

Confirmation: Purpose

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church

Holy Huddle 1: Prayer

Lesson themes:

1. Why should I want a relationship with God and how does prayer help me establish and nurture that relationship?
2. What is prayer and how do I do it?
3. What is the role of prayer in my life as I prepare for Confirmation?

Holy Huddle Directives

1. Open and close with prayer. Invite the teens to add their own intentions and pray out loud within the group.
2. Share your story as a follower of Christ, and don't be afraid to share your struggles.
3. Show the teens you care by learning names and a little bit about each teen.
4. Leave each Holy Huddle by issuing a challenge to the teens related to Confirmation.

Small Group Q&A with the Catechism and Sacred Scripture (Teaching)

Allow the teens to answer the questions and reflect on these resources as you give your own answers. Be open to what the teens have to say before correcting any misinformed answers.

Q: What is prayer and how is it possible?

A: Prayer is conversation with God and a vital part of our relationship with God. Prayer is a back-and-forth exchange of love between us and God. Prayer is possible only through God's initiative through the Holy Spirit. This means that when we pray, we are responding to God reaching out to us. That is amazing—God loves us so much that He thinks of us, reaches out to us, and calls us to respond and communicate with Him.

CCC 2565, 2567, 2725

Q: What is the correct way to pray?

A: Prayer is more about establishing a relationship with God than satisfying our desires or needs. By focusing on God through prayer we become more open to his graces and fortified by our relationship with Him. Prayer can happen in many forms, but true prayer is always an intentional and God-focused conversation where we allow God to lead and direct us. Only through prayer can we come to understand our unique spirituality and identify specifically how God is calling us to a more intimate relationship with him.

John 15:7, Matthew 6:5-8, CCC 2726, 2734

Q: What if I get stuck in prayer or don't want to pray?

A: We can easily become distracted and even frustrated in prayer. Deep relationships aren't built overnight, and this includes our relationship with God. It's important that we are intentional and committed in our prayer with God, even when our prayer feels fruitless. This feeling is extremely common in prayer and even the greatest saints experienced it! Frustration in prayer should never cause us to stop praying. Prayer is vitally necessary, and we become slaves to sin if we do not engage the freedom and grace from prayer. God can't live in our hearts without prayer.

Job 33:31-33, CCC 2742-2744

Q: How is my prayer life connected to my Catholicism?

A: Prayer is intimately connected to liturgy -- our religious and ritual participation in the worship of God. Liturgy connects us to God and to one another by sustaining us in the Love of God. Without a conscious and intentional prayer life, it becomes very difficult for us to accept the love that God has for us and to enter fully into the mysteries of liturgy, the Sacraments therein, and the Church as a whole. By praying, we participate in the work of God through his Church and her actions.

Matthew 6: 9-15, CCC 1071, 1073

At-home/Make-up Lesson Instructions:

Parents and/or Sponsors: Please read through the provided reference material above and discuss with your candidate. Talk with them through the questions below. After your discussion, have your candidate complete the short answer questions on the last page of this lesson..

Discussion Questions:

- 1) *What is your prayer routine? How do you connect with God throughout the day?*
- 2) *It seems as though Jesus was in near-constant prayer. Why is it important for us to stay committed to prayer?*
- 3) *What are some things you can do with your family to cultivate prayer in your home and family life?*

Small Group Open Questions

Use these questions or your own to draw the teens into a conversation about their faith. Let the teens answer and share in their own words. Allow the Holy Spirit to direct the conversation. All of these questions are also available as journal prompts.

1. What is the biggest challenge you personally face in prayer?
2. What is your prayer experience at Mass? Do you really pray or just go through the motions? How might this impact the rest of your prayer life?
3. Have you ever had a prayer answered? Describe the situation. What about the opposite—have you ever had a prayer you didn't feel was answered?
4. As you prepare for Confirmation, what steps can you take to better engage in prayer?
5. Where are places where you can pray? (Brainstorm several of these with the group. *If possible, write them down on notecards then pass them out to the teens before they leave.*)

Additional Resources

Please see *WHY PRAYER? THE TRUTH ABOUT PRAYER* By Fr. Mike Schmitz on page 3 and 4 of this packet.

WHY PRAYER? THE TRUTH ABOUT PRAYER

By Fr. Mike Schmitz
Adapted from lifeteen.com

Does prayer really do anything?

If God cared about us, why would He need us to ask for anything before He gave it to us?

The only thing prayer does is make you feel good about yourself.

Do you ever find yourself thinking this way about prayer? Or have your heard others question prayer in this way? That's totally normal . . . you are not a freak or a "terrible Christian." It shows that you are taking prayer seriously and not just kind of "going through the motions." If prayer is going to "mean something," then it should "do something."

WHY PRAY IF GOD IS GOOD?

Hold up! If God is good, wouldn't He already be planning on doing that thing in the first place?

This question is so deep that it goes all the way to the very identity of God and the nature of the universe. We can sometimes fall into the mistaken notion that God is in control of everything. And I acknowledge that, in a general sense, that is kind of true. Everything that exists either comes directly or indirectly from God. We readily acknowledge that God is the "ground of Being"; without Him nothing at all would exist. But that is not the same thing as saying that God is "in control" of everything or that everything that happens is a "part of his plan."

In choosing to create a universe that operates according to certain "rules," God has willed to abdicate his power to a certain extent.

A FREE WORLD

In the Christian perspective, God is all-powerful, but God is also Reason. Reason is part of the very nature of who God is. Therefore, when God willed to create the universe, He was free to create it to operate somewhat "independently" of Himself. God is certainly still the Primary Cause, but He has created a universe that has both "laws of nature" and is also filled with free beings.

Because of the laws of nature, there are things like physics through which we can deduce that "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." Unless there is a suspension of this law, it will happen every time—both when a baseball player hits the ball to deep center field as well as when a stray ball hits a child in the temple. God is not the "cause" of either occasion except for the fact that He created a world based on physical laws. God created chemistry, but He does not "control" a campfire or "cause" a wildfire; the fire burns because of the "secondary cause" of reason or science (the laws of nature).

And God has also created a universe with free beings. These beings are truly free, therefore they are free to act as "secondary causes." Human beings are part of this kind of causality.

This is why we have thieves, liars, and kidnappers. But it is also why we can have doctors, nurses, judges, and teachers. Human beings are free to choose to act or not to act. And in choosing, we become causes ourselves.

GOD CARES. BUT...

When it comes to prayer (and how prayer works), it might be helpful to consider this reality. Christians believe that God exists and that God cares and acts in this world. But we also know that there are an abundance of secondary causes at work.

For example, it would be a little crazy for someone to say, “I don’t have to go to work in order to have money for food; if God wants me to have food, he will give it to me.” Absolutely not! We may be completely convinced that God loves us and still know we have to work for our daily bread.

C.S. Lewis gives the example of asking whether any of us would leave the house in a rainstorm without an umbrella under the idea that “If God doesn’t want me to get wet, he won’t let the rain fall where I am.” All Christians go through their day counting on God’s care while simultaneously making choices that make a difference. We are accustomed to being secondary causes!

In the Bible, God has revealed that He wants prayer to operate in a similar way. There are many times when the Bible teaches us that prayer makes a difference. In fact, it is one of the ways in which we cooperate with God’s will. In the same way your choice to give to a person in need is one way you can cooperate with God’s will to care for the poor, your decision to pray for a person is another.

Now, this doesn’t mean that everything you pray for is a part of God’s will. Sometimes what we want (even if it is a good thing) is not simply “given” because we asked for it. Sometimes God’s answer is “no”... sometimes God’s answer is “wait.” And even if we are asking for a good thing... or an end to a bad thing (like war or cancer)... sometimes we do not “get what we ask for.” Remember that this is a world where things go wrong and where people are free to choose violence rather than peace.

LET’S WORK TOGETHER

When you care for a sick person, are you changing God’s will? No. Are you making a real difference? Yes. What you are doing is *fulfilling* God’s will. You are doing your part in God’s will to make this world more and more the way He wants it to be.

Along these same lines, when you pray for another person, are you changing God’s mind? No. But your prayers make a difference because they are fulfilling what is needed for God’s will to be done. When you pray, you have become a “cause.”

In fact, that is something that has been taught for a long time. Blaise Pascal once declared, “In calling us to pray for one another, God has extended to us the dignity of becoming causes.” This reveals a great deal about the nature and identity of God. It reveals that God is the opposite of a tyrant. In Christianity, God is not a dictator, but a father who wants to work with us.

Consider the parent who makes their child do chores at home and help out around the house. At first glance, you might be tempted to think that this was because the mom or dad wanted to “lord it over” their children. But on further reflection, you would realize that it would be a lot easier for mom to just clean the room herself or for dad to take out the trash himself than trying to teach the kids how to do it.

However, a good parent will bring their children in on the chores of the household because this is one way children become full-grown. A parent who never makes their children contribute is more likely to see their children stunted in their development. That parent is “soft,” but they are a soft tyrant, because they have kept all of the strength for themselves.

God shares his strength with us. God shares his power with us. When he calls us to pray (and that prayer actually makes a difference), God makes us into something even more than children, he allows us to be co-workers with him.

And when we pray... when we work with God, we are drawn into even more intimate relationship with Him.

And that kind of prayer and relationship definitely changes something else... it changes us.

Journal Prompts for Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What is the biggest challenge you personally face in prayer?

2. What is your prayer experience at Mass? Do you really pray or just go through the motions? How might this impact the rest of your prayer life?

3. Have you ever had a prayer answered? Describe the situation. What about the opposite—have you ever had a prayer you didn't feel was answered?

4. As you prepare for Confirmation, what steps can you take to better engage in prayer?

5. Where are places where you can pray?
