



Prayer Series - Session 1: What is prayer?

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Overview: *(Please read to your group before the Opening Prayer)*

If you just completed the Introduction series of Videos read this section:

We've just completed the Introduction series of videos and will be starting the next series. As we move forward and into the Prayer series, be sure to pay attention to the weekly challenges and remember to be patient with yourself. When we talk with God, there is no right or wrong. God is always waiting patiently for us to share with Him and is waiting for our response. Let's now start with our Opening Prayer.

Or

If you just completed the Relationship with God series of Videos read this section:

We've just completed the Relationship with God series of videos and will be starting the next theme of videos. In summary, our past videos covered topics about Who Jesus Is, Why He Died The Way He Did, Sin, Struggling with Forgiveness and How God Can Heal Our Wounds. We ended with an insightful talk about the importance of the Holy Spirit and evaluating if God is at the center of our lives.

As we move forward and into the Prayer series, be sure to pay attention to the weekly challenges and remember to be patient with yourself. When we talk with God, there is no right or wrong. God is always waiting patiently for us to share with Him and is waiting for our response. Let's now start with our Opening Prayer.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: **Jeremiah 29:11-14** – Calling the Lord

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for your perfect love for us. Open our hearts and our minds so that we may encounter You always and listen to Your heart. We ask this all in your holy name. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. In Jeremiah 29:12 we hear, "*When you call me and come and pray to me, I will listen to you.*" Do think/feel God listens to you in prayer? Why or why not?

{Let your group know that you will be watching two short videos today rather than just one.}

YouTube Video:

Fr. Mark Toups – Question 1 (3:42 Min) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-3_Jdz8H3Y

Fr. Mark Toups – Question 2 (4:52 Min) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cx7CbMKX_9g



Prayer Series - Session 1: Continued

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. What was your understanding of prayer before watching the videos?
3. How has your understanding changed, based on how Fr. Toups described prayer from the Catechism of the Catholic Church? {Leader: CCC 2567 *God calls man first. Man may forget his Creator or hide far from his face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer, the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, this drama engages the heart. It unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation.*}
4. Fr. Toups reminds us that our first step in prayer is always a response to the God who is tirelessly calling us. What does this make you think/feel? Will having this understanding cause you to enter into prayer differently?
5. What are some of the distractions that keep you from prayer?
6. What are the ways you put yourself in a position to be found by God in prayer?
7. Describe a moment where you have felt lost and then been found again through prayer.

Session Challenge:

Put yourself into a position to be found by God:

1. Recognize that God is tirelessly pursuing you.
2. Respond to God's call by opening yourself up to God's presence and love.
3. Take time to honestly evaluate and LIST those things in your life that pull you away from encountering God. Be specific and take these to God in prayer. Ask Him for the courage to remove them from your life and take active steps to follow His will.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for calling us to You. Help us to respond fully and joyfully to Your call so that we may turn away from those things keeping us from You. Over the next several weeks, help us to continually focus on putting ourselves into a position to be found. We pray this in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*



Prayer Series - Session 2: How to Prepare for Prayer

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: Matthew 6:5-8

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your continued presence in our lives and for tirelessly reaching out to us, even when we are distracted from You. Help us to be direct and intentional in our response to Your love and open us to a deeper and more fulfilling relationship with You. We pray for all these things in God's holy name. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. In verse 7 we hear, "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words." What do you think/feel this means on how we should pray?

YouTube Video: Fr. Mike Schmitz – Tips for Praying (8:12 Min) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yk8In-6KUGc> {Leader - be sure to play to the full 8:12 minutes to hear his bonus round tips }

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. Do you make time for prayer? How does it define your day?
3. If you have a place where you regularly pray, can you describe it to the group? What do you have in this area that supports your prayer time?
4. Do you find your relationship with God improving through prayer? Why do you think so?
5. What do you find to be the most effective prayers for you?
6. What do you think about the tips Fr. Mike describes in the video? What changes in your life do you think you might see if you implement these tips into your prayer life?

Session Challenge:

Reflect on how you are currently praying and consider what changes you can make to deepen your relationship with God:

1. Commit to a "season of prayer" for the next few weeks.
2. If you haven't been praying regularly, focus on showing up in daily prayer. Be realistic and start small. If you have been praying regularly, evaluate how you can build your day around prayer.
3. At the end of the week, reflect on what has worked and what needs more work. Ask yourself how you can be more intentional and effective in your prayers for the rest of the "season". Write down your When, Where, What, and Why to share with the group.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

Heavenly Father, give us the willpower to commit to our prayer life. Help us to make time to be with You, so that we can know Your will and draw closer to You. In Your loving name, Amen.



Prayer Series - Session 3: How to Start Praying – Relating to God

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: *Isaiah 43:1-7*

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Heavenly Father, please help us to center our gaze on You. May we look deeply into Your eyes and rest in Your presence. {pause} Give us the ability to look past our own weaknesses so that we can see ourselves as You see us. We ask this all in Your holy name. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. What do you think/feel God is telling you in the scripture verses today?

YouTube Video: Fr. Mark Toups – Question 3 (6:15 Min) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FNZ-WuMkA>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. What are some of your initial thoughts and feelings after watching the video?
3. What are some difficulties you have encountered while praying that keep you from acknowledging God's love and from receiving His gaze?
4. Do you find that you project your own doubts and guilt onto God and what He might be thinking of you?
5. Think of moments where you have gazed at your loved ones. How do you think this compares to the love God might have for you?
6. How does knowing that God loves us infinitely more than we love others change your view of praying?

Session Challenge:

Reflect on God's gaze upon you:

1. Take a moment at the beginning of your prayer time to pause and place yourself in God's presence. During this time imagine yourself looking into His eyes and see how precious you are to Him, His gentleness, His compassion. Rather than focusing on yourself, consider what is in God's eyes as He gazes upon You.
2. Share with the group any changes in perspective you have during your prayers.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

Dear Lord, we thank You for Your loving gaze. We pray that we have the patience to allow You to see us as You always see us. Build in us a desire to spend time each day to share with You the love You share with us. In your holy name, Amen.



Prayer Series - Session 4: Challenges of Prayer

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: *Psalm 139:1-16*

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Heavenly Father, we ask that You give us the clarity that we need to understand the purpose of the distractions we may have in prayer. May we recognize when these distractions are from You and what we need to learn from them. Allow us to open our hearts to Your love, especially in those places we are most wounded. Help us to remember that You know and want the best for us. Please give us the strength to endure as we try to hear You. We ask this all in Your Holy name. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. In Psalm 139:7 we hear that there is nowhere we can flee from God. Do you think/feel you can hide from God? How about in prayer? Have you ever tried to hide things from God in prayer or push Him away?

{Let your group know that you will be watching two short videos today.}

YouTube Video:

Fr. Mark Toups – Question 7 (5:54 Min) – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWKH7B4Kn0I>

Fr. Mark Toups – When I Don't See God (2:22 Min) – <https://youtu.be/MZYixwocQZ0?t=1>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. What are some of the challenges or distractions you have when trying to pray?
3. What were things that have popped up repeatedly in your life and prayers that might have seemed like challenges or distractions but may have been an invitation to work through something with God?
4. How did you respond to those challenges or distractions at the time? How might you respond to a similar challenge or distraction after viewing the video?
5. Have there been times when you were able to realize those challenges or distractions were messages from God?
6. Were there times in prayer where you felt like God wasn't answering you or you didn't feel Him? How did you react to that?
7. After watching the video, is there anything new you will try to incorporate into your prayer time?

Session Challenge:

Listen for God's message amidst the distractions. Examine the distractions you experience while trying to pray. Try to understand what it is God is telling you by allowing those distractions in your life.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

Heavenly Father, help us to hear Your voice. Also, help us to recognize those times where Your silence is what is best for us. Help us to be patient with You and with ourselves as we discover our heart's longings and true desires. Encourage us to always remember Your love for us. In your loving name, Amen.



Prayer Series - Session 5: Silence

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Opening Prayer

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: **1 Kings 19:11-13**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Heavenly Father, like Elijah, may we find You in the soft silence. Help us to set aside and use quiet time so that we may recognize Your voice. Please give us the patience to sit in silence and the wisdom to listen to what You wish to reveal to us. We ask this in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. Why do you think/feel that God was only in the light silent sound in verse 1 Kings 19:12 vs the strong wind, earthquake, or fire?

YouTube Video: Fr. Mike Schmitz – The Value of Silence (7:45 Min) – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hHjdLtNOWg>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. Do you find that you avoid silence or revel in silence?
3. If you find yourself avoiding silence, what are specific ways you do so? If you revel in silence, are there specific things you do to get comfortable in the quiet?
4. Have you found silence to be a magnifier like Fr. Schmitz indicates in the video?
5. What are some of the types of distractions you experience when you try to pray in silence? Prior to this video, had you ever considered that the distractions you have when praying are actually God revealing something to you and He wants you to invite Him into it with you?
6. Would anyone like to share something that you feel/think God revealed to you while praying in silence?
7. What are ways that you can increase the amount of time you spend in silence? How might your prayer life change if you invite God into every aspect of your life?

Session Challenge:

Find time each day this week to take 10 minutes in silence, calling upon God's peace and direction. Use no technology, prayer books, rosaries, or anything tangible. Simply sit in silence and peace. Rather than doing all the talking, give this time to God and allow Him to speak. A great way is to start by simply asking God a question like "What would You like to share with me today God?" If you already do an activity like this, add 10 minutes to your time.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

Heavenly Father, help us to prioritize setting aside daily time to spend in silence for it is in silence that we begin to hear Your whispers. Create a hunger in us for this quiet time and open our minds to the wisdom You reveal. In Your loving name, Amen.