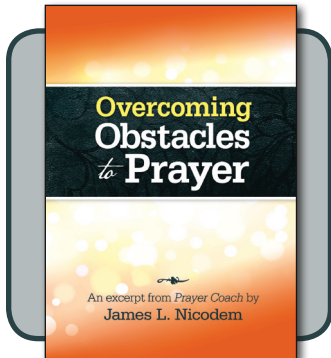


Additional Prayer Resources



Week of Prayer Poster & Bulletin



Overcoming Obstacles to Prayer



Week of Prayer Bookmark

Week of Prayer

Youth Lesson

Tell It All to God

STUDY TEXT:

Psalm 34:18; 139:7–14; Matthew 6:9–13; 21:22; Luke 6:27–31; Ephesians 3:20,21; Philippians 4:6,14–19; James 1:5; 5:14–16; 1 John 5:14

OBJECTIVE:

- **WHAT** is the point? God wants us to take every problem and crisis to Him in prayer.
- **WHY** is it important? Sometimes emotions like guilt, fear, and doubt can leave us wondering if God really wants to listen to our prayers.
- **HOW** should I respond? Accept God's promise that He hears your prayers, and seek Him no matter what problem, challenge, or need you're facing.

KEY VERSE: Philippians 4:6

In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (NIV).

Getting Started

ACTIVITY: You Can Trust Me

Before class, gather several treats that most teens would like, such as pieces of candy or slices of fruit. Also place in a sealed container a food item that smells terrible. Examples include limburger cheese, sauerkraut and vinegar, or sour milk. As class begins, ask for three volunteers and announce that you will be testing how much they trust you. Dismiss them from the room, along with someone who will blindfold them while they are out. Meanwhile, explain to the class that you will approach each blindfolded volunteer with reassuring words as you open the container of smelly food under their noses. Then you will place candy or fruit in their mouths. (Use a plastic spoon or fork rather than touching it.) Instruct students to gasp, groan, and shout "Oh, gross!" as you proceed. Then bring in the volunteers and go through the activity. Note if any actually trust you enough to refrain from removing the blindfold. Then discuss these questions.

- **How did you (volunteers) feel just before I put the candy/fruit in your mouth? Was it difficult to trust? Explain.** (Invite responses, noting that most people would have a hard time trusting in this situation, even someone they've known for awhile.)
- **(Directed at the rest of the students.) Do you think you could have kept the blindfold on? Why or why not?**

Continued on page 2



- **How well would you have to know a person before you would have sufficient trust that you wouldn't get something gross put in your mouth in a situation like this?** *(Note that most people would have to build a solid, trusting friendship before they'd disregard a terrible smell as their friend placed something in their mouths that they hadn't first identified.)*

Explain: Trust is an extremely important part of any relationship, and that's especially true in our relationship with God. But when we're faced with challenges, doubts, and distractions, trust can be a struggle. That's where prayer comes in. God wants to hear every issue, temptation, and problem we're facing. We can tell Him anything, and then trust Him to respond.

Digging Deeper

1. God Cares about What You're Facing

ACTIVITY: What Are the Odds

Announce to students that you are going to read a list of accidents, misfortunes, and crises that any of us may or may not face. Their assignment is to guess what the odds are that they will experience each of these events. See who comes closest on each one. For fun, you might also discuss how you could make your odds better for each. If you choose, keep track of who comes closest most often and award a prize at the end.

- **The odds of being hit by lightning during your lifetime?** *(1 in 9,000)*
- **The odds of dying from a snake bite, bee sting, or other venom attack?** *(1 in 100,000)*
- **The odds of dying from a dog attack?** *(1 in 150,000)*
- **The odds of being struck by a meteor in the next year?** *(1 in 5,000,000,000)*
- **The odds that you will get heartburn today?** *(1 in 150)*
- **The odds that you will someday hurt yourself shaving so badly that you need medical attention?** *(1 in 7,000)*
- **The odds of mistakenly being declared dead because of a clerical error?** *(1 in 24,000)*
- **The odds of being injured in a shark attack?** *(1 in 600,000)*
- **The odds of getting in a car accident during the first year you have a license?** *(1 in 5)*

EXPLAIN: We all face a lot of problems every day. And while they might not fall into the category of "being hit by a meteor," they are serious nonetheless. How we respond to those crises says a lot about where we've placed our hope and trust. When we turn to prayer, we will not be disappointed—no matter the size of the problem.

- **Nothing is too big for God.**

READ: Ephesians 3:20,21

DISCUSS: Ask students to name some of the biggest problems, fears, and worries they've had to face—or often find themselves thinking about facing. Then talk about how they responded. Finally, discuss why a Christian might hesitate to pray in hard times. Explain that sometimes the issue seems so huge that we don't even understand what is happening, or what could be done to change things. We're tempted to conclude that there are no answers. It's a hopeless cause.

ASK: "What do you think verse 20 means when it says God is able to do 'more than all we ask or imagine'?" *(We shouldn't limit our prayers to what we understand. Nothing we ask is ever so great that it overwhelms His ability to respond effectively. He knows the future, sees the whole picture, and controls every circumstance. When life seems overwhelming or hopeless, put your trust in God by making prayer your first priority.)*

- **God cares no matter the situation.**

Continued on page 3

PONDER: Invite students to think of a moment in their lives that was so shocking or frightening that it seemed to take their breath away. Maybe they learned that someone close was getting divorced, or they received a terrible and unexpected medical report. Were they tempted to wonder if God still cared about them, and about the situation? Why might someone have that temptation, and what could be done to overcome it?

READ: Psalm 139:7–13

DISCUSS: Talk about the promises these verses give us: no matter what happens to us, no matter where we are in life, God is there. How can we be so sure? Because God himself made us, and did so carefully and with purpose. Then discuss how knowing these things will affect our prayers. Note that no matter our situation, our problem, or even our emotional state, God is there. He doesn't laugh at us if we sound desperate. He doesn't reject us because we're inadequate. We can freely approach Him with any need.

2. He Listens to the Small Things

ASK: Invite students to think about times when they've had a problem that really weighed them down, then shared that issue with a friend or relative, only to be brushed off with a response like, "Don't sweat it," or "It'll be all right," or maybe even "If you think that's bad, listen to what happened to me." Talk about how they felt at that moment.

EXPLAIN: It hurts when someone—especially someone close to us—ignores or minimizes our problems. What seems small to someone else can be anything but small to us. For example: our parents seem to be fighting a lot more lately. We need to do well on a test to keep our GPA at scholarship level. We just had a serious argument with a close friend, who now seems to be avoiding us. When people brush off issues like these, we might be tempted to wonder if anyone really cares, if our feelings even matter. But we can know they matter to God—enough that He wants to hear about them.

READ: Have three students each read one of the following Scriptures: **Matthew 21:22; 1 John 5:14; Philip-
pians 4:6.**

DISCUSS: Talk about how each of the three Scriptures you just read can help teens feel confident and filled with faith when they pray about problems facing them, even if these problems might not seem serious to others. Use the following as a guide if necessary:

- **Matthew 21:22:** Prayer gives us incredible access to God. We can pray with confidence and assurance. This verse doesn't limit our prayers to things we find important, others find important, or we wonder if God will find important.
- **1 John 5:14:** The only "qualification" to our prayers is that we're not violating God's plan for us. While we must eliminate selfish and wrongly motivated prayers, we can know that God hears us when our hearts are focused on Him.
- **Philippians 4:6:** God gives us a clear invitation to pray that doesn't depend on who we are or how important anyone thinks our needs are.

3. Nothing Is Off-Limits When We Pray

PONDER: Have students complete these sentences. (Due to the personal nature, avoid a lot of discussion on the third question. You might talk about it in general, however.):

- **For me to trust someone, I have to know that they _____ .**
- **The things I value most in a relationship include _____ .**
- **The things that I find most difficult to discuss with others include _____ .**

EXPLAIN: Our relationship with God is personal. While He's the all-powerful Creator of the universe, He's also a close friend, confidant, trusted Counselor, and wise guide. Like our closest of friends, nothing is out of bounds when we have conversations with Him. We can

Continued on page 4

talk about needs, fears, hopes for the future, as well as problems and temptations. And because He's the perfect friend, unable and unwilling to let us down or fail to honor His promises, we can talk to Him with full assurance that He listens, ready and willing to respond. It's with this perspective on prayer that we can examine the most familiar prayer in the Bible: the Lord's Prayer.

READ: Have a student or students read Matthew 6:9–13, then **DISCUSS** what each section of the Lord's Prayer tells us about the conversation we can have with God. Talk specifically about how learning these principles can free us to take anything to the Lord in prayer without fear of rejection or disappointment. (The specific statements are listed below.)

- *Our Father in heaven*—While we need to be respectful when we pray, prayer is a personal conversation between Father and child. Do you struggle to see God this way? Let this prayer remind you that God is close by, and there is nothing you can't tell Him.
- *hallowed be your name*—What an incredible concept: the holy God and Creator of the universe wants to talk to us. How will knowing we have this kind of access change the way we pray, including our attitude toward prayer?
- *your kingdom come*—God wants us to pray with an eternal perspective in mind. Yes, we face a lot of needs and issues every day. But how will our outlook change when we pray consistently for Christ's return, and to see God's grace overcome evil in people's lives?
- *your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*—This prayer is twofold: We pray that God's commands will be honored and obeyed, and we pray that His plans for the world, salvation, and eternity are accomplished. This isn't always easy; sometimes His will conflicts with what we want. So, in a sense, God is telling us to examine our priorities when we pray.

- *Give us today our daily bread*—We all have needs. Some Christians around the world literally don't know where their next meal is coming from. But even for us not in that situation, this phrase reminds us that God is in control of every need. We must surrender ourselves to His plans, knowing He will give us what we need, and what He wants us to have—even if that means not having some of the luxuries and comforts we want.
- *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*—Forgiveness is a big part of the Christian life. We need to confess our sins to God, then trust and accept His forgiveness. But we also need to forgive others, no matter what they've done. If we refuse, we will build a destructive wall in our relationship with God.
- *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one*—The Christian life is filled with spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10–14). What are some of the battles we face? Whatever the case, we need God's help. This prayer means we ask God to spare us from harsh tests, recognizing we are weak. But it also involves trusting God (not relying on self) to see us through to a good conclusion when we do have to wage battle in the spiritual realm.

4. It's Time to Take Action

ACTIVITY: Invite students to describe the most difficult job or task they've ever had to do. Note that there are many different reasons a job or assignment can be hard: it's complicated, it involves really hard labor, or maybe it's extremely gross. Whatever the case, after they've shared, vote to see what example the rest of the class would least want to do. Then **DISCUSS** what would have happened if they didn't do the job. (They would have lost their job; parents would have been mad; the bathroom would have completely flooded.)

EMPHASIZE that there are times we need to take ac-

Continued on page 5

tion when something needs to be done—no matter how tempting it is to do something else. This is especially true with prayer.

READ: Have students read the following Scriptures as a class or in small groups. Note that each passage deals with a specific situation when we need to pray. For each, talk about why we might be tempted to overlook prayer. Then discuss why it's important for us to pray in these situations. Note that God has invited us to pray in all situations, no matter how desperate or frightening.

- **James 5:14–16:** When praying for healing, we might worry how we will feel if a miracle doesn't happen. But this can be a desperate situation, and God wants to hear from us.
- **Philippians 4:14–19:** It can be embarrassing to pray about a financial need in our family, especially when praying with others. But true Christian friends won't look down on us when we have this kind of need. God has an unlimited supply, and He wants to take care of us.
- **Psalms 34:18; Luke 6:27–31:** Sadly, some people resist praying about broken relationships because they want to get even with that person who hurts them, or they fear God will tell them to go apologize to the other person. But God doesn't want us to have bad feelings against anyone. And He can restore any relationship.
- **James 1:5:** It's not uncommon to worry or be confused about the future, and where our lives are heading. We might even be tempted to wonder if there's a lot we can accomplish with our lives. But God has incredible plans for us. And He wants to give us wisdom to follow those plans.

Making It Real

MINISTRY ACTIVITY: Take specific prayer requests from students, perhaps noting the specific categories of prayer needs mentioned above. Also note prayer needs you might know about from your church congregation. Note these needs on the board. Then gather students together and have a time of intercession when they pray for one another. They might also use this time to talk with one another about the fears or concerns they're feeling, as well as share some great things God has been doing. Encourage them to continue praying for these needs during the week. (You might have them record the requests on sheets of paper to place in their Bibles as reminders during their prayer times. Also, consider encouraging them to stay in touch with one another during the week to offer encouragement and reassurance that they are continuing to pray.)

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