

PRAYER PRACTICES

Prayer Practices are defined as: prayers that rely on spiritual disciplines (silence, study, etc.). They allow us to place ourselves before God so that God can do something; it is nothing we do. They draw our attention to the presence of God.

Why use Prayer Practices with youth?

Because they.....make space for God
are experiential
are Accessible to all
encourage maturity
give us time to encounter God's rhythms and rest in God's presence
are counter cultural
can be recreated by youth when they leave camp
are empowering and transformative
are Christian methods
nurture leaders (staff).

Why do youth need Prayer Practices?

Because many youth.....need to learn how to pray
consider themselves "spiritual" but not religious
experience a loss of sacredness in life
long for some center of stability amid rapid change
starve for values of enduring substance
need to be reminded of worshipping and praying community
need to be able to name God.

Leading Spiritual Exercises:

Hospitality: trust each other, be prepared, create a welcoming and sense-filled environment.

Invitation: describe the experience, be informal, yet respectful, acknowledge that there is no "right way" to do the exercise, allow the group to get comfortable.

Prayer: center the group, pray, invite youth to offer thanks to God for whatever happened during the prayer, have an appropriate closing.

Sharing: allow others to share their feelings, thoughts, or experiences with the group, ask "What was God like during this time?," respond with caring, non-judgmental remarks using their names.

Types of Spiritual Exercises:

Contemplative Prayer: sit somewhere alone, resting in God's presence, feel sun or wind on your face, feeling God's love.

Writing your own Psalm: become aware of feelings you have about God. Read examples of different psalms where the writer is joyful, or angry, etc.

Prayer of the Heart/Centering: sit somewhere alone, or walk through a quiet place repeating a short phrase such as, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me," or "Holy Spirit, fill me," or "Teach me patience, gracious God."

Lectio Divina: this is a way to read scripture as if it were a letter from a Loved one, read over and over again. We center on a line or word. We may not like what is said sometimes, but it is said in love.

1. Read the scripture slowly. Ask youth, what stirs, beckons, or disturbs you? Think about this word or phrase. Youth can each share the word or phrase aloud.
2. Read the scripture a second time. Ask youth to think about a feeling connected to the scripture. Each youth can share this feeling.
3. Read the scripture a final time. Ask youth to connect what is Happening in their lives with the reading. Ask, how is God present to you here? What is God like for you in your life? Is God calling you to anything in this situation? Allow time for sharing.
4. Close with some silence and a spoken closing prayer that connects the concerns brought up during the exercise.

Ignatian Examen: this is a way of reflecting on the day, week, etc so that insignificant moments become significant as we see a pattern in the way God works in our lives. Groups also become closer through this practice.

1. Allow time for silent reflection in the group.
2. Ask each member to share the answer to two questions. These questions can be: What was your high for the day? What was your low for the day? Or:

What are you most grateful for today? Least grateful? Or: When were you most open to God today? Least open?

3. Respond to any needs that arise during sharing and end with a prayer that remembers the responses shared by the group.

Ignatian Guided Meditations on Scripture: the leader guides the group through a meditation on scripture, allowing youth to use their imaginations to recreate the story.

1. Place the group within the Biblical scene.
2. Have youth use their five senses to make the story come alive
3. Invite youth to become a character in the story.
4. Process the passage, what did it feel like? What did you learn?

Journaling: the diary approach or writing letters to God.

Praying with Crayons: let youth choose colors of crayons, this is not an art class, but a free expression of prayer through colors, words, pictures, etc. Allow time for youth to share if they want to.

Prayer Postures:

- Orans – standing up (1 Kings 8:22, Mark 11:25)
- On your knees (2 Chronicles 6:13, Acts 9:40, Philippians 2:9-11)
- With your head bowed (Genesis 24:26)
- Prostrate – face and body laid out before God (Joshua 5:14, Matthew 26:39)

Other Types of Prayers:

- Circle or Squeeze Prayer: stand in a group holding hands with a leader beginning with a prayer and then squeezing the hand of the person next to them. Youth can pray out loud or silently before passing on the squeeze.
- Popcorn Prayer: there is no order to this prayer, youth say a prayer at any time usually filling in the leader's statement of "Lord, thank you for..." or "Dear Jesus help us to..."
- Quaker Prayer: using and not being afraid of silence, allow youth to pray when they feel read to.

- **Written Prayers:** can be read by different members of the group when it is time to pray out loud.
- **Alphabet Prayers:** take turns thanking God by adding an alphabetical thanks (aunts, brother, clothing, etc.)
- **Echo Prayer:** leaders says a short phrase and the group repeats
- **Babbling Brook Prayer:** everyone prays aloud at the same time
- **Prayer Stations:** pray at different areas at camp, for what happens there (at the garbage room pray for those who clean up after us)
- **Sung Prayers:** using the Taize model.
- **ACTS Prayers:** give a framework for youth, using the model of
Adoration (praise God for who God is)
Confession (own up to our sins)
Thanksgiving (thank God for all God has done)
Supplication (make requests for ourselves and others)
- **Enfolding Prayer:** circle around a person, touch them on the shoulder and pray for them.
- **PARTS** of prayer
Praise, **A**sk, **R**epent, **T**hank, **S**hare
- Take a **TRIP** with God and ask the following questions:
Thanks – for what am I thankful?
Regret – what do I regret?
Intercession – whom do I need to pray for?
Purpose – what is my purpose or plan (for today, this week, etc.)
- **Five Finger Prayer:** each finger reminds us to pray for certain people
Thumb – pray for those closest to me
Pointer – pray for those who guide me (teachers, mentors, pastors, etc)
Middle (tallest) – pray for those who stand tall (government, media, firefighters, other leaders)
Ring (weakest) – pray for those who are weak (the poor, sick, infants, homeless, powerless)
Pinky – pray for me and my needs