

WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

HIGH PRIEST INTERCESSOR PETITION COMMUNION WITH GOD

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

John 16:17-17:19

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To strengthen in the preadolescents the regular practice of prayer; to help them understand that it is a means by which we can tell God our concerns; and to be grateful for the privilege of praying on a regular, daily basis

MEMORY VERSE

“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”
(Philippians 4:6-7, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Prayer is an essential part of being and making Christlike disciples. In fact, prayer is the bedrock upon which all other ministry efforts are built. As we pray, God inspires us to be actively engaged in the world. Through prayer, we participate in the Holy Spirit's transforming power, both for ourselves and for our neighbors. There are many people for whom it is hard to believe that they can speak directly with God. We generally have to use the correct channels to talk to a government leader or even our boss. So, some people feel they are not worthy to speak with God and seek a mediator or a person who can speak for them. This lesson will help your students understand that Jesus taught us that we have the privilege of being able to speak with God directly. Jesus is our high priest, our Intercessor. He carries our message directly to the presence of the Creator of the universe!

For some preadolescents, prayer is usually a way of asking for things. For others, it is only a cry for help in times of crisis. It is necessary for them to know that prayer is a daily communication with the Lord to praise, thank, worship, and present our requests.

Keep in mind this passage in Hebrews 4:15-16 to discuss with your group during this unit: “For we do not have a high priest who

is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

Prayer, the Word of God, and intentionally helping each other to be more like Jesus characterize dynamic discipleship in the Church. So, we encourage each other to personally pray each day and to have accountability partners who will also pray daily for us. Prayerfully, we invite mature Christians to intentionally disciple us along our journey with Jesus. Likewise, prayerfully, we invite a small group of Christ followers to become part of our discipleship groups.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Jesus, a religious Jew, was from a people who originally valued prayer. Every morning and every evening the Jews recited the SHEMA, three short passages of Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41). And three times a day—morning, afternoon and night—they prayed the Tephillah or the Eighteen Blessings. For Jesus, however, prayer was much more than a habit to repeat three times a day. Many times he moved away from the crowd, and even his disciples, to pray alone; sometimes he spent the whole night in prayer (read Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12). At other times, he climbed a mountain to pray, accompanied by his disciples (see Mark 6:46; Luke 9:28). Of course, at the time of greatest pressure of his life, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane and cried out to the Father with all his heart (see Matthew 26:36-44).

The habit of prayer was part of Jesus’ daily life, and it was very natural for him to use it as a farewell to give an example to the people. Knowing that he would soon die on the cross, Jesus prayed a prayer known as “the priestly prayer” (John 17). He did it in the presence of his disciples during the Last Supper, which was in a very real way, his farewell speech. In other parts of the Bible, we also find farewell speeches. A prominent place is the Book of Deuteronomy. As he approached death, Moses sang a significant hymn (31:30–32:47) and gave his blessing (33:1-19). The words of farewell (be it a song, a speech, or a prayer) have greater meaning because the author at that time communicates the most important thing before facing death.

The disciples had a unique privilege: to be in the presence of Jesus daily. They could see and talk to him. But now, Jesus would no longer be with them. How would they talk to him if he was not going to be there anymore? How could they survive in a world of problems without his power to help them? We can imagine the doubts and fears that the intimate or very close circle of friends and Jesus would face.

The priestly prayer offered by Jesus at the Last Supper was intended to show them that their greatest resource was the power of prayer. God the Father was only a prayer away, and now Jesus would be too. Although he was going to be physically absent, he would be closer than ever through prayer. The amazing thing for any Christian today is the reality that, by quieting our minds and hearts, we have God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son as close as talking to a friend.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

You have a message

Pass out Student Activity Sheet #388-A (You have a Message). Have them write or draw shapes of ways by which we communicate. Consider giving a small prize or recognition to the student who makes the longest and most complete list. (Examples: telephone, carrier pigeons, talking, fax, email, letters, smoke signals, signs, facial expressions, actions, telegrams, cell phones, radio, television, Internet, etc.) You can bring some of these items to the group to illustrate the lesson. After a few minutes, let the students share their answers with the others.

Say: “One would think that with all these excellent ways to communicate, we should be very good at the art of communication. However, sometimes we struggle, especially when it comes to communicating with God. Today we’ll talk about the importance of communicating with God.”

What I know about prayer?

Ask the students to complete the statements on Student Activity Sheet #388-B (What I know about prayer).

When students finish writing, ask them to share what they wrote. Listen to what they say among themselves. That way you can have a better perspective or idea of what they understand about prayer. Say: “Prayer is a privilege. We’re honored that God wants us to communicate with him. Through prayer we can tell him our concerns and openly communicate any burden of our hearts or concern we have.” Then, ask the following questions, allowing time for the students to answer:

If when you were a small child you prayed before bed, what was your prayer like?

Do you think God hears each of our prayers?

Why do we sometimes struggle to pray?

Tell us about a time you prayed and God answered your prayer.

Why does it seem to us that God does not answer all our prayers in the same way or as we would like him to answer them?

Today we'll talk about prayer, and we'll see the experiences Jesus had in relation to it.

TEACH THE LESSON

Steps to pray

When telling the Bible story, mention that this prayer was prayed by Christ in his last week of life. Say: "Today we're going to study what we call Jesus' 'priestly prayer.' In the Old Testament, a high priest was the priest who led others. Moses' brother Aaron was the first high priest. Today, our High Priest is Christ."

This is Jesus' farewell address. He prayed while having dinner with his disciples for the last time. He knew that he would soon die on the cross, so he took advantage of one of the last opportunities he had left while he was alive on earth to pray for believers.

Direct your students to Student Activity Sheet #388-C (Steps to Prayer) or write the five portions of Scriptures on a blank sheet. If possible divide into 5 smaller groups and assign each one of the passages.

The answers should be in response to the question: "What does this passage teach us about prayer?"

John 16:19-24. (Jesus will take our petitions to God. We can ask God for anything, according to his will. When we pray, we do it in Jesus' name.)

John 16:32-33. (God is with us even when we're in trouble. He is only a prayer away. Prayer brings us peace.)

John 17:1-5. (In prayer, we remember all the gifts God gave us, and we can thank him for his goodness. We also ask him to make us like Jesus.)

John 17:6-12. (Only God can protect us from evil. Through prayer, we find the power and strength to live in this world, even when the world treats us badly.)

John 17:13-19. (We're special to God. In prayer we remind ourselves that we can speak directly with the God of the universe, who wants to separate us--"sanctify us"--from the world. When we speak to God, we have deep joy.)

Allow the small groups to tell the rest of the group what they learned, including what they thought their passage said about prayer. Give them the opportunity to ask any questions of the text that they did not understand. Finish this activity by asking them to note that in this lesson we will not be studying chapter 17 in detail. We'll simply see that Jesus, in times of difficulty and trials, sought prayer as an answer. In the next three lessons, we'll discover the three parts of the priestly prayer of Jesus found in this chapter.

CONNECT THE LESSON

A Card to Call God

Hand out to your group Student Activity Sheet #388-D (A Card to Call God). Tell the group: "You were chosen to design a 'card to call God.' Use what you just learned from the Bible to create a card that you could use to call heaven, including a number and a slogan." Remind the students that some people spell their phone number instead of giving the numbers. (For example, 777-PRAY, is 777- 7729). Write the corresponding letters and numbers before the session and allow the students to use them.

Some ideas for the slogan can be: "We attend 24 hours a day," or "Free call to heaven," etc. After a few minutes, allow them to show their work to the rest of the group. You can also add the quote from Philippians 4:6-7.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

[Download Suggestions for Bible Memorization PDF](#)

Use this biblical activity to learn the memory verse. Explain the meaning of the words: "anxious," "transcends," and others that

may be difficult for preadolescents.

Before the session, write each of the phrases, as found below, separated by the slash mark [/], plus the reference, on card stock or on pieces of paper. Students should learn the verse by heart, and then put it together in the correct order, as if it were a puzzle.

In the group say: "We have talked about the importance of prayer. Jesus prayed when faced with difficult circumstances. Now we'll learn a passage that tells us how we should pray." Read the Memory verse

"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 / (Philippians 4:6-7)."

Mix up the cards with the written phrases and place them on a table. Tell the students that after reading them, they should put them in the correct order. If you wish, you can divide into two groups for a competition. If so, you will need two sets of phrases. You can repeat this activity in each of the four lessons of the unit. At the end of the unit, you can prepare prizes or some type of recognition for those who learned the text by memory. Think of giving them some fruit, such as an apple, orange, etc. They should not always be sweets.

WRAP-UP

Pray

End today's lesson by thanking God for the gift of prayer. Ask him for wisdom to pray the right way. If you decided that the students would have prayer partners, plan a time for them to talk to each other about their concerns, so they can pray together.

Encourage

Encourage the students to set aside moments during the week to pray together and separately for each other.

Consider praying for one or two requests from the church each week. During this unit, remind your students to pray for these requests on a regular basis in their private prayer times. They can send a card or a message to the person they're praying for. That way they'll know that the group is presenting their name to the Lord every week.

Invite

As the students prepare to depart, tell them something of interest about the next session and encourage them to attend. Remind them to welcome visitors.