



**Educate
+ Engage**



SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES:



prayer

OVERVIEW

Prayer is a vital part of every disciple's relationship with Jesus Christ. It is how we express to Him our needs, our praise, our desires, and our struggles. Prayer is direct communication to the throne room of Heaven. Understanding who we pray to will shape how we pray and what we pray for. Prayer needs to be our first response, not the last resort.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 6:9–13 (NKJV)

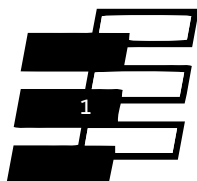
In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

ICEBREAKER: Charades Duel

1. Split the class into two groups.
2. Before class begins, write random words or phrases on slips of paper for students to later act out. Suggestions include *artist, mom, pilot, scuba diving, fishing in a boat*, etc.
3. Pick one person from each team to be the "actor" each round, and show those people the phrase or word you want them to act out.
4. Both people will be acting out the same word or phrase at the same time. The first team to guess the word or phrase will receive five points.
5. Here is a twist: The actors will not be facing the groups. Their backs will be to the audience.
6. The team to win the most number of rounds in a certain amount of time wins the game.

Discussion Question: Have you ever had something major happen that you couldn't wait to tell your friend, but your friend didn't answer your call or text you back? (Have a couple students share responses.)

Why is this type of situation so frustrating? Because when you want to talk to someone, you expect them to be ready to talk to you in an instant, even if that isn't realistic. Even though we can't reasonably expect immediate attention from each other, God's proximity to us is different. (Have a student read Psalm 145:18.)



Psalms 145:18 (NKJV)

The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.

EDUCATE

1. Prayer is how we speak with God.

Our minds can't fully grasp the fact that the Creator of everything is close to us and wants to hear from us. Why is that so hard to understand? One reason is because we can't see Him. Plus we can't physically touch God. So, it's not difficult to understand why people question if God can hear their prayers.

Discussion Question: What would you say to someone who questions whether God hears us when we pray? (Share a personal story about a time God answered a specific prayer that you prayed.)

Now let's talk about the second part of Psalm 145:18: "to all who call upon him in truth!"

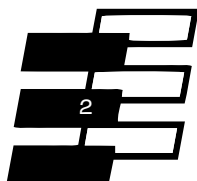
Discussion Question: Have you ever done something nice for your siblings or parents and their response was, "Now what do you want?"

Your family knows you—the real you. If they question your motives, that might mean you have been insincere in the past, so they are expecting that behavior again. In our prayer life, God wants our sincerity and the truth. He genuinely knows the real you, your motives, and your desires, and He wants you to be authentic. That means when you pray, don't try to be someone you aren't or use fancy words and showy prayers.

2. Just talk to God because He wants to talk to you.

Philippians 4:6–7 (NIV)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.



Lesson 2

Paul told the church at Philippi that God wants us to bring everything we deal with to Him in prayer. It's not enough just to talk to God when we need Him to intervene; we should bring **everything** to Him in prayer. Are you struggling with algebra class? Pray about it.

Are you trying to figure out which college to attend? Pray about it. Not sure which career path you want to pursue? Take that to the Lord in prayer, too.

Discussion Question: Why do we often forget that prayer needs to be our first response, not a last resort?

Have an honest conversation with God. Don't try and pray like you hear your parents, youth pastor, or pastor pray. Be yourself. Also, pro-tip here: God knows you don't have it all together, so don't act like you do. Prayer is a heart-to-heart conversation with our closest friend, Jesus Christ. Know that prayer is a real conversation with a real God who can handle all of your real problems.

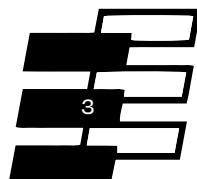
3. Prayer changes you.

(Have a couple students read Genesis 18:23–33.)

We just read how Abraham pleaded with God to save the righteous in Sodom, trying to get God to hold back judgment. Would God really destroy the city if there were only fifty righteous people there? What if there weren't fifty, but only forty? On and on Abraham asked God until eventually he asked if God would still destroy the city if only ten righteous people could be found in it. When Abraham heard that God would spare the city for ten righteous people, Abraham stopped praying.

Does that mean God would have destroyed the city if there were only nine righteous people? Does it mean God would have destroyed the city along with fifty righteous people if Abraham hadn't prayed? Maybe, but what if that's not the case? Abraham finished praying once he realized the depth of the mercy of God. It's possible this story teaches that prayer changed Abraham; it didn't change God.

Discussion Question: Why is it important to let prayer change us?



Closing

Remember that prayer is an open and honest conversation with God. It is going to take time to build up a consistent prayer life. It's okay to have some moments when you struggle. Let your prayer life grow. Make adjustments when you need to.

Lose the distractions when you pray. Try to pray with your phone on airplane mode or without your phone around you. Take notes in a journal in case you are prompted to pray for something. If you are distracted by words in prayer music, play just instrumental prayer music. Do whatever you need to so you can stave off distractions when you pray.

One of the most important things we can do in our prayer lives is to establish routine. Create time and space in your day for prayer. If you are an early bird, get up early and pray. If you are a night owl, pray before you go to bed. Whether you pray in the morning or pray at night, just pray!

A final practical piece of advice is to determine any tools you can use to help in your prayer life, such as prayer journals, devotional books, or prayer apps. Don't let the tools control your prayer life; rather, you control the tools. These resources can provide structure, inspiration, and guidance through your prayer time. Journaling your thoughts and prayers can also help you track your spiritual journey and maintain focus if you find yourself easily distracted. This is a great way to also keep track of all of the prayers God answers in your life!

ENGAGE

Let's take some time as we close class to have some authentic conversations with God. Talk to Him about your real needs. Be open to the leading of His Spirit. He may reveal to you things you need to change before He can begin working.

(Have some soft prayer music ready to play while the class concludes in prayer. When you are ready for dismissal, challenge students who do not have consistent times of prayer to initiate a "2x2" activity into their daily lives: two minutes of prayer daily and two minutes of Bible reading daily.)

As we get into the habit of beginning with two minutes of prayer and two minutes of Bible reading each day, we will learn that two minutes in each category will no longer be enough, and we will naturally see our prayer and devotion time increase! It is better to begin with a few minutes of prayer and Bible reading each day and gradually increase as your routine becomes more established. Starting small makes it easier to stay committed.

