

“THE WORLD” TRIES TO STOP US FROM PRAYING UNCEASINGLY

Youth Group Session Six

Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry – Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA
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Objective: To give the participants an understanding of:

1. ‘The world’
2. Being ‘on guard’ in our faith like soldiers
3. How to deal with distractions

Items in **blue** are notes for the Session Leader. For younger children read for them – you may want to paraphrase and ask questions often to keep their interest. For older children, allow them to read aloud or to themselves.

Related books for Session Leader’s Reference:

- A Beginner’s Guide to Prayer – The Orthodox Way to Draw Closer to God
Michael Keiser. Conciliar Press. www.conciliarpress.com
- The Orthodox Church A – Z
Fr. George Grube. Light and Life Publishing. www.light-n-life.com
- Beginning to Pray
Metropolitan Anthony Bloom. Paulist Press. www.paulistpress.com
- Living Responsibly in an Age of Excuses.
Fr. Anthony Coniaris Light and Life Publishing. www.light-n-life.com

Children’s Books

- Brave Like a Saint
by Iakovina illustrated by Jeff Rudolph. www.light-n-life.com
- Courage to Witness: Study Guide for Brave Like a Saint

Craft for Children 5 – 11 - Armor of God

Needed Items:

- Poster Board
- Construction Paper
- Markers
- Glue
- Felt

Pre-session Preparation

Make needed copies of the Lesson Hand Outs. Provide bibles.

Print the following slogan of the US Postal Employees printed on a piece of paper that can be divided by word or a few words. Divide up the slogan into enough parts for your participants.
“Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.”

Set up an obstacle course. It can be easy or difficult. Invent a few “surprises” that can happen along the way to make it harder.

Prior to the start of the session have the participants run the obstacle course. Each person has a piece of a message that they must bring back to the next person. Each person must go through the course, get their

message and return to the message center. When they have completed the course they must put the slogan together in the correct order. This could be done in two teams, completing for time. For a bonus, ask them to right on the bottom of the last page, "who uses this slogan?"

Once the slogans are turned in begin the lesson. Ask the participants to find a place in the room not near anyone else. Tell them that today's session will begin with personal prayer. They will have 5 minutes of silence for their prayers.

Session

We've learned that "praying without ceasing" really means always sending the message to the world that we are children of God, living our lives for His glory. But do you ever feel that no matter how much you may want to SEND that message, the world doesn't want to RECEIVE it, or that somehow the message gets "blocked" or lost, like a dropped conversation on a cell phone. The truth is that "the world" **doesn't** always want to receive this message, so it does try to block it.

What or who is this "world" that's causing us these problems?

Ask them how this relates to the game that they just played. At this point reveal that the slogan is for the US Postal Employees. Discuss a bit how the Postal Services never shut down because of difficulties, they deliver mail whether you want it or not (ask what kind of mail they may not want), ask if they have any other points of similarity. Read to them the revised Slogan, which was written after 911.

**We are mothers and fathers.
And sons and daughters.
Who every day go about our lives
with duty, honor and pride.
And neither snow,
nor rain,
nor heat,
nor gloom of night,
nor the winds of change,
nor a nation challenged,
will stay us from
the swift completion
of our appointed rounds.
Ever.
We are the 800,000
men and women of
The United States Postal Service.
Founded September 26, 1789.**

We know that our world is God's Creation; He made it and everything in it, to be perfect and holy. But when Man chose to bring sin into this perfect Creation, Satan saw his chance to gain power over it by gaining power over us. Often, in the Bible and Church writings, "the world" is used to describe this difference between the life God intended for us and what we have chosen instead.

But God never stopped loving his Creation. John 3:16-17 tells us exactly how God feels:

"For God so loved _____ **the world** _____ that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever _____ **believes** _____ in Him shall not perish but have _____ **everlasting life** _____"

_____. For God did not send _____ His Son _____ into the world to _____ condemn _____ the world, but that the world through Him might be _____ saved _____.”

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ came into this world to show us how to live so that one day we can be with Him in the Kingdom of God. Jesus understood that we would not have an easy time following Him; even He was tormented by Satan and made to suffer because the world had fallen so far away from God.

Read Matthew 4:1-11 and talk about it. (Discuss: Satan didn't even try to disguise himself to Christ, as he does to us. Why not? With what did Satan tempt Christ? How hard would it be to pass these things up? Read Luke's version of the temptation (4:1-13), especially verse 13. What does this tell us about Satan? He is willing to wait until the time is right!)

What are some other ways that Jesus suffered in this world? (Not being accepted; being "run out of town;" having His own disciples be weak, squabble among themselves; deny Him; finally His crucifixion)

Knowing how difficult it is to follow Christ while we are in this world, St. Paul often tells us that we have to be like soldiers: training, keeping in shape, and never giving up no matter how tough things look. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. List some of the things St Paul tells us we can use as soldiers facing battle:

Shield of _____ Faith _____ Helmet of _____ salvation _____

Sword of _____ the Spirit _____ The whole _____ armor of God _____

Prayer is one of the best weapons we have in our war against the Evil One, and a good soldier always makes sure his weapon is always working!

What are some of the tricks that Satan tries to use on us? (Discuss to get their ideas before going on)

Read 1Kings 19:11-12 (You may have to briefly tell the story of Elijah: why he was hiding and waiting for God. Discuss how people expect God to come to them in a very dramatic way, even though He, throughout salvation history, often chooses much subtler ways to communicate with us.) Now think about your day...Make a list of everything you hear from the time you wake up.

Do you think that you would ever be able to hear "the still, small voice" if it speaks to you? There's probably nothing on your list...music, TV, crowds of people, even video games... that 's all "bad." But, when we get lost in these noisy distractions, we aren't giving ourselves the time we need to listen for God, and to think about the people around us. (Discuss the quiet time given at the beginning of the session for personal prayer, for example...did they notice any difference in themselves?)

The world also uses those same noisy distractions to tell us how to live, how to think about ourselves, and about other people. Think of some messages that the world sends to you: (Get them to give you examples of commercials, song lyrics, shows, etc. that preach self-centeredness, greed, idolatry, etc) _____

When we hear these messages again and again, they start to fill our heads and our lives until we believe them and start putting God further and further down on the list of things that are important to us. St John, in his first epistle, tells us “Do not love the world, or the things in the world...” because these things don’t last like the love of God does.

Sometimes we can just walk away from things that we know are wrong, but we can't live in a cave, hiding from the world and the things that it tempts us with. Prayer without ceasing, with our words, our minds and our actions, will let us keep the things of the world where they belong and leave room for God in our lives.

At this time, you may give the teenage participants time to close the session in at least ten minutes of undisturbed quiet prayer time (a half hour would be ideal). You may want to take them to the church for this. They could spend the time journaling about prayer, reading scripture, or praying.

For younger participants begin the craft. Out of the materials suggested have them craft a sword, shield, and helmet. On the sword they should write “The Spirit”, on the shield “Faith” and on the helmet “salvation”. Attempt to have the participant work in silence. Tell them that each time they either glue something, color or cut – they can make it into a prayer. You may only want to have a part of the time in quiet or the whole. Remind them that quiet is just not ‘not speaking’ but quiet in their body and actions as well.

You may want to end the day with a meal or fellowship.