



GOAL

Youth explore different types of prayer.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Let me be intentional in my listening, speaking, and presence so that I may live my life as a prayer to you.

THIS SESSION

Prayer is interwoven into almost all spiritual disciplines because keeping company with Jesus involves talking to God, listening to God, and simply being with God, in other words, praying. There are many ways to pray—through songs, movement, actions, words, silence, and more—and each individual’s preferred way is unique to them. Prayer is also communal, and many gather together to pray before meals, in worship, before big events, or in special moments.

THE BIBLE STORY

The book of Psalms is an entire book of prayers. These prayers cover a wide range of expression from praise to suffering. Psalm 84 is a prayer of longing, adoration, and praise. It is also a request for God’s reconciliation and deliverance as the author seeks to be in God’s court and house. The court and house are metaphors, not only for heaven, but also for moments when we find comfort and power in God’s presence.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth worry about not having the right words or receiving judgment from peers when they lead prayer. Youth may feel liberated learning that prayer can take many forms. Prayer can be quiet, loud, silly, serious, private, shared, long, or short. Prayers encompass a vast variety of thoughts, expressions, and movements. Different youth will connect to different styles of prayer. Sincerity is the key.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Call and Response” (p. 14): Post the prepared newsprint from “Call and Response” from session 1 (p. 6).

Depending on the options you choose:

- “The Six Questions” (p. 14): Post six sheets of newsprint around the room. Title each sheet with one of these words: Who, Where, What, When, Why, and How.
- “Prayer Book Exploration” (p. 16): Obtain a few books that include prayers, such as hymnals, worship books, and devotionals. Your pastor may have some.
- “Prayer Beads” (p. 17): Cut yarn into pieces roughly a foot long. Cut enough pieces for everyone in your group to have one. Prepare an example set of prayer beads to share with youth.

GETTING STARTED

- ☐ “Call and Response” newsprint

CALL AND RESPONSE

Remind youth of last session’s opening ritual. Inform them that each session will open with a similar call-and-response prayer that reflects the spiritual discipline being explored in the session. Lead youth in the following prayer or invite a volunteer to lead:

Draw near to God

and God will draw near to us.

When we fast, we free up space to ponder God’s goodness.

Let us keep company with Jesus.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

- ☐ Six sheets of newsprint
- ☐ Markers

THE SIX QUESTIONS

Distribute a marker to each member of the group and explain that today’s session will focus on prayer. Invite youth to visit each of the sheets of newsprint and write on each respective sheet: *who* people pray for, *where* people pray, *what* people pray for, *when* people pray, *why* people pray, and *how* people pray. Tell youth that they can circle or put tally marks next to previously written answers that they also wanted to contribute.

If you want to personalize the activity a bit more, adjust the instructions to reflect the prayer life of those present. For example, instead of “Who do people pray for?” ask, “Who do you pray for?”

Process responses as a group using the following questions:

- ➔ What are you surprised to see on any of these lists?
- ➔ Does anything on a list raise questions for you? If so, what?
- ➔ Who would like to elaborate on anything they wrote or see written?

PRAYING TOGETHER

Gather in a circle. Invite youth to get in a comfortable position to pray. Invite everyone to pray silently. If you completed “The Six Questions” activity, direct youth to the sheets hanging around the room for ideas. Allow a few moments of silence to pass so everyone can pray silently. Invite youth to begin to whisper their prayers aloud. After a few moments, encourage youth to use a regular speaking voice to say their prayers. After a minute or two, invite youth to be silent again.

One at a time, ask youth to share one sentence of a communal prayer. Begin with your own sentence then invite youth to contribute. After they share their sentence, instruct them to say another participant’s name to invite that person to pray.

After all youth have contributed their one-sentence prayer, invite all to say “Amen” together.



Make sure everyone in the group knows each other’s name. If you are uncertain, go around the circle and have everyone say their names for a few rounds prior to praying together.

PRAYER LANGUAGES

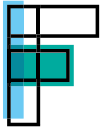
T C AT

Internet-connected device

Show the video “The Lord’s Prayer in Different Languages | Pentecost 2020” (bit.ly/FMPrayerLanguages, 1:10). Discuss what it was like to hear the Lord’s Prayer spoken in different languages.

If youth know how to say the Lord’s Prayer in a language other than English, invite them to demonstrate for the group. Invite all group members to say the Lord’s Prayer together and to think about the people all over the world who know and pray these words.

Remind youth that spiritual practices and prayers are not just between one individual and God, but that they are shared with others. Spiritual practices and prayers connect us to God, people, and all creation.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.

MODERN READING

AT

Bibles

Paper and pens

Form four groups. Distribute Bibles, paper, and pens to each group. Direct youth to follow along in the Bible as you read aloud Psalm 84. Explain that each group will be responsible for summarizing a portion of the psalm using modern terms, concepts, and scenarios. The verses for the four groups are divided as follows: 1–3, 4–7, 8–9, 10–12. Invite youth to write their paraphrase on the sheet of paper they have been given. Allow groups to work together for a few minutes, then ask them to share their paraphrase with the group in the order the verses are presented in Scripture.

PSALM 84

C

Bibles

Have two or three volunteers read Psalm 84 aloud and then wonder together using the following questions:

- ➔ What do you think the author of this text was experiencing spiritually and emotionally when they wrote this psalm?
- ➔ When might someone read or recite this psalm? When would you find it useful to read or recite?
- ➔ What are some other prayers in the Bible people might read or recite during a similar time?

SINGING PRAYER

M

Bibles

Internet-connected device

Explain that the book of Psalms is composed of many different prayers and songs. Some are celebratory and some are laments, but each of them is an authentic expression offered from an individual or community to God.

Invite youth to turn to Psalm 84. Ask youth to follow along in their Bibles as they listen to the song “Better Is One Day – Matt Redman (with lyrics)” (bit.ly/FMBetterOneDay, 4:40). Play the audio, but do not display the video.

After listening to the song once, display the video and invite youth to sing along.



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

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- Copies of Resource Page 1
 - Pens

PRAYER WORD SEARCH

CT

Distribute a copy of Resource Page 1 and a pen to each participant. Invite them to look over the word bank and, as a group, read through the list. Explain that each item on the list describes a type or style of prayer. Invite youth to define each word and provide an example of that prayer if possible. Discuss with youth whether they can think of any other kinds of prayer that the word bank does not include.

Allow youth to work on the word search for a few minutes before inviting them to finish the rest at home.

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- Books that include prayers (hymnals, worship books, devotionals, Bibles, etc.)

PRAYER BOOK EXPLORATION

C CT

Distribute the books to the youth. Have youth gather together in groups so they can share books if you have limited books available. Invite youth to flip through the book for a few minutes. As a group, wonder together using the following questions:

- ➔ What kinds of prayers are included in the book?
- ➔ How are the prayers organized?
- ➔ What prayers caught your attention?
- ➔ If it is a worship book, how do you think it is used in worship?
- ➔ How, if at all, do you think you could use it in your prayer life?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

-
- Internet-connected devices

EMBODIED PRAYER

T AM

Form several small groups. Make sure that each group has access to an internet-connected device. Invite youth to read the Presbyterian Mission Agency's article titled "Reformed Ministers in Switzerland Take Steps to Meet the Jerusalema Dance Challenge" (bit.ly/FMDanceChallenge) together with their group. Explain that youth will take turns in their group reading the article out loud a paragraph at a time.

After each group has read the article, show one of the videos contained within the article to the whole group. After watching the video together, use the following questions to facilitate a discussion:

- ➔ What do you think this dance is expressing prayer for?
- ➔ What do you think is significant about people all over the world participating in the Jerusalema Dance Challenge?
- ➔ What are examples of other similar communal, embodied prayers?

If time permits, use the video "Jerusalema (Beginner) - Colin Ghys & Alison Johnstone - Teach and Learn with Anke" (bit.ly/FMJerusalema, 4:43) to learn the dance and participate as a group.

PRAYER BEADS

A X

Instruct youth to select twenty-eight regular beads, five unique beads, and a piece of yarn. Have them string the beads together by dispersing the unique beads among the regular beads so that there are seven regular beads between each unique bead and a unique bead on each end. Explain that youth can use these beads to pray by thinking of a short phrase they want to offer to God and to repeat this phrase as they touch each bead and unique bead. In doing so, they will repeat the phrase thirty-three times.

If time permits, encourage youth to think of a phrase and practice using the prayer beads as they repeat this phrase. You can choose to either say the prayers aloud as a group or request youth to pray quietly. Some examples might be “Be still and know that I am God,” “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening,” “Here I am, Lord. Guide my thoughts,” “Bring healing and peace to this world.”

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- Beads
 - Unique beads (distinguishably different from the other beads)
 - Scissors
 - Yarn

PRAYER GRID

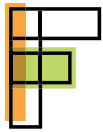
X CT

Distribute paper and markers and invite youth to draw a grid with three columns and four rows. Instruct them to label the columns WOW, PLEASE, and THANK YOU and the rows ME, LOVED ONES, ALL PEOPLE, and EARTH.

Invite youth to write a prayer of admiration about the goodness of each subject in the WOW column, a prayer requesting guidance or help in the PLEASE column, and a prayer of thanksgiving in the THANK YOU column.

If your youth group uses social media, invite youth to write their prayers in the grid and post them on social media using a distinct hashtag (such as #FirstChurchYouthPrays) in the upcoming week. Share their posts on your youth group’s social-media platforms.

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- Paper
 - Markers



FOLLOWING JESUS

LESSONS LEARNED

QC

Invite each youth to highlight one thing they learned today and consider how they can apply this knowledge in the upcoming week. Have all youth who feel comfortable share what they’ve learned and how they will apply it. After all youth who wish to have shared, say, “May we draw near to God in prayer.”



WORD BANK:

ADORATION
 BEADS
 BENEDICTION
 BLESSING
 BREATHE
 COMMUNAL

DELIVERANCE
 DEVOTION
 EMBODIED
 GUIDANCE
 INTERCESSION
 LABYRINTH

LAMENT
 LORDS
 MEDITATION
 PETITION
 PRAISE
 PROPHETIC

PSALMS
 SILENT
 STATIONS
 THANKSGIVING
 TONGUES