

STEDFAST

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Mural paper, pens, markers, pencil crayons; you may also include newspapers/magazines, scissors, and glue
- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: WALL O’ FAITHFULNESS

Bring in a generously sized piece of mural paper (or make one by taping smaller pages together). In the centre, write out the following definition of faithfulness (www.merriam-webster.com): “*Faithfulness means to be loyal and conscientious: ‘stedfast in affection or allegiance’ and ‘firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty’*”. Tell your teens that they are creating an inspirational graffiti-style mural/collage on the theme of “faithfulness”. They can include Bible verses, song lyrics, movie and book titles, real life role models, etc. They may wish to consider “faithfulness” in a variety of things – relationships, work, as well as Christian faith. If you wish, start them off with one or two verses, such as:

- “I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me” (Psalm 119:30).
- “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).
- “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy” (Proverbs 27:6).
- “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much” (Matthew 25:21).
- “The Lord preserves the faithful” (Psalm 31:23).

FOR GROUPS OF FIVE OR LESS, ALLOW THE TEENS TO WORK TOGETHER DIRECTLY ON THE LARGER PAPER. FOR BIGGER GROUPS, SPLIT THE TEENS INTO TEAMS OF 3-5 AND ASSIGN EACH TEAM ITS OWN SECTION OF THE MURAL (YOU MAY HAVE TO DIVIDE IT INTO PIECES). FOR GROUPS OF MORE THAN 30 YOU MAY WISH TO HAVE MULTIPLE MURALS.

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: HOW COULD THIS POSSIBLY END WELL?

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 do you think prevents people from following through on their commitments?
- Have you ever been in a situation that you thought could not possibly end well? What happened?
- How do you think someone who wants to be faithful can keep on track even when things get hard?

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

- *Commitments vary in their solemnity. They can range from agreeing to attend an event, to making a serious promise to a friend. Sometimes people make commitments under pressure and later don’t feel able to follow through. This can happen whether or not the commitment was made with good intent. Many undertakings are easy to say “yes” to as you are setting out, but it is not long before we discover that honouring that “yes” involves ongoing, hard work. Sometimes we fail to honour our commitments because we get distracted or discouraged*

STEDFAST

along the way or slide into selfish justifications, willingly breaking our word. At some point in life, we will all be in positions where we need to apologize for breaking a commitment and also in other positions where we need to forgive someone else who has broken one with us.

- *Sometimes we find ourselves in situations where we cannot imagine a good conclusion. Perhaps you've been on a sports team that is performing poorly, or tried to help a friend to break a bad habit only to witness repeated relapses. Whatever the situation, when we become discouraged, believing that there is no hope, it can become attractive to simply walk away from trying, even if we have promised to see things through to the end.*
- *We all know that we shouldn't break our promises. We want to be faithful students, loyal friends, and steadfast in our devotion to God. Remaining true to our promises means saying "yes" not just at the beginning, but each day, and each time we're tempted to go astray or give up. To do this, we need to be rooted in prayer and scripture, surrounding ourselves with faithful believers, and then listening to the encouragement and exhortation that we receive from them. In this way we give "no opportunity to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).*

THE LESSON: NUMBERS 13+14

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.)

Starting out on a journey can be daunting. But many of the challenges we face along the way can be just as hard: causing us to doubt, causing us to want to turn back, to give up all the ground we have gained. But remember this: even "if we are faithless, God remains faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). We can trust him even in the most hopeless of situations, for "he will establish you and guard you against the evil one" (2 Thessalonians 3:3). And with these promises in mind: *press on.*

+++

The story is a familiar one. The people of Israel were slaves in Egypt. God appointed Moses to lead them out of their bondage, performing many wonders along the way. God promised the people that he would bring them to a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8), but because of their disobedience they spent many years wandering in the wilderness first. When Moses died, a young man named Joshua succeeded him and led the people of Israel into that promised land. Again God performed many wonders, which are recorded for us in the Hebrew scriptures (the Old Testament).

The text that we're going to look at today comes in the middle of this larger story. It tells what happened when the Israelites stood on the doorstep of all that had been promised to them. Check it out.

Refer to Numbers 13:1-2, 25-28, 30-14:9.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READING FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGE FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ IT IN ITS ENTIRETY: NUMBERS 13:1-14:9.)

(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 were the spies in agreement about?
- What were the spies *not* in agreement about? (What were "the ten" focussed on versus "the two"?)
- How did the people respond to the report?
- What was the response of those who were steadfast?
- What can we learn from the example of these steadfast saints?

STEDFAST

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Note: When the people first looked out on the promised land, they were told by Moses: “See, the Lord your God has set the land before you. Go up, take possession, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has told you. Do not fear or be dismayed” (Deuteronomy 1:21). But the people came up with the idea of spying out the land before entering it, failing to trust fully in God’s promise. This was a request that God granted.*
- *The spies were in agreement about the goodness of the land. It was, indeed, a land “flowing with milk and honey” (13:27-28, 14:7). On the other hand, the people of the land were strong and their cities were large and fortified.*
- *The ten naysaying spies were fixated on the strength and size of the people, saying “we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers” (13:33). This may have been an exaggeration, but to these ten men the odds seemed to be against them, and they did not have any hope that they could succeed in taking possession of the land. On the other hand, Caleb and Joshua were focussed on God’s promise, saying “we are well able to overcome it” (13:30) and “if the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us” (14:8). W.H. Griffith Thomas put it this way: “The former saw the giants and forgot God. The latter saw God and feared not the giants”.*
- *The people’s response is described as rebellion by Joshua and Caleb (14:9). The people believed the words of the naysayers and were thrown into despair, weeping through the night and expressing their angst forcefully (14:1-4). Griffith Thomas points out that, “this was the extremity of all their rebellions. Hitherto they had wished to go back or to have died in Egypt; but never before had they actually proposed to return”. Here, in 14:4 we have them saying “Let us choose a leader and go back”. Griffith Thomas further notes that, “The habit of looking at the dark side always means weakness, and leads to doubt, depression, despondency, disbelief and despair”.*
- *Moses and Aaron were greatly distressed upon hearing what the people were saying (14:5). Joshua and Caleb repeated their words of faith and pleaded with the people not to rebel against God, but rather to trust and obey him (14:6-9).*
- *In moments of discouragement, when we are tempted to throw in the towel, we should remember who God is, that he is with us, and that he can be trusted. Our disobedience is actually rebellion. We must choose to trust the Lord and obey him, following where he leads. Moreover, when we are faced with a community that is headed in the wrong direction, it should break our hearts, moving us to plead with them to return to the way of obedience.*

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.))

Are you – or is someone you know – facing an uphill battle, and concerned about remaining faithful till the end? Take some time to bring that concern to the Lord. Close your time with the following prayer:

O Lord God, when thou givest thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory; through him that for the finishing of thy work laid down his life, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

(A PRAYER FOR STEDFASTNESS, BCP P. 635)

STEDFAST

Do you find at the end of the day that you feel overwhelmed by all that you have not been able to accomplish? Take some time to bring that concern to the Lord. Close your time with the following prayer:

O Lord, who hast pity for all our weakness: Put away from us worry and every anxious fear, that, having ended the labours of the day as in thy sight, and committing our tasks, ourselves, and all we love into thy keeping, we may, now that night cometh, receive as from thee thy priceless gift of sleep; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (PRAYER FOR FREEDOM FROM WORRY FROM FAMILY PRAYERS, BCP P. 730)

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 ONE OF THE THEMED PRAYERS FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

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

NUMBERS 13+14: GRASSHOPPERS, REBELS + OVERCOMERS

13 ¹The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel...²⁵At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. ²⁶And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large...”

³⁰But Caleb quietened the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.” ³¹Then the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.” ³²So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. ³³And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

14 ¹Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. ²And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” ⁴And they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

⁵Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. ⁶And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes ⁷and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. ⁸If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. ⁹Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.”