

# Pray Honestly

MATTHEW 6:9-13

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## GOAL

Youth review the significance of the Lord's Prayer and examine their prayer practices.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

God, may my prayer life be strengthened as I learn and teach about prayer. Amen.

## THIS SESSION

What is the point of praying? One answer rests on openness and honesty. In prayer, we can be open about ourselves and open toward God. We can confess our most basic needs and our most grievous mistakes. We can bring to God our sorrow and pain. We can admit when we need forgiveness and when we need help to forgive others. Our honesty with God allows us to be honest with ourselves.

Prayer opens us toward what God desires, “on earth as it is in heaven.” We become aware of how God is acting in the world and join in these activities. In an honest relationship with God, we recognize where we stray or where the world departs from God’s just community. When we openly acknowledge what is wrong in our world, what wrongs we have done, and what God calls us to do, we can confess, repent, and move into action toward God’s justice.

## THE BIBLE STORY

In Matthew 6, Jesus gives a lesson in prayer, a roadmap for how to pray. One of the first prayers that many of us learn is the Lord’s Prayer. It begins by addressing God as both a being with whom we have a personal relationship, saying “Our Father” (or other parental language), and One who is sacred and holy (“who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name”). We orient ourselves toward God’s will and ask for the sustenance we need for our lives. We ask both to be forgiven and for help as we forgive those who harm us. A concluding doxology proclaims God’s glory. The Lord’s Prayer encapsulates many kinds of prayer: adoration, guidance and help in our lives, confession, and praise.

## CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth can be self-conscious as they work to discern who they are in relation to others. Younger youth are prone to follow the norms of a community and strive to fit in, while older youth often challenge norms. All youth will benefit from learning traditional prayers, yet there is no right nor wrong way to pray. They can choose to follow the traditions and norms or they can practice creativity with their prayers. Both are acceptable to God who simply wants to be in an open and honest relationship with us.

## SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “A Challenge” (p. 9): Use the YouTube video “How to Make a Zine from One Piece of Printer Paper” ([bit.ly/FMMakeZine](https://bit.ly/FMMakeZine), 3:10). Prepare to teach youth the process.

# GETTING STARTED

- Markers
- Newsprint

## GATHER AND WRITE C

Write *PRAY* in the center of a sheet of newsprint and display it. As youth gather, invite them to write on the newsprint words that describe pray, praying, and prayer. They may also write prayers they know or use.



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

## PRAYING PSALM 136 QC

Welcome the youth with your usual opening activities. Explain that the theme of this session is “Pray Honestly.” Invite participants to join you in the following litany with their response: “God’s steadfast love endures forever.”

Give thanks to God, for God is good.

**God’s steadfast love endures forever.**

God hears us when we pray—

**God’s steadfast love endures forever.**

God invites us to draw close—

**God’s steadfast love endures forever.**

God welcomes us with open arms—

**God’s steadfast love endures forever.**

Give thanks to the God of heaven and earth:

**God’s steadfast love endures forever.**

## OUR PRAYER LIFE AM

Explain that the group will be exploring and discerning prayer for the next four sessions. To begin today’s session, “Pray Honestly,” they will take a look at their current prayer lives.

Read aloud the questions below. Have youth move to the right side of the room if they relate more to the first option and to the left side if they relate more to the second option. They may also stand between the two options.

- ➔ Do you pray privately or pray publicly?
- ➔ Do you pray quietly or pray loudly?
- ➔ Do you pray when you are sad or when you are happy?
- ➔ Do you pray with words or with movements?
- ➔ Do you pray often or rarely?
- ➔ Do you pray in the morning or in the evening?

Discuss what the youth notice about the group’s prayer life.

## BARRIERS TO PRAYER C

Select from the following questions for discussion:

- ➔ If I asked you to pray silently, what would you think?
- ➔ If I asked you to pray with a friend in the room, how would you feel?
- ➔ If I asked you to pray in front of this group, what would you do?
- ➔ If I asked you to pray in front of our congregation, what would you think?



**Teaching Tip:** If there are persons with mobility issues, give each youth two different colored papers. They raise one color for one option, and the other color for the second option. Raise no color if they are between the two options.

- ➔ What prevents us from always praying confidently?
- ➔ What do you think God cares about when we pray?

Explain that the group will be exploring and discerning prayer and identifying ways to pray honestly with God.



## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.

### DISCUSSING AND PRAYING



Distribute Bibles and read Matthew 6:9–13 aloud together as a group. Invite youth to notice who is speaking, who is listening, and why these words are included in the Bible. Use these questions for discussion:

- ➔ Where and when have you heard this prayer before?
- ➔ What do you know about this prayer?
- ➔ When might it be helpful to you to pray this prayer?

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 Bibles

### WONDERING REFLECTION



Read aloud Matthew 6:9–13. Invite youth to identify which phrases they connected with most. Encourage them to elaborate on the significance of their chosen phrases.

Read Matthew 6:9–13 again. Wonder together why Jesus might offer these words as a prayer. Discuss together why so many people across time and location have found these words significant or helpful.

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 Bibles

### WRITING A MODERN LORD'S PRAYER

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 and writing supplies and have youth complete the worksheet. Invite youth to read their versions of the Lord's Prayer. Discuss which versions they prefer for their personal praying.

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 Copies of Resource Page 1  
 Writing supplies


## FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

### PRAYING AROUND THE WORLD



Show the YouTube video “The Lord’s Prayer in Different Languages—Pentecost 2020” ([bit.ly/FMLPDiffLang](https://bit.ly/FMLPDiffLang), 1:10). Invite youth to talk about their thoughts and impressions from the video. Wonder together what meaning people across the world might find in this prayer.

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 Bibles  
 Internet-connected device


### BELHAR CONFESSION



Explain that the first 90 seconds of this video describe the social conditions that led to the creation of the Belhar Confession. Show “The Confession of Belhar and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” ([bit.ly/FMBelhar](https://bit.ly/FMBelhar), 10:21). Invite youth to talk about what they saw and heard in the video. Encourage them to name other issues that the church could also confess. List these on newsprint. Discuss what they would say about these issues and

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 Internet-connected device  
 Newsprint and marker

 **Teaching Tip:** This activity will take longer than 10 minutes. If you choose this activity, plan accordingly.

work together to craft a confessional statement. Record the statement on newsprint and display it in your learning space.

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- Internet-connected device

## GOD SAYS YES

QC

On the internet, locate Kaylin Haught's poem, "God Says Yes to Me" ([bit.ly/FMGodsYes](https://bit.ly/FMGodsYes)). Youth with smartphones may access it too.

Read aloud the poem. Ask youth to identify the feelings that arise for them as they listen to the poem. Reread the poem. Ask youth what words or phrases stick out to them. Read the poem for the third time. Ask where they see themselves in the poem. Discuss what the poem models for praying honestly. Invite volunteers to tell about a time when they prayed honestly and how it felt to them.



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

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- Six sheets of newsprint
  - Marker
  - Pens

## COMMUNAL PRAYER

CT

Write these phrases across the top of separate newsprint sheets:

- God (*a name you have for God*)
- Thank you for . . . (*people, places, or things you appreciate*)
- You are . . . (*attributes of God*)
- Sometimes we . . . (*confessions of ways we mess up*)
- Help us . . . (*actions that help us promote God's love*)
- Yours . . . (*your name*)

Distribute pens and have youth write their responses to each heading. Encourage youth to be honest in their responses. Tell them that they may write multiple responses on each sheet. Save their responses to use for a closing prayer.

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- Writing supplies
  - Paper



Teaching Tip: For more on dialogue journaling, read Marcus Hong's foundational essay, (p. 33).

## DIALOGUE JOURNALING

QC AT

Distribute writing supplies and paper. Ensure that each youth has two different colors for writing. Have them use one color to write a one-sentence prayer to God. In quiet prayer, have them meditate on how God might respond. Use the second color to write God's response. Encourage youth to repeat the practice for five minutes.

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- Paper
  - Writing supplies

## A LETTER TO EARTH

QC

Distribute paper and writing supplies. Ask: "What problems do you think the earth currently faces?"

Have youth write a letter to the earth. Encourage them to include in their letters the problems the group described and acknowledge the ways they each contribute to the problems. Invite them to describe to the earth what they think God has planned for creation and to commit to participate in God's plans.

When the youth complete their writing, invite them each to share one line from their letter. Discuss ways they can participate in responding to problems facing the earth. If there is interest, plan a group activity to actively care for the earth.

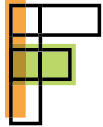
## A CHALLENGE



Show the YouTube video “How to Make a Zine from One Piece of Printer Paper” ([bit.ly/FMMakeZine](https://bit.ly/FMMakeZine), 3:10), and teach youth the process.

Distribute supplies and encourage them to decorate the front cover. Challenge them to write a prayer to God for each day in the upcoming week on the inside pages.

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- Paper
  - Scissors
  - Drawing supplies



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### ONE THING LEARNED



Write “Pray Honestly” down the left side of the newsprint. Prompt youth to consider what it means to pray honestly, how they pray honestly, what they pray honestly for, and who prays honestly. Have them write one thing they learned about praying honestly. Save the newsprint for future sessions.

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- Newsprint from “Gather and Write” (p. 6)
  - Markers

### REVISITING COMMUNAL PRAYER



For a closing prayer, invite youth to review and select one statement from each newsprint list. Have them take turns offering their statements aloud as a prayer.

If you did not choose the “Communal Prayer” activity on page 8, use the closing prayer below, offering each line and having the group repeat after you.

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- Newsprint lists from “Communal Prayer” (p. 8)

O God who is in heaven and on earth,  
thank you for caring for and participating in our lives.  
Help us be honest and vulnerable with you  
and to trust in your good ways. Amen.

# A Modern Lord's Prayer

Read the Lord's Prayer below. Next to each line, write a similar phrase using language significant to you.

Our Father who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our debts,

as we forgive our debtors;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom

and the power

and the glory, forever.

Amen.