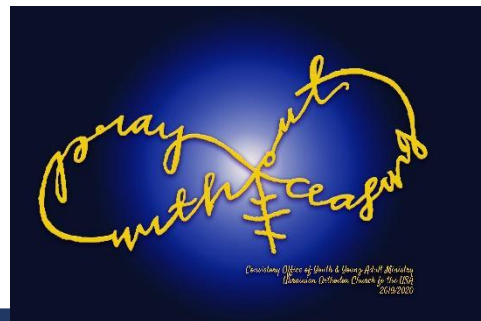


WHY DO WE PRAY?

Session Two, Part 1: Getting closer to God



Objective: To give the participants an understanding of:

1. Two-way open communication
2. Ways in which to address and pray to God – Praise, Thanksgiving, Forgiveness, Intercession

Items Needed: Copies of worksheets, copies of Psalm 66, pencils or pens, bibles, poster board, markers (red, blue, green), paper wrist bands (https://www.amazon.com/s?k=wrst+bands&ref=nb_sb_noss_1)copies of prayers to be used.

Items in (blue) are notes for the Session Leader.
The symbol “→” indicates a question for the students.

Pre-session Preparation:

Lord’s Prayer – Take the poster board and write on it the Lord’s Prayer. Ensure that there is at least an inch separating the lines so that things may be written in-between. Order wrist bands.

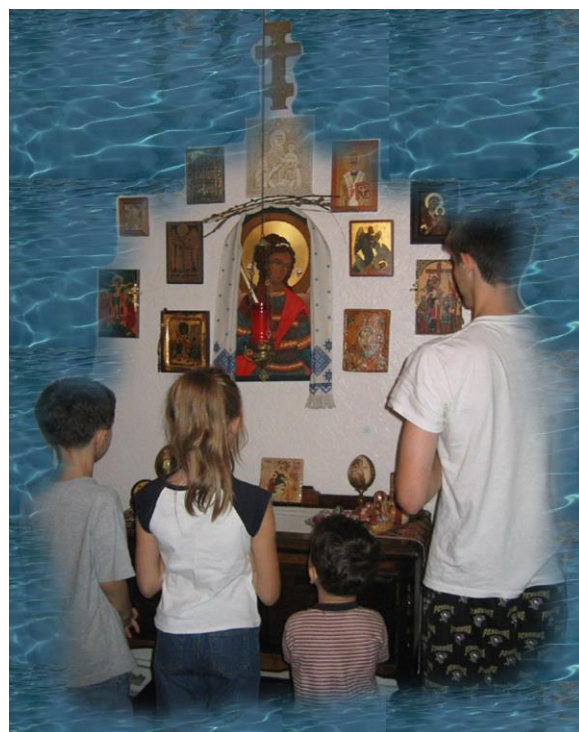
Begin the session with the Lord’s Prayer.

(Prior to the start of the session, ask several of the participants, in private, to ignore everyone in the group except for the other people you have chosen. They should not acknowledge the other people in any way. Ask the remaining members to go and gather everyone to begin. Let this go for a few minutes. If you see frustration mounting bring the exercise to an end. Explain what you asked the others to do. Discuss how everyone felt while it was happening. How hard do we have to try to ignore someone, once we know they’re there? How does it feel to be ignored?)

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.

→ (Does God make His presence known to us? How does this relate to the exercise we just did?)

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 every day 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.

→ (What kinds of questions do you ask new people to get to know them? Pause and let students offer ideas. Some examples may be: What classes do you take? Do you have any hobbies?)

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; and,**
- **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! 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."

[\(Discuss that God is due praise for much more than our talents...we can't comprehend His greatness, etc.\)](#)

Read Psalm 66. There are many beautiful songs of praise in the book of Psalms. [Add Psalm 66 to the personal prayer books/journals.](#)

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. [\(Excerpts from the Akathist for Creation or Glory to God for All Things are a great illustration of this. This akathist is available in the supplemental materials and will be used in the praxis sessions.\)](#)

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.

Each time we pray the Lord's Prayer, 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. [\(Take the time to have a short discussion on the true meaning of forgiveness. This is a whole lesson in and of itself, but take the time to hit a few major points. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is a good example to use.\)](#)

Jesus Christ taught us the Lord's Prayer. How are praise, thanksgiving, and forgiveness included? [\(At this point, take out or indicate the Lord's Prayer on the poster board. Have the participants take turns going to the prayer and using the different colored markers, indicate what parts of the prayer are praise \(blue\), thanksgiving \(green\), and forgiveness \(red\).](#)

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." [\(Discuss times when this has happened with their parents or other authority figures.\)](#) He tells us to ask for things (Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you), but to trust and respect His answer. [\(Read 1 John 5:14 -15\).](#)

→ Have students fill in the blank from the Scripture reading: "Now this is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything _____(according to His will)_____, 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 of sins. 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.

[\(At this point have them trace their hand on the blank area at the end of this lesson. Then begin the next section.\)](#)

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. Leaders 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 his 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.

Taking it Home! Hand out the wrist bands to the youth. Explain that these are prayer bracelets. Ask them to think of people for whom they would like to pray. Have them write “Lord Have Mercy” and then write the names of the individuals. You may send home some extra bands with them to use in the future or to share with family members. Send a note home to the parents explaining the bands and their use.



Silent Contemplation Time: Scripture Reading on Joy and Gentleness - Philippians 4:4-5