

Prayer: talking or listening?



Introduction:

The aim of this session teaches young people about the importance of prayer within Christianity and asks the serious question: 'Does prayer work?'

Aims & objectives:

- To understand the fundamentals and practices of prayer.
- To explore how prayer through the generations has influenced other people's lives.
- To deepen young people's understanding of how prayer can impact their own lives

Materials: Unusual Bible verse (example given below).



Activity...

Pass on the passage

To begin the session invite the group to stand in a line. Whisper the passage below into the ear of the first person in the line and ask them to whisper what they can remember into the person's ear that is standing next to them. Repeat all the way to the final person who shares the passage they heard with the rest of the group - you can make the task harder by making a noise!

Encourage the group to feed back on their experience asking if the task was easy, hard etc. Explain communication is about speaking, listening and concentrating, and so is prayer.

God can speak to us in many ways - even through a donkey!
This session explores the concept of prayer.

Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"

Numbers 22:28 (NIV)



Activity...

Pass on the passage



Engage...

What is prayer?



Explore...

Prayers from God's Word



Going deeper...

Dear God



Pause...

Prayer Square



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Engage...

What is prayer?

Materials: Laptop/equipment to play a You Tube clip.

Before you play the clip, 'What is 24-7 prayer?' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjCHzkoog1I&feature=related> explain to the young people that the short film they are about to watch introduces the 24/7 prayer movement. However, for this activity, invite the group to watch the clip and think about what it says to them more generally about prayer. Thoughts and observations can be shared afterwards.



Explore...

Prayers from God's Word

Materials: Pens and spare Bibles in case the young people forget to bring their own.

Divide the young people into smaller groups . Hopefully the young people have remembered to bring their own Bibles but have spare copies just in case. Encourage each group to look up the following passages asking what are their views about these prayers. For example, did they like them, what did they like, did they understand them etc.

- Hannah's Prayer (1 Samuel 1:10-11)
- Samuel's Prayer (1 Samuel 3:7-11)
- David's Prayer (Psalm 51: 1 - 12)
- Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:5-14)
- Jesus Prayer (Luke 22: 39 - 46)
- Pentecost prayer (Acts 4: 24-31)



It is really important that after the fifth session on the Bible, leaders are encouraging the young people to be more confident looking for Bible verses for themselves, rather than being given the readings on a worksheet.

This activity may take some time and a little extra help (and patience) from the leaders too, but do persevere with the task. However, if preferred, an optional worksheet has also been produced which includes the Bible readings for this activity.



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Going deeper...

Dear God

Materials: Copies of the 'Going deeper' worksheet.

The aim of the next activity will help the young people explore the application of prayer in their own lives and how prayer can deepen a relationship with God. Keep the young people in their small groups and distribute copies of the 'Going deeper' worksheet. As the groups discuss each question, encourage the young people to be open and honest and assure them that there is no right or wrong way to pray or rules on how often we do it. Discuss each question as a group before moving onto the next question.

- 1) Do you find praying easy or difficult?
- 2) What do you pray about?
- 3) How often do you pray?
- 4) Does anything happen when you pray?
- 5) Do you have any questions about prayer?



Pause...

Prayer Square

Materials: A free standing cross, 'Pause' worksheets (images), pebbles or similar.

Building on the Ignatian Prayer used in the previous session, this session concludes with the group taking part in another reflective prayer exercise that can be used with all ages. This is a silent inner prayer activity where no words are said other than by the person leading the activity and the occasional collective 'amen'.

You will need a free-standing cross, the images for the prayer square ('Pause' worksheets) and some pebbles. Make a square on the floor using the templates with the cross placed in the middle of the square. Invite the group to sit around the prayer square and then spread the pebbles out on the floor in front of the group. Ask the young people to choose a pebble they would most like to use as their prayer pebble.

Invite the young people to place their pebbles on the square they want to and silently say a prayer in their own heart/mind for approximately ten seconds (prayers can also be said aloud too).

At the end of the ten seconds the whole group says 'Amen' together. This is repeated three more times (each time inviting the group to move their pebbles onto another square if they wish to) and at the end, the group can say a collective 'Amen' to join all the prayers together.

