

Pray with and for Others

JAMES 5:13–16

3



GOAL

Youth recognize prayer as a communal practice and pray for themselves and others.

- 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

God, you know the joys and concerns of the youth who will gather for this session. Walk closely with them and stir them with your presence. Amen.

THIS SESSION

We pray to God in all things—celebration, grief, hope, desperation—and we trust that our God cares and listens. We do not pray alone. Jesus’ framework for prayer begins, “*Our Father*,” acknowledging that the one whom Jesus called “Abba, Father” is God of all. Christians pray, not only during our own good and bad times, but also in the good and bad times of other people and for all creation. Prayer encourages us to be aware of ourselves as well as those around us. Within the Christian tradition, praying with and for others is called *intercessory prayer*. We are invited to share our prayers and to participate in the vast prayers of others.

THE BIBLE STORY

The epistle of James is a letter from the first century written to a group of Christians, encouraging them to persevere and remain faithful during difficult times. In James 5:13–16, the author instructs the community to pray for anyone experiencing trouble, happiness, or sickness and reminds the community of the power of praying with and for others. The author claims that prayers are physically, socially, and spiritually healing, especially when offered to God as a community.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Young people experience a vast array of emotions, incidents, and circumstances. Youth will find comfort knowing that there is nothing too great for God to handle or too small for God to care. Youth will also find relief knowing that they do not need to keep their concerns and joys to themselves, but can offer their prayer requests to others for support. As youth develop a community consciousness, their joys and concerns extend past their own lives and include the joys and concerns of their local community and global incidents. Praying for and with others creates a greater awareness of their connection with the wider community and world.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Prayer Walk” (p. 22): Download and print a copy of the photo from the article “Prayer Group Walks Streets Seeking Divine Help for Harlem” (bit.ly/FMHarlem).
- “Prayer Bracelets” (p. 22): Obtain bandanas. Cut them into 1.5-inch strips, at least one strip per person.
- “Prayers for the People” (p. 23): Collect prayer requests from your faith community and addresses for those listed.
- “One Thing Learned” (p. 23): Display “One Thing Learned” newsprint from session 2 (p. 15).

GETTING STARTED

- ☐ Two sheets of newsprint
- ☐ Markers

JOYS AND CONCERNS

C

Write *Joys* on one sheet of newsprint and *Concerns* on the other. As youth arrive, invite them to write good news they wish to share with the group on the *Joys* sheet, and write worries, stresses, or bad news on the *Concerns* sheet.

Gather the youth. Invite volunteers to elaborate on what they wrote. Explain that we do not have to hold our joys and concerns to ourselves, but are invited to share them with our communities. Offer a prayer for what the young people bring to the group today.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

PRAYING PSALM 136

QC

Welcome youth with your usual opening activities. Invite participants to join you in the following litany with their response: “God’s steadfast love endures forever.”

Give thanks to God, for God is good.

God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Who answers the cries of the wronged—

God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Who showers us with mercy—

God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Who lifts up the humble—

God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of heaven and earth:

God’s steadfast love endures forever.

- ☐ Resource Page 1
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Drawing supplies

COLLABORATIVE DRAWING

A G

Distribute drawing supplies and paper. Form youth into groups of three. Use Resource Page 1 to guide youth through an artistic game demonstrating how our individual prayers contribute to a bigger picture of prayer.

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 2
- ☐ Writing supplies

PRAYER CARDS

G AM

Distribute copies of Resource Page 2 and writing supplies. Instruct youth to discuss the prompts on the card. Encourage them to write in the space above the prompts the names of people they know for whom the prompt is true. They may include people’s names multiple times. Have them make sure that each person’s name is included on their card.

Youth may take their card home to use as a reminder to pray for those in the group.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

PRAYING FOR EVERYTHING

CT C

Write these words across the top of the three newsprint sheets: *Suffering*, *Cheerful*, *Sick*. Distribute Bibles. Invite four volunteers to each read aloud one verse from James 5:13–16.

Begin with the sheet marked *Suffering*. Invite youth to identify examples of when someone might be suffering. Record their responses on the newsprint. Repeat this activity for *Cheerful* and *Sick*.

Explain that praying for others is called *intercessory prayer*. The person *intercedes* or turns to God with prayers on behalf of oneself or another. James encourages us to pray in all circumstances: in suffering, cheerfulness, and sickness. Discuss the effect of praying for people who experience the examples the group listed. Continue discussion with these questions:

- What difference does it make to pray for oneself? For others?
- Why do you think the author of this letter tells Christians to pray for everything?

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- ☐ Bibles
 - ☐ Three sheets of newsprint
 - ☐ Markers



Teaching Tip: If the Bible version you use offers different words than *suffering*, *cheerful*, and *sick*, substitute the words from your version.

PRAYING TOGETHER

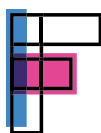
C AT

Distribute Bibles. Invite four volunteers to each read aloud one verse from James 5:13–16.

Explain that prayer is a practical action in James's letter, meant to be done in and for community. Choose from these questions to facilitate a discussion:

- Why do you think James includes verse 16? What is “powerful and effective” about prayer?
- When have you asked others to pray for you? What did that feel like?
- When have you prayed for others? How do you think they felt about others praying for them? What did that feel like for you?
- What have you noticed happens when you pray with and for others?
- How would you like to grow in your ways of praying with and for others?

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- ☐ Bibles



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

THE EARLY CHURCH

C

Explain that the faith community in the book of Acts is one of the earliest recorded examples of life in the Christian community. Read Acts 2:42–47 as youth follow along. Use these questions to facilitate a discussion:

- What do you notice about the commitments and activity of the early church?
- What does this passage say about prayer life in the early church?
- How is our church similar to the early church? How is our church different?
- If your group was developing a new church, what elements from the early church would you include? Why?

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- ☐ Bibles

☐ Internet-connected device

PRAYERS OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

C T

Explain that Martin Luther King Jr. was an influential civil-rights activist from the 1960s. Invite youth to explain what they know about Martin Luther King Jr.

Before showing the video, encourage youth to notice what and who is prayed for in the collection of prayers. Show the YouTube video “The Prayers of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.” (bit.ly/FMMLKPrayers, 4:35). Invite youth to talk about what stood out for them in the video. Use the following questions to facilitate conversation:

- ➔ Who and what is prayed for in this collection of prayers?
- ➔ In what ways did you notice Martin Luther King’s passion for justice and activism weaving through his prayers?
- ➔ How does hearing Martin Luther King’s prayer for the well-being of people inspire you to pray and act?

☐ Smartphones or internet-connected device



Teaching Tip: If you do not have internet access, you may print the photo and limited copies of the article for educational use.

PRAYER WALK

CT C

Explain that prayer walks are ways of praying for a community by walking around a neighborhood and praying for its needs. These are sometimes organized around a celebratory event or in response to violence in a community.

Display the photo on “Prayer Group Walks Streets Seeking Divine Help for Harlem” (bit.ly/FMHarlem). Invite youth to talk about what they notice.

Direct youth to bit.ly/FMHarlem to access the full article. Invite volunteers to take turns reading aloud the text. Discuss the effects that the prayer groups’ presence had on this community and various ways local residents responded. What does this account show about the power of prayer?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

- ☐ Strips of bandana
- ☐ Bowls of water
- ☐ Paper towels

PRAYER BRACELETS

A X

To make a bracelet out of the bandana strips, dip a strip into a bowl of water, remove it, and squeeze out the excess water. Hold the ends of the strip with both hands. Twist the hands in opposite directions. Once the strip is tightly twisted, it can be wrapped around another person’s wrist and tied at the ends.

Show the group how to make a bracelet using a bandana strip and water. Tell them that they will each make a bracelet at the end of this activity.

Form pairs and distribute a bandana strip to each youth. Each pair will hold both bandana strips together and take turns praying for each other. Encourage them to pray for good things to come, for attributes they appreciate about their partner, and for joys or concerns their partner has. Have each youth make a bracelet for their partner using the bandana strips. Tie it around their wrist as a reminder of their shared prayer.

Encourage youth to take home extra bandana strips to distribute to others and pray for and with them.

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE

S X

Explain that you have gathered a list of prayer requests for people in your faith community. Invite youth to join you in a group prayer as you read aloud the individual requests. For confidentiality, you do not need to read aloud people's names.

Have youth respond to the prayer requests by writing encouraging letters to the people for whom they prayed. Distribute paper, pens, and envelopes. Youth may write their own messages or adapt this sample message:

Dear Friend in Christ,

[*Name of church*] youth are praying for and thinking of you! May you feel God's presence and know you are surrounded in prayer.

Peace be with you. [*Signature optional*]

- ☐ Prayer request list
- ☐ Paper and pens
- ☐ Envelopes



To protect the privacy of people on the list, you may address the envelopes yourself.

PRAYING FOR CREATION

QC AT

Explain that praying for and with others includes praying for and with the creation. Distribute copies of Resource Page 3 and pens. Have youth take turns rolling the dice to determine what they pray for as listed on Resource Page 3. They may use the format on the Resource Page to write a prayer. Invite youth to offer examples from their prayers.

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 3
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ 2 dice



FOLLOWING JESUS

ONE THING LEARNED

CT

Write "Pray with and for Others" across the top of the "One Thing Learned" newsprint. Invite youth to write what they learned about praying with and for others and for creation. Save the newsprint for session 4.

- ☐ "One Thing Learned" newsprint from session 2 (p. 15)
- ☐ Markers

PRAYING A BLESSING

AM QC

Invite youth to repeat the following words and mimic the following actions after you:

O God, (*raise arms above head*) //

thanks for giving us ears (*touch ears*) //

to listen to the prayers of others (*cup ears with hands*) //

and eyes (*touch eyes*) //

to witness the needs of others. (*make visor over eyes with hands*) //

We pray for others with (*motion to those in the room*) //

our thoughts, (*touch head*) //

our words, (*touch mouth*) //

our hands, (*extend hands in front of you*) //

our feet, (*touch feet*) //

and with all the other gifts you have given us. (*circle hands around body*) //

Amen. (*raise arms above head*)

Collaborative Drawing

Show youth how to fold their paper into thirds as if they were folding a letter. Explain that each section of the paper will be a different section of a mysterious creature: the top section, the head; the middle section, the torso and arms; the bottom section, the legs and feet. Each youth in the groups of three will draw one section of the creature without looking at what others in the group have drawn.

Each youth needs to keep their paper folded as they begin to draw in the top section of their paper. Allow drawing for 90 seconds, then instruct youth to complete the section by drawing lines at the neck connecting the top of the creature to the fold between the top and center. This allows the next person to know where to begin drawing in the center section.

Have youth pass their folded paper to the person on their right without revealing the top of the creature. Allow about 90 seconds for youth to draw the middle of the creature. Have them connect their drawing to the lines from the top fold. Draw lines to connect their creature's middle to the fold between the middle and bottom section of the paper.

Fold the paper and pass it to the person to their right. Allow about 90 seconds for youth to draw the bottom of the creature. Each group will have created three creatures with each person contributing one section to each creature.

Fold the paper and pass it to the person to their right. Have youth unfold their papers to reveal their creatures. Encourage them to name the creatures. Use the following questions to facilitate conversation.

- ➔ How does it feel to create a group-made creature? Did the creatures turn out better or worse than you expected?
- ➔ What was it like to contribute to the creature without knowing what others had drawn?
- ➔ What was it like knowing others were contributing to your original drawing?
- ➔ In what ways do our individual prayers contribute to a larger prayer or story?
- ➔ What do you think happens when we pray?



Prayer Bingo

Knows someone who is sick	Has good news	Needs advice	Knows someone experiencing a life transition	Has a test soon
Is thankful about something	Knows someone in trouble	Is learning a new skill	Knows someone who is injured	Wants someone to pray for the earth
Has an essay due	Is stressed about something	PRAYER CARD (Pray for all!)	Has an art event soon	Is experiencing a life transition
Wants prayer for their family	Has a sports event soon	Is about to do something new	Is celebrating something	Came to church today
Is going on a trip soon	Wants something	Has a musical event soon	Wants prayer for their friends	Has bad news

Dice Prayers

Roll two dice. Write a prayer about the creation element that corresponds to the number rolled.

2 - Fish

3 - Soil

4 - Birds

5 - Reptiles

6 - Insects

7 - Air

8 - Amphibians

9 - Mammals

10 - Water

11 - Grasses

12 - Trees



I pray for _____ who/that need _____

I see how this/these is/are hurting and suffering because _____

I hope _____

Please _____

