

STUMIN

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE SCHOOL FOCUS

THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

FEBRUARY 28, 2024

Week 2 of a 2-week series
about prayer

BOTTOM LINE

Find your way to pray.

SCRIPTURE

"This, then, is how you should 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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

- Matthew 6:9-13 NIV

GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to consider the heart behind their prayers and to give them a framework to use in prayer

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Good news: There isn't a wrong way to pray! Knowing this gives us freedom to go to God in prayer with confidence! It's not wrong to pray the Lord's Prayer or other scripted prayers. And it's not wrong to pray any words you choose. God hears both, and that's important for middle school students to know. They can use things like Jesus' prayers in Scripture to guide them or they can speak openly and honestly in their own words. Give your group the freedom to try what works for them in prayer. Also, encourage them to not see prayer as something that only works at specific times of day, like before bed, at meal time, or in the morning. Instead, help them see how prayer can become an active part of their lives every day throughout the day. They can pray at any time in any place to connect with God.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What's one thing you learned today about prayer?
- Prayer can sometimes feel awkward or confusing - and that's ok! Share an uncomfortable, funny, or confusing prayer experience you've had in your own life.
- Have you ever felt close to God when you prayed? If so, tell us about it!
- How can prayers we read from others in the Bible be helpful to you when you pray?
- Who is somebody you feel comfortable being real with? Why are you comfortable with them? What can you apply from your relationship with this person to your relationship with God? How might that positively impact the way you pray?

DO THIS:

Have students get into pairs and give them a specific prayer to look up in the Bible. (Examples: Psalm 23, Psalm 91, Psalm 145, and Matthew 6:9-13.) Have each student pair read their prayer out loud and then discuss as a group what's interesting about it or what they learned.

DO THIS:

Explain to students that a simple way to pray is by following the model Jesus gave us: "Thanks," "Please," "Sorry." Pass out the provided journal page and have students write down a prayer using these three categories.

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HIGH
SCHOOL
FOCUS

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>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Before you get to group, ask yourself the small group questions and pay attention to any tensions you have about prayer so you can lead your group authentically. Do your best to lead your group without projecting your feelings or expectations onto them.

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What's one app you can't live without?
- Some people treat prayer like an old school landline phone and only pray one prayer: "help." Share about a recent "help" prayer you prayed. How did the situation turn out?
- How can we treat prayer more like a smartphone? What other ways can we pray besides asking for help? Share about a recent time you prayed in a way that didn't involve just asking God for "help."
- Jesus could have just commanded "talk to God." Instead He prayed out loud as an example, showing that there are several things we can pray for. In today's message, 5 ways to pray were highlighted:
 - Thanks - thanking God for big and small things
 - Please - asking God for help
 - Sorry - apologizing and asking for forgiveness
 - Wow - worshiping God by being in awe of who God is and what God does
 - Huh - bringing your questions to God
- Of these options, which one is a surprise to you?
- Which one do you use most often in prayer? Which do you use the least? Why?
- Which of the 5 ways to pray would you like to incorporate more into your prayer life?
- How would your life be different if you prayed this way more often?
- Who is somebody you feel comfortable being real with? Why are you comfortable with them? What can you apply from your relationship with this person to your relationship with God? How might that positively impact the way you pray?
- What is something important to you that you do consistently? How can you become more consistent in prayer?
- How can our group support one another in prayer?