

# WHY DO WE PRAY?

## Part 1: Getting closer to God

### Youth Group Session Two

We pray to get closer to God. God is everywhere around us at all times, but most of the time, sadly, we ignore Him. We act as if He is a stranger at a bus stop or in the waiting room at the dentist's office: someone who just happens to be at the same place we are. We don't talk to Him, we just go about our business, and every now and then, out of curiosity, we take a peek to see if He's still there.

But God **isn't** a stranger to us; He knows us better than anyone else ever can. He created us and knows each and every one of us from before the time we are born, and will be with us "even to the end of the world." He knows our thoughts, no matter how secret. He knows all of our joys, our sorrows, our strengths, and our weaknesses...and He loves us anyway. So it only makes sense that we should get to know Him better and better everyday of our lives. The best way to get to know someone is through honest communication with Him.

Of course, our communication with God is different than what it would be with just anyone we want to get to know. There are certain special messages that we should send to God as we learn to pray without ceasing. We should pray:

- **To praise and glorify Him**
- **To thank Him**
- **To ask His forgiveness for the sins we've committed.**

Only then can we ask Him for His continued blessings and for special needs.

### **To Praise and Glorify**

To praise and glorify means to show that we think highly of someone or something. There is no one or no thing that we should ever think more highly of than God!

The word "praise" is used often today: to praise someone for singing beautifully, or for being smart, or for doing anything well...even when an animal learns a trick! And we enjoy being praised when we do a good job; this is natural and fine. The thing to remember, though, is that all of our talents and abilities come from God, so the praise is actually due to Him. When someone compliments you, you should say thank you, of course, but also a small prayer: "Glory to God."

Read Psalm 66. There are many beautiful songs of praise in the book of Psalms.

### **To Thank**

"Thanking prayers" are usually the first prayers we learn when we are young. We thank God for our food, our families, and other blessings that we see around us. We must never take any of these things for granted and should continue to thank Him for them. To pray without ceasing, we show our thanks not only in words, but also by treating these blessings well.

As we get older, we must learn to also thank God for the things we can't see or understand. Our lives, even when we are having problems, are part of God's plan for mankind. As we learn to trust Him, we can give thanks to just be a part of this marvelous plan.

### **To Ask Forgiveness**

When we pray we must honestly look at ourselves and ask God's forgiveness for what we've done wrong. When we ask Him to "forgive us our trespasses," we should take a few moments to think about what those trespasses are. Yes, God already knows what we've done. That is why we ask Him to forgive us for the things we've done "voluntarily and involuntarily...in knowledge or in ignorance." We can tell God anything, even the things that we are too embarrassed to tell anyone else. It's important for us to think about the sins we know we have committed. Then we can honestly apologize and work to do better.

We ask God to forgive us in the same way "as we forgive those who trespass against us." These are strong words! Unless we sincerely forgive the people who hurt us, we are saying that we don't need God to forgive us! Of course this isn't true...we need Him to forgive us and help us in our dealings with others. Forgiving someone, right away, is another way to pray without ceasing.

Jesus Christ taught us the Lord's Prayer. How are praise, thanksgiving, and forgiveness included?

Now that we've praised and thanked God and asked Him for forgiveness, we can ask Him for the things we *think* we need. Some people believe that if they ask God for something and then don't get it, He's not listening to their prayers. They forget that God knows best and that the things we ask for may not be what's best for us. God **always** hears your prayer, and **always** answers it. But sometimes the answer is "no" or "not right now." He tells us to ask for things (Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you), but to trust and respect His answer. Read 1 John 5:14 -15.

"Now this is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, He hears us"

## Praying for Others

Prayer is a sign of love: our love for God and our love for other people. We pray for the people that we know and love, for strangers in the world, for our enemies, and for the departed. These prayers for others are called "intercessions." *To intercede* means to act for someone else.

Knowing that everyone in the world needs God's help, we add our prayers to theirs. If God hears each one of us, imagine how He hears a whole group of us praying for the same person! We also pray for others because they may not be able to pray for themselves. We pray for the departed, asking God to give them good rest and forgiveness. We pray for our enemies because only God knows what is in their hearts and we don't want their hatred of us to bring them to further sin.

When we pray for others who we know, we should pray for them by name. Remember, God knows each of them, too.

Our prayer books have *petitions* that include the people for whom we should intercede. There is a simple way to remember everyone you pray for when you don't have a prayer book.

Look at your hand. It is a gift from God that helps you almost every minute of the day. You cannot forget your hand! You can also use your hand to remember what we have learned today.

Next to or inside your thumb write – Those who are closest to me. In this way you can begin praying for those easiest for you to remember.

Next to or inside your index finger write - Teach, Instruct, Heal. Your pointer finger "points" the way and gives direction. People who teach, instruct and heal such as clergy, teachers, doctors and missionaries need wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to "point" those they are with in the right direction.

Next to or inside your middle finger write – Leaders. Your middle finger is the tallest finger. Leader such as Bishops, government officials, administrators and leaders in business need God's guidance to make good decisions. They make decisions that are for and affect all of us on a daily basis. Their leadership influences one to millions of people.

Next to or inside your ring finger write – Those in trouble, pain or departed. The ring finger is the weakest of all fingers. It is the only finger that does not have an independent tendon to make it work. This will help to remind you to pray for those who are weakened by pain, sorrow, stress, troubles or have left this life. These people are in constant need of prayer.

Next to or inside your pinkie finger write – Me. Your pinkie finger is the smallest. This will help you to remember that your relationship in respect to God and all the other people you have prayer for. Once you have prayed for others, you should have a better understanding and perspective of your own blessings, needs, and troubles.

**WHY DO WE PRAY?**  
**Part 2: The Holy Spirit lives in us**

Do you remember what happened as soon Jesus came out of the Jordan after He was baptized?

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The same thing happened to you when you were baptized! When you came out of the baptismal water, you were anointed with oil as the seal of the Holy Spirit, the sign that God has adopted you as one of His children and sent His Spirit to live in you, making you a temple of God. This Mystery is called Chrismation, because the oil used by the priest is called Holy Chrism.

As a child of God, it's only natural that you should communicate with your Father often. The life of the Holy Spirit within you gives you another important reason to pray. Just as you need to exercise your muscles to keep them strong and growing, prayer is the "work out" for the holy part of you...and that part is just as real as your heart and other muscles. Prayer is part of your "total fitness program!"

But the wonderful thing about the Holy Spirit is that He actually gives us the power to pray. Read John 14: 16-18. What does Jesus call the Holy Spirit?

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With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can honestly bring our prayers to God. The more we do, the stronger the Holy Spirit grows in us. The Holy Spirit will even do the work for us when we honestly can't: Romans 8:26.

With the gift of the Holy Spirit comes responsibility. We are to "bear fruits" in our life. What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22-23

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Prayer will help us bear these fruits and show the world around us the wonderful gift that is a life with God.