

SAFE LODGING

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Small container, paper, 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: ON THE SPOT: THE “SAFE” VERSION

Write out some of the questions below on scraps of paper (you may wish to add some of your own), fold them, and place them in an opaque container. Have the teens sit in a circle. One at a time, ask each teen to select a paper from the container and give a brief monologue, responding to the question selected.

FOR SMALL GROUPS, YOU MAY WANT TO TAKE MULTIPLE TURNS. FOR LARGE (OR TALKATIVE) GROUPS, YOU MAY HAVE TO TIME RESPONSES (FOR EXAMPLE, EACH PERSON HAS THIRTY SECONDS TO SPEAK).

- If you could be protected from one negative experience throughout life, what would it be?
- What does it mean to be “challenged”? Do you think it’s a good or a bad thing?
- Would you rather live in a censorship state or an anarchy?
- If you could choose one superhero to act as your bodyguard, who would it be and why?
- How do you respond to constructive criticism? Do you find it hard to hear?
- Describe the safest place in the world.
- What strong emotions make you uncomfortable? Why?
- If you were to build your own panic room, what features would you include? (*Note: A “panic room” is a fortified secret room in a house where people can lock themselves away in case of danger.*)
- Are there some things that you would say to your friends but not in front of a classroom? What and/or why?
- What should people do when they see something that upsets them?
- Where do you think courage comes from?
- What do you do when you disagree with something that’s being said at school?

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’S “SAFE” ANYWAY?

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 define being “safe”?

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- What is the safest you’ve ever felt? What made you feel that way?
- In whom do you have the most confidence to keep you safe?

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

- *The word “safe” has traditionally meant being protected from danger, harm or risk. In modern society the language of safety is sometimes used to suggest a broader philosophy of being free from emotional discomfort (as opposed to physical injury).*
- *We often feel most safe in familiar places, with stable routines and among people who we know love us. Perhaps your teens have a pet that calms them down or a favourite book or song that makes them feel a sense of security. Consider sharing a story of your own. If anything of a serious nature arises, take a moment to pray for that situation.*
- *Hopefully there are friends or family members that we feel we can rely on to be there for us when we need them; and call upon in crises and emergencies. Chances are the people who come to mind are both kind and reliable, and have already demonstrated that they can be counted on.*

THE LESSON: PSALM 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.)

*Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life, and they will never perish,
and no one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28).*

We live in a world that is anything but safe. Throughout life we will experience sorrow, suffering and grief, not to mention “dangers, toils, and snares” (John Newton, *Amazing Grace*). But God can use these challenges to teach and to shape “his sheep” – believers.

As his sheep, we want to know our Shepherd more, and be known by him. We want to recognize his voice, and follow him. As his sheep, we have his promise that he will never leave us nor forsake us. As his sheep, we know that “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). Our Shepherd’s plan stretches beyond the dangers of this life, into a glorious eternity, where we will always be home with him.

In the meantime, we hold fast to the words of scripture: words that tell us that our Lord knows us and loves us, and that our future is in his hands. We find our peace in the knowledge that we *belong* to this Good Shepherd. We can sleep at night and face each new day with confidence because we are now, and forever will be in those hands – the safest place of all.

Refer to Psalm 4.

(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 does the psalmist describe his circumstances?
- What does this psalm tell us about the character of God?

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- What “exhortations” are offered to us by the psalmist?
- What is the meaning of the question posed in verse six? What answer does the psalmist give?
- What can we learn from this today?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *The psalmist (King David), speaks of past distress (v1). He calls out to God at a time when he feels that his honour is being “turned into shame”, when those around him “love vain words and seek after lies” (v2). Scholars believe that this psalm was written when David was fleeing with his men after his son Absalom had conspired to dethrone him (2 Samuel 15-18).*
- *God is righteous and the vindicator of the righteous (v1). God has been gracious in the past, and the psalmist prays that God will be gracious again (v1-2). The Lord “hears” (v3). He is trustworthy (v5). The Lord is the one who brings peace (v7-8). It’s worth noting that “the Hebrew word for ‘peace’ (shalom) means much more than the absence of conflict. It carries with it the ideas of adequacy for life, confidence and fullness of life” (Warren Wiersbe, Commentary).*
- *The psalmist says “Be angry, and do not sin” (v4). This is reminiscent of Ephesians 4:26, which says, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger”. Anger is a reasonable response to injustice, but we are not to allow that anger to cause us to sin. The psalmist invites his companions to meditate quietly on these things, to “offer right sacrifices”, and to put their “trust in the Lord” (v4-5). Note that both in the psalms and elsewhere, scripture points out that God does not desire an empty act of sacrifice, but instead a heart that is sincere in both repentance and thanksgiving. 1 Samuel 15:22 says, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams”. Psalm 51:17 says, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise”. Psalm 50:23 says, “The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me”.*
- *In verse six, the psalmist expresses the question that “many” have: “Who will show us some good?” Commentators Keil and Delitzsch write, “the situation gives it the character of a despondent question arising from a disheartened view of the future... David therefore prays as he looks upon [his companions]: Oh lift upon us the light of Thy countenance”. When faced with circumstances that seem hopeless, the psalmist turns in prayer and praise to God (v6-8).*
- *As we travel through life, the road is not always easy nor is it always comfortable. No matter the season and no matter the circumstances, believers find our identity, our purpose, our consolation and our future hope in our Creator, Redeemer and King. The psalms, and this psalm in particular, remind us of these truths.*

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).)

The following prayer for eventide is found in both the Prayers & Thanksgivings and the “At Sea” sections of the Prayer Book. It speaks not only of the daily challenges we face, but also of the life-long ones. It asks of God not

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only rest and safety at the end of each day, but also eternal safety when our lives come to a close. Spend some time this week praying with and reflecting upon the words of this prayer:

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, Lord, in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at the last; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(PRAYER FOR EVENTIDE FROM PRAYERS & THANKSGIVINGS, BCP P. 58, AND AT SEA, BCP P. 634)

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.

PSALM 4: **WHERE SAFETY IS FOUND**

¹Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

²O men, how long shall my honour be turned into shame?

How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? [*Selah*]

³But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.

⁴Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. [*Selah*]

⁵Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.

⁶There are many who say, "Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!"

⁷You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.

⁸In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.