chosen to implement a plan to store up food because a famine was coming. When the famine did come, it stretched far and wide and people came from all over to seek food, including Joseph’s own brothers. Joseph did not reveal himself to them immediately, but tested them till he was satisfied that they had learned from what they’d done to him so many years before. Check out what happened next.

Refer to Genesis 45:1-15, 50:15-21.

(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.

- How did Joseph’s brothers react to meeting him again? What did they think his attitude towards them would be?
- What was the consequence of Joseph’s being sold by his brothers?
- What evidence is there that Joseph forgave his brothers?
- What does this passage tell us about God?
- What can we learn from Joseph’s life and example?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Joseph’s brothers had great guilt over what they had done to him. They probably did not expect to see him alive again, and certainly did not expect to find him a powerful official of Egypt with their lives in his hands. Scripture tells us that “they were dismayed at his presence” to the point of speechlessness (45:3). After the death of their father, his brothers were fearful that Joseph would seek revenge upon them for what they’d done all those years ago. This was in spite of the fact that Joseph had rescued them, had spoken words of reassurance to them, and had been living in reconciliation with them.*

HOMESICK

- *God used Joseph to provide for many people during a seven-year famine, including his own family. All this was possible because Joseph went to Egypt and through various circumstances became known to the Pharaoh.*
- *Joseph was under no illusions about his brothers' intentions. He said "you meant evil against me" (50:20). Yet, beyond the malicious intentions and actions of his brothers, Joseph could see God's faithfulness to him and could recognize that it was God's plan that prevailed. Moreover, having tested them to be sure they had changed, Joseph actually comforted his brothers, saying "do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life" (45:5). And he embraced them and kissed them with many tears (45:15). Then, later on he again reiterated his forgiveness. The brothers thought that perhaps they had been spared for the sake of their father only, but Joseph's forgiveness had not been a mere show. Again he reassured them, pointing to God's plan and committing himself to provide for them (50:19-20).*
- *God is actively involved in our lives and in our world. Joseph testified to this when he said "God sent me" for a purpose (45:5,7,8) – it was not the plan of his brothers that mattered. Even of his appointment to a high position in Egypt Joseph said, "God has made me lord of all Egypt" (45:9) – it was not the plan of the Pharaoh that mattered. God's purposes are good. Joseph recognized that what happened to him when his brothers sold him into slavery was not good and was not intended for good. Nevertheless, "God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive" (50:20).*
- *We can seek to emulate Joseph's example of faith and faithfulness during hardship. Joseph experienced betrayal by his brothers. He missed his father and his home. He was falsely accused. He spent time in prison. Through all of this he remained faithful and saw God's hand at work. We can seek to follow Joseph's example of forgiveness and humility. When he was in a position of power and prestige he did not see this as his own accomplishment, nor did he use it to exact revenge but he used it benevolently, forgiving those who had wronged him, even caring for them. Like Joseph, we can strive to help others to see God's providence, even when circumstances are challenging: for "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).*

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))

Do you have friends or family members that have moved away? People whom you used to see often but don't any more? Take some time to pray for them, remembering that God loves them even more than you do. (And he loves *you* even more than *they* do). Close your time with the following prayer:

O God, who art present in every place: Look down with thy mercy upon those whom we love, now absent from us; give thine angels charge over them, and defend them from all dangers of body and soul; bring us together again, if it be thy holy will; grant that both they and we, drawing nearer to thee, may draw nearer to one another, and in the end, united in thy presence, may evermore rejoice together in our heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(PRAYER FOR HOME AND LOVED ONES FROM FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED AT SEA, BCP P. 633)

HOMESICK

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.

GENESIS 45+50: **GOD'S PLAN IS THE ONE THAT PREVAILS**

45 ¹Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ²And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

⁴So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest. ⁷And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. ¹⁰You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' ¹²And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father of all my honour in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." ¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

50 ¹⁵When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died, ¹⁷'Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.