

PRAY FOR US

An Edge Issue Night on Intercessory Prayer

EDGE NIGHT AT A GLANCE



Scripture

Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 18:1-8; Acts 12:5; Romans 8:26-27; 2 Corinthians 9:13-14; Ephesians 6:18-20; Philippians 1:3-4; Colossians 1:3-4, 4:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12



Catechism

2634-2636



Resources

Rise Up Young Church: “Mark Hart on Prayer” ([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...))

GOAL

The goal of this Edge Night is for middle school youth to be inspired, through their understanding of intercessory prayer, to ask others for prayer as well as dedicate themselves to praying for others.

GATHER

The youth participate in a relay race. The purpose of this relay race is to illustrate how our community grows stronger when we pray together and the role of intercessory prayer.

PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- Intercessory prayer leads us to pray as Jesus did — asking the Father with childlike trust for what we need and others’ needs.
- Through intercessory prayer, we are connected to the whole Church, both living and dead.
- God hears all our prayers and answers them according to His will.

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EDGE NIGHT SET UP

SET UP

Set up the Gather game — either outside or in a large meeting room or gym. Consider making this space look like a racetrack or sports arena and, if possible, get matching headbands or bandanas for each of the small group teams competing. Gather enough large bins for each small group to use as a goal and enough items for each group to throw into the bins.

Set up a separate space for the Send that is prayerful. Choose a dimly lit area where a music minister can play quiet, reflective music. Consider also doing this prayer time in your church or chapel or an outdoor garden — ensuring you have a safe space for candles or open flames.

SUPPLIES

The following is a list of supplies needed for the Edge Night:

- Large bins, one for each small group
- Ten or more items of various shapes and sizes that youth can throw (e.g., frisbees, balls, crumpled paper, shoes), one set for each group
- Craft popsicle sticks or candles or LED tea lights, one for each youth
- Sharpies, one for each small group
- A bucket filled with sand for the lit popsicle sticks, or a fire ring, or a safe place to display candles or LED tea lights
- Lighter

ASSIGNMENTS

Use the following list to assign core members to specific tasks:

Set Up: _____, _____, _____

Gather:

- Opening Prayer: _____
- Game: _____

Proclaim: _____

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EDGE NIGHT OUTLINE

GATHER

Edge Night Introduction (5 min)

Welcome the youth, introduce any youth who are there for the first time, and begin in prayer. Give a brief overview of the topic of the Edge Night, using the following as an example:

If you've ever seen a track relay race, you know how unified and precise the teams must be — especially for the handoff. If one person is "off" on a relay team, it throws off the whole team's time for the race. But on the other hand, one superstar cannot typically carry the whole relay team. As is the case with most teams or musical groups, the relay team's power is in their unity, the balance of strengths and weaknesses, and focus on the goal. The same is true of the people of God who make up the Church. The more we are unified, balanced in our strengths and weaknesses, and focused on our goal of heaven, the better off we are in this "race" of life. And what is the key to accomplishing all three? Intercessory prayer — which is asking each other for prayers, praying for one another, and uniting with the communion of saints in heaven in those prayers. This week at Edge, we will take a closer look at what intercessory prayer is and its impact.

Intercessor Relay Race (15 min)

This game is played in small groups of five youth. Use the following to introduce the game:

When we ask others to pray for us or offer our prayers for other people, there are often different types of intentions. Some intentions may not be very serious and easy to pray for, while others may place a very heavy burden on our hearts and may prove more challenging to offer prayers for. Like the various items that each of your teams have, our prayers come in all shapes and sizes. When we pray, our goal is to bring those prayers to God — just like the "God goal" that each team has — and along the way, we may enlist the help of others who pray for us as our intercessors. Imagine each of these various items as different types of prayers that you are bringing to God as you throw them into the "God goal," and your entire team encompasses those who are praying for you and your intentions and helping you accomplish this goal.

1. Choose one youth to be the "pray-er" and ask them to stand at one side of the room or field with the ten objects of various sizes.
2. Across from the "pray-er," place a bucket to serve as the "God goal." The bucket should be close enough that if the youth really tried they could throw at least one type of object into it but far enough that it would be tricky to get most of the items into the bucket.

3. The rest of the team will be the “intercessors.” These youth, along with their core members, should spend some time making a plan as to how they can balance all of their strengths and weaknesses in order to get all of the items quickly into the “God goal.”
4. On “go,” the “pray-er” chooses which items they think they can throw into the “God goal” and which items to hand off to the intercessors instead. Together, they will work to get all the items into the bucket as quickly as possible.
5. The “pray-er” has to stay in their place but the “intercessors” can be anywhere in the middle between the two ends. The “intercessors” can only handle one object at a time and the “pray-er” must hand objects directly to the intercessors. If there are items that the “pray-er” threw but did not make it, the core member must retrieve that item and give it back to the “pray-er” to either try to throw again or hand off to the intercessors.
6. The team that gets all their items into the bucket first wins.



Suggestions

If the youth are struggling, send out core members to be the “Holy Spirit,” helping each team and emphasizing the symbolism that the Holy Spirit fills in when we do not know how to pray well.



Step It Up

For added difficulty, use bandannas or fabric ties to inhibit the “intercessors” (e.g., blindfold, tie hands behind backs, and/or bind feet together), adding the symbolism that all humans, even saints, have weaknesses.

PROCLAIM

“Pray For Us” Proclaim Teaching (10 min)

The teaching can be found on pages 7 to 10. The following are the main points that are covered in the teaching:

- Intercessory prayer leads us to pray as Jesus did — asking the Father with childlike trust for what we need and others’ needs.
- Through intercessory prayer, we are connected to the whole Church, both living and dead.
- God hears all our prayers and answers them according to His will.

BREAK

Small Group Discussion (20 min)

Divide the youth into their small groups. Begin in prayer and then discuss the following questions before doing the activity.

- If you could meet any saint face-to-face, who would you choose? Why?
- What are the most common things you have heard people ask for prayers for?
- Why do you think some prayer intentions are easier to ask for than others?
- Has there ever been a time where someone has asked for your prayers? Or that you have asked for someone else’s prayers? What was that experience like?
- Who is your “go-to” person or saint to ask to pray for you? Why?
- Do you think you could ever be that person for someone else? Why or why not?
- Why do you think God gave us a community to pray for us? How do you think this helps us in our relationship with God?

Eighth-Grade Adaptations

Use the following questions for a more challenging discussion for eighth-grade youth:

- Is it hard for you to be “humble” and “childlike” in prayer to God? How do our own egos and pride get in the way?
- Do you regularly ask people for prayers? Are there certain people who you feel like you can ask?
- Have you ever felt discouraged in prayer? Have you ever felt like God was telling you “no” to something you really wanted to happen?

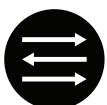


Step It Up

Pick prayer partners within your small group or set up a time of day when you will all pray for your small group’s intentions.

Pray For Us Activity (10 min)

Keep the youth in their small groups and give each youth a popsicle stick and a sharpie. Instruct each youth to write as many prayer intentions for other people as they would like to on their popsicle stick. If they are private prayers, they can write in code or abbreviations if they like — these prayers will not be read aloud. If you decide to use candles or LED tea lights for this activity, ask the youth to write all their intentions on a notecard that they can place underneath their candle during the Send activity.



Suggestions

Read the prayers of the faithful from Mass to help the youth think of a wide range of prayer intentions.

SEND

Intercessory Prayer Activity (20 min)

Gather the youth back to the main meeting space or the space designated for the closing time of prayer. Use the following to introduce this time of prayer:

Our prayers are powerful, and when we pray for one another, we can impact that person's life. While we might not see immediate or visible results, we know that our prayers are working, even if in mysterious ways. When we ask for the saints or Mary to pray for us, we ask those who already stand before God to intercede for us, and their prayers are very powerful. One image we can use to help us imagine how our prayers work is that of candles or incense. Our prayers are like the smoke rising up into heaven and to God, who always hears our prayers and answers them according to His will. At this time, we will have an opportunity to lift up all the prayers we have written down in a visible way. As you see the flames or smoke of the candles drifting up, pray for all those people as you lift those prayers up to God.

Call up each youth group one at a time to stick their popsicle sticks in the designated sand-filled buckets where they can be safely lit or to toss them into a fire pit where they can all be burned. If you choose to use candles or LED tea lights, instruct the youth to place their intentions written on a notecard under a non-lit candle set up in a designed area.

Once all the youth have placed their popsicle sticks or candles in the designated area, have one core member light all of the popsicle sticks or candles while assigned youth or other core members read aloud each of the following Scripture verses:

- 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12
- Ephesians 6:18-20
- Colossians 1:3-4
- Colossians 4:2-4
- Philippians 1:3-4
- Acts 12:5
- 2 Corinthians 9:13-14

Close the Edge Night by praying a Hail Mary as a large group. Following the prayer, give the youth their weekly challenge.



Suggestions

Create a slideshow with each Scripture verse on it so the youth can read along.

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EDGE NIGHT PROCLAIM

GETTING STARTED

This teaching is provided to give you an example of how to present this topic in an age-appropriate way, making it relevant to middle school youth. If the youth are ready to take it deeper, incorporate a few of the Going Deeper call-out boxes, picking the ones the youth would relate to the most.

TEACHING GUIDE

Pray Always

- Jesus told us to ask for what we want and need, not because He doesn't already know what we want and need, or because our questions entertain him, but because it's good for us to ask.
- Among other things, the very act of asking humbles us. Rather than doing everything on our own, it shows us that we must depend on another person to help us. It also makes us more grateful for all the gifts of God that we have received and continue to receive because we recognize God's love and generosity. Ultimately, the gift of asking makes us more trusting. As we grow in our faith, we trust that God is the best father who takes care of and loves His children perfectly.

Put the words "HUMBLE," "GRATEFUL," and "TRUSTING" up on a screen or whiteboard to drive home this idea.



Going Deeper

Read Matthew 7:7-11 and discuss the following questions with the youth. How does asking, seeking, or knocking help us in our relationship with God? What if we don't ask, seek, or knock?

- Jesus doesn't just tell us to do things, but He does them Himself to be our example. Jesus is our example of how to pray. He prays to the Father with childlike trust, asking God for His help and trusting the Father's will in every situation.
- We can see examples of this when Jesus showed great trust in God through His prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane before His Passion. We also see examples of this before Jesus performs miracles, calling upon the Father, acknowledging His goodness, and asking for good things for those around Him.
- Jesus is our ultimate example, and we should follow His lead, listening when He tells us to pray to the Father and for others.



Going Deeper

Watch the short video “Mark Hart on Prayer” from the Resources section and discuss the video with the youth focusing on the following line: “The more we pray, the more we become aware of the fact that God is real, and God’s alive, and God is with us.” Ask the youth, how can improving our prayer life deepen this awareness?

The Early Church

- In several places in the New Testament, particularly in the Acts of the Apostles and the letters from Saint Paul to different Christian communities, we see the first Christians following the example of Jesus Christ as they prayed for each other and asked others to pray for them.
- When we pray for others or ask them to pray for us, this is called intercessory prayer. We are interceding, or standing between, that person and God on their behalf.

Share with the youth a practical example of how someone might intercede for another in a circumstance they are familiar with. For example, a friend standing up for and speaking on behalf of another friend to a trusted adult when they are in need, or asking their parents to talk to a teacher or coach on their behalf, etc.

- We believe that this ability to pray for one another does not end with death. Instead, we turn to those in heaven — the saints and Mary — and ask for their prayers. We can also pray for the souls of those who have passed away.

Put together a few slides, including the Virgin Mary and a few recognizable saints, as a visual aid while talking.

- We believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary — completely human as she was — has some of the most powerful intercessory prayers that exist. That’s why we pray to her so much. We are not worshipping her with these prayers; instead, we ask her to go to Jesus on our behalf. We know that Jesus honored His mother greatly on Earth and that He continues to honor her and her requests in heaven.
- For the people who the Church has declared saints, we know that they’re in heaven, so we have confidence that they can intercede for us with the Lord, too.
- So not only can we ask friends and family here on Earth for their prayers, we can ask our heavenly family to pray for us, as well.



Going Deeper

Give a personal witness about praying for someone or someone praying for you to show how impactful it can be.

- This community of prayer reflects the unity of the Church and our unity as God’s family. And with more people praying, we grow closer and closer as a family.

HEAR OUR PRAYER

- Believing that prayers are powerful and that God hears and answers all prayers takes a lot of faith and trust.
- Trusting that God hears all our prayers can be particularly challenging when asking for the healing of a loved one, or for some other good thing, and God does not answer our prayers directly with the response we desire.
- Trusting that God hears our prayers is also challenging when we pray hard for the evil and tragedy in our world to be conquered or avoided, but yet they remain.
- But prayer is not just about getting what we want, prayer is our relationship with God, and that relationship is strengthened the more we pray. And the more we pray, the more we trust in the ways that God answers our prayers.
- Scripture and the saints give us examples of how to trust that God hears our prayers: sometimes God's answer is "yes," but sometimes it is "no," or "not yet," or even "yes, for now."



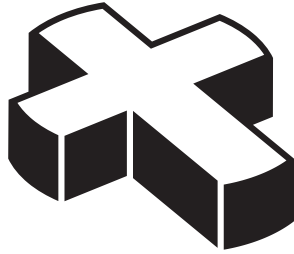
Going Deeper

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux says, "Everything is a grace, everything is a direct effect of our Father's love — difficulties, contradictions, humiliations, all the soul's miseries, [its] burdens, [its] needs — everything — because through them, [the soul] learns humility, realizes [its] weakness" (Last Conversations). *Discuss with the youth how this can be true.*

- While it might feel like God does not hear our prayers, Jesus tells us through the example of the persistent widow that we should not give up on prayer.

Read Luke 18:1-8.

- The unfair judge ends up giving the widow what she wants because he's tired of being annoyed by her. Through this story, Jesus shows us the importance of being persistent in our prayers and never being afraid to ask Him for things — God will never get annoyed with us but will help us grow in our understanding of Him and how He answers our prayers.
- And what if the answer to our prayer might be "no?" What do we do then?
- The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Old Testament tells one answer. In the Book of Daniel, we see these three men who refuse to bow down to the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has made for everyone to worship. They tell him, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18).
- We can see that these three men trusted in God no matter what happened and showed with the firm conviction that no matter how God answered their prayer, it would not change their relationship with God.
- If our prayer is not answered in the way we want it to be answered, it does not mean God does not hear us, does not love us, or does not exist. But it means that, for reasons sometimes only known to God, His will is not for that thing to happen.



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Middle School Ministry

