

Pray Honestly

MATTHEW 6:9–13

GOAL

Adults approach God with honesty about themselves and with openness toward God's will.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



Visit our YouTube channel, bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR, for conversation starter videos.

PRAYER

As I prepare to lead your people, O God, may I be open to your presence, your listening, and your guidance. Amen.

THIS SESSION

What is the point of praying? One answer rests on our 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” (Matthew 6:10). 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 (turn around), and move into action toward God's justice.

THE BIBLE STORY

Jesus prefaces what we have come to call the Lord's Prayer, saying “pray then this way” (v. 9). He offers a model prayer directed to our Holy God. In prayer, we ask for God's will to be done and for earth to resemble heaven. As we seek to know and abide in God's kingdom, we recognize that we live in a fallen world. We pray for earth to be a place where everyone has a seat at the table, where all are fed, and where all creatures can flourish and prosper. We also acknowledge that we contribute to a world where people do not flourish. We admit our need for forgiveness and our need to forgive. We beseech God's protection from temptation, harm, and evil. A concluding doxology giving glory to God was likely added to Jesus' prayer by saints of the early church.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Beginning Conversations” (p. 5): Obtain the *Pray* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters, Year 2 Set).
- “Communal Prayer” (p. 7): Write the six phrases across the top of separate newsprint sheets for display.
- “Creating a *Lorica*” (p. 8): Copy the prayer pattern from page 15 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* onto newsprint.

GETTING STARTED

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome participants and allow time for gathering activities particular to your group (*introductions, offering, prayer concerns, and announcements*). Review the summary of the practice found in the Unit Overview on page 4 of the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain that a more detailed discussion of the practice can be found in the foundational essay that begins on page 49 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Encourage participants to read the essay during the course of the next four sessions.

In this first session in the practice of *Pray*, it is assumed that many participants are just receiving their *Adult Reflection Guides*. Many of the suggested activities in this *Adult Leader's Guide* correspond closely with *Adult Reflection Guide* activities since participants may not have worked through these prior to the session.

OPENING LITANY

Explain that the theme of this session is “Pray Honestly.” Refer participants to the litany on page 7 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* and have them join you in the responsive reading. After you read a line of the litany, participants say this line in unison: “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.

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- This and all sessions require that the leader and participants have their copy of the *Adult Reflection Guide* with them.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

CONVERSATION STARTER VIDEO

Show the “*Pray Overview*” video and the “*Pray Honestly, Session 1*” video from the Growing Faith YouTube channel (bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR). Lead a brief conversation about participants’ thoughts and questions the videos prompt as you introduce the session.

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- Internet-connected device

BEGINNING CONVERSATIONS

Display the *Pray* infographic poster. Invite adults to notice the different words and actions associated with prayer. Have them call out the words that they experience with prayer. Encourage volunteers to describe their prayer practices or experiences.

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- Pray* infographic poster (Year 2 Set)

PRAYER LIFE

Refer participants to the Unit Overview and reflection questions on page 5 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Discuss the two questions to encourage participants to begin thinking about their prayer lives.

Pens

PRAYERS YOU KNOW

Refer participants to the introduction to “Pray Honestly” and the questions on pages 6–7, preceding the litany in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Distribute pens and have them write responses to the two questions. Briefly discuss their written responses and encourage participants to identify where they learned the prayers they recall.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.

Bibles

WONDERING AND PRAYING

Distribute Bibles and read Matthew 6:9–13 aloud together as a group. Invite participants to notice who is speaking, who is listening, and why these words are included in the Bible. Have them identify which phrases they connected with most and discuss the significance of their chosen phrases. Wonder together why so many people across time and location have found these words significant or helpful.

Pens

FLESHING OUT THE LORD’S PRAYER

Direct participants to “Finding the Practice in the Bible” and the two columns on page 9 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read the paragraph preceding the columns about taking time to read through Scripture. Invite participants to read the text of the Lord’s Prayer and respond to the questions accompanying each line of the prayer. Discuss with the group their experience with reading and reflecting on the prayer in this way. How does a deeper reflection enhance the prayer?

Bibles

COMPARING PRAYERS

Refer participants to “Finding the Practice in the Bible” on page 8 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read aloud the first paragraph. Ask participants to talk about when they first learned the Lord’s Prayer and who taught it to them.

Distribute Bibles and invite two volunteers to read aloud Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:1–4 while others read along. Invite participants to identify similarities and differences between these two prayers. Discuss why there are two different versions of the prayer and what is significant about the similarities and differences.

Have participants read the second paragraph on page 8 of the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Discuss insights they discovered in the paragraph. Ask them which prayer they prefer and why.

FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

Internet-connected device

PRAYING AROUND THE WORLD

Show the YouTube video “Lord’s Prayer in Different Languages” ([bit.ly/FMDiffLang](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly/FMDiffLang), 3:32). Invite participants to talk about their thoughts and impressions from the video. Wonder together what meaning people across the world might find in this prayer. How does praying the same prayer in different languages connect people of faith?

PRESERVED PRAYERS

Direct participants to “Finding the Practice Then and Now” on page 10 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read aloud the first paragraph to introduce the collection of prayers included in this section of the guide. Assign each of the five prayers named in the guide to five groupings of participants: individuals, pairs, or small groups. Have them read their assigned prayer and the accompanying description. Encourage them to consider how the prayer might guide them to God.

Gather participants and have them describe their assigned prayer and how it guides people to God. After hearing about all five prayers, invite discussion about whether they would replace their practice of praying the Lord’s Prayer with one of these five and explain why or why not.

PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

CREATING SPACE TO PRAY

Engage participants in conversation about creating space to pray in both your gathering space and their living spaces. Have them read “Creating Space to Pray” on page 13 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Use these questions for conversation:

- ➔ What type of surroundings do you find conducive to praying?
- ➔ What can be done in this space to enhance praying during this study? Consider ways to engage the senses and enrich the environment.
- ➔ What spaces do you have in your living area that are conducive to prayer?
- ➔ What enhancements could you include in your living space to create a peaceful place to pray? Consider ways to engage the senses and enrich the environment.

DIALOGUE JOURNALING

Refer participants to “Dialogue Journaling” on page 13 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain the process of dialogue journaling using the instructions on the page. Distribute pens. Have participants use the dialogue prompts on page 14 to begin a prayer conversation with God. Offer a time of quiet for people to work independently. Close this activity by inviting conversation about participants’ experience with this type of praying.

COMMUNAL PRAYER

Write these phrases across the top of separate newsprint sheets and display them.

- God (a name or phrase 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 markers and have people move around the room and write their responses on each newsprint. Encourage them to be honest and open

Pens



Teaching Tip: For more on dialogue journaling, read Marcus Hong’s foundational essay (p. 24).

Six sheets of newsprint
 Markers

in their responses. They may write multiple responses to each heading. Save the responses to use for a closing prayer.

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- Pens
 - Prepared newsprint and marker

CREATING A LORICA

Copy the prayer pattern from page 15 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* onto newsprint and display it.

Direct participants to “Creating a *Lorica*” on page 15 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read aloud the first paragraph. Distribute pens and have participants fill in the blanks in the prayer pattern. Display the prepared newsprint and invite people to suggest words to complete a group prayer. Write their suggestions on the newsprint. Save the newsprint to use for a closing prayer.

FOLLOWING JESUS PRAYING THROUGH MUSIC

Have volunteers take turns reading aloud, sentence by sentence, the two paragraphs in “Following Jesus” on page 16 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Invite participants to name one new insight they gained about prayer from this session.

Show the YouTube video: “Jim & Jean Strathdee—Our Father (1978)” (bit.ly/FMSungLordsPrayer, 3:43).

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- Internet-connected device

CLOSING PRAYER

If you chose the “Communal Prayer” or “Creating a *Lorica*” activities, refer to the newsprint sheets from these. Have participants say the *Lorica* prayer in unison. Or have each participant 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 either previous activity, invite the group to say the Lord’s Prayer in unison.

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- Newsprint sheets from previous activities (optional)