



Vocal Prayer

KNOWN: EXPERIENCING GOD IN DAILY PRAYER
SESSION 02



Overview:

This session does not have videos. After each session that is guided by videos, you will have another session that is video-free and will allow you to actually practice prayer together. This series is not simply a lesson on prayer, rather it is an apprenticeship. Before we launch them into the wild to pray on their own, teenagers must first try it with a guide. You, dear leader, are that guide. You will notice that these non-video sessions have a new section in addition to our usual “CONNECT, DISCUSS, COMMIT” and that is “DO”. After you go through the discussion, it is critical that you DO the prayer you are discussing.

In this session, we will break open vocal prayer, the first building block of a daily prayer life. Your group will not only discuss what vocal prayer is but also learn where it comes from in scripture and tradition. You will end with a time to practice vocal prayer as a group.

We highly recommend that each student has a copy of the YDisciple Prayer Journal (YDisciple.com/store). They will begin to interact with the journal in this session.

In the coming weeks, it will be essential for each student to have a Bible. Remind them multiple times between this session and the next!

Theme Scripture:

PSALM 95:1-2

Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord;
Cry out to the rock of our salvation.
Let us greet him with a song of praise,
Joyfully sing out our psalms.



A Key to Using this Guide:

ANYTHING IN ITALICS: Important information for leaders. Not necessary to share with the group.

REGULAR FONT: To be shared aloud with the group.

LEADER TIPS: Check out the “Leader Tip” boxes in the margins for helpful hints.

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Connect

1. Check-In

It is always good to check-in and ask, "How was your week?" demonstrating that you care about what is going on beyond your small group. You can ask generally or have them share "Highs and Lows." (High - best part of your week; Low - worst part)

2. Accountability

In the last session of The Invitation, your group was introduced to the concept of "The 5 S's of Accountability." These are 5 things that a disciple should be striving toward. Check-in each time you meet to see how everyone is progressing.

The 5 S's of Accountability: Service, Praying with Scripture, Sacraments, Overcoming Sin, Sharing Jesus with Others.

After every session, teens are encouraged to make a commitment. **Last week they committed to simply pray every day, "God, give me the desire to pray."** Ask them how that commitment went.

3. Optional Activity

TELEPHONE Pictionary

Supplies: 1 sheet of paper and pen per person (leader included)

Telephone Pictionary combines the verbal exercise of Telephone with the fun drawing game Pictionary.

1. Give each participant a sheet of paper.
2. Instruct them to fold it like an accordion into as many equal segments as there are people in the group. For example: If there are 6 people in the group, there should be 6 segments after folding. See the example to the right.



3. In the top segment, have each participant write just ONE sentence about anything: a pet, asking a question, telling a joke. Remind them to keep it appropriate and to not let their neighbor see what they are writing.
4. When everyone is done, have them pass the paper to the left. That person will read the sentence and do their best to illustrate it in the blank segment below the sentence. It is best to limit their time to 1 minute or less.
5. This next step is VERY important: the illustrator folds down the top sentence so that only the drawing can be seen.
6. Have them pass their papers to the left again.
7. The new person needs to construct a sentence based on the illustration in a minute or less.
8. Before passing it, they need to fold the paper so that only what they wrote can be seen.
9. This process goes on, writing, drawing, writing, drawing, writing, drawing. All the while, the paper is being folded down each time, until all spaces have been filled. The person who finishes the last section of the paper gets to share the telephone game with the class by reading each sentence and sharing the pictures.

The aim of the game isn't to get it completely right, but to see what wacky transmutations come from each time the phrase gets "lost in translation"!

Discuss

Transition: Clearly, words are powerful. And words are uniquely human. Animals can use sound and body language. There is even some evidence that apes can draw! But no other creature has the power of speech.

And words are powerful in prayer. Today we are going to talk about vocal prayer.

- **WHAT DO YOU THINK VOCAL PRAYER IS?** *Vocal prayer is any form of prayer expressed in words. It can be spontaneous prayers that we say from the heart, or it can be more traditional prayers said throughout the ages in the Catholic Church.*

• WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF PRAYERS WE SAY OUT LOUD?

- Traditional or rote prayer (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, meal prayers, etc.)
- Rosary
- Prayers before meals
- Spontaneous prayers from the heart
- Jesus Prayer – “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner”
- Reading Scripture aloud, especially the Psalms (Liturgy of the Hours)
- Charismatic Expression – “Praise You, Jesus ... I love you, Lord!”
- Singing
- Responses at Mass

• WHAT MIGHT BE THE PURPOSE/IMPORTANCE OF SAYING THEM OUT LOUD?

“The need to involve the senses in interior prayer corresponds to a requirement of our human nature. We are body and spirit, and we experience the need to translate our feelings externally. We must pray with our whole being ...” (CCC 2702)

- Connects the head and the heart to what we’re saying.
- Gives homage to God with our body as well as our heart and mind.
- Can help center ourselves back to God if we become distracted or tired.
- Gives us the words to say when we don’t know what to pray for.
- Can be used in groups and communities to unite ourselves.

• THIS WHOLE SERIES IS ABOUT STARTING A HABIT OF DAILY, PERSONAL PRAYER. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT? EXCITED? INTIMIDATED? CONFUSED?

Give them space to answer honestly.

When we think of starting a habit of personal prayer, it can be intimidating or we can think simply “Where do I even start?” Vocal prayer can be just that - a place to start.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that vocal prayer stirs up devotion. Maybe we go to pray and we just aren’t feeling it. Or maybe we are having trouble focusing. If we begin with vocal prayer like saying an Our Father, singing a song of praise - if you like to sing, or even simply saying out loud, “Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus...” we engage our bodies and our minds, then our hearts often follow. It’s like turning on the car. We can’t drive unless we’ve started the engine. Vocal prayer starts the engine of our prayer, if you will.

Leader Tip

This session has several moments in which you, not a video, will be the source of important information. Be prepared. Your teens will receive it better if you are sharing naturally instead of reading a script.

Now let's briefly look at where vocal prayer comes from.

Open your Bibles to Psalm 95:1-2

Have someone volunteer to read it out loud.

- **WHAT WORDS OF VOCAL EXPRESSION DO YOU SEE HERE?** *Cry out, sing, greet, sing out.*

Throughout the psalms, you will hear language like this!

Jesus also shows us that it is important.

- He taught His disciples a vocal prayer, the Our Father. (Matthew 6:9-13)
- "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth." (Matthew 11:25-26)
- "Abba, Father... take this cup away from me." (Mark 14:36)
- "He not only prayed aloud the liturgical prayer of the synagogue but, as the Gospels show, He raised His voice to express His personal prayer, from exultant blessing of the Father to the agony of Gethsemane." (CCC 2701)

IMPORTANT: The goal is not to rattle off as many prayers as you can, but to think about the words you are praying.

"And when you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they will be seen by people. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But as for you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you are praying, do not use thoughtless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words." (Matthew 6:5-7)

- **HAVE YOU EVER PRAYED THE ROSARY? WHAT WAS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE?**

Think about the Rosary. Sometimes it may feel like the monotony of the words we are saying becomes boring -- saying the same thing over and over again. But when we focus on the words we are actually saying, it can serve to bring our hearts, mind, and soul together as one, lifting them up to God. The goal is not to see how fast you can pray through a Rosary, but to be attentive in our mind to what devotion is growing in our hearts.

"Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls." (St. John Chrysostom)

Vocal prayer also helps us acknowledge the reality of who God is. If we begin with a song of praise, the lyrics are often about God's goodness, power, provision, mercy. These are great things to have in mind before we begin praying. *This is the kind of God we are talking to!*

"Before prayer, endeavor to realize Whose presence you are approaching, and to Whom you are about to speak. We can never fully understand how we ought to behave towards God, before whom the angels tremble." (St. Teresa of Avila)

Even if we don't sing, we can read a psalm to have the same effect. Think back to Psalm 95.

When we pray, it is critical that we address God with whatever title we are comfortable with: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Lord, etc. Why? Because prayer is a real conversation with a real person. By addressing him, we remind ourselves of this relationship.

• **WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TITLE FOR GOD? WHAT DO YOU USUALLY CALL HIM?**

One way to easily practice vocal prayer is to start thanking God for all the blessings He's given us. Say out loud a list of things that you are thankful for and why you're thankful for them. Gratitude helps us acknowledge how much we need God.

Do

So enough talking, let's do this!

Take out your journal/participant guide.

Make a list of all the things you are grateful for. Serious things like family and health, but also have fun with it. Thank him for things like the color blue and mac and cheese. Scripture says that "every good and perfect gift comes from God." (James 1:17). List as many things as you can in 3 minutes.

[Pause for 3 minutes while they write]

• WHAT THINGS DID YOU COME UP WITH?

Now, take 3 minutes and list everything good about God himself. Write these down.

[Pause for 3 minutes while they write]

• WHAT DID YOU COME UP WITH?

Praising God (God you are good, you are generous, you are kind...) is so important. He doesn't need compliments. But we need to remember these things about him. We talk a lot in this series about not treating God like Santa or a genie. One thing that helps dispel this myth in our minds is praise and thanksgiving.

By the way, journaling is a form of "vocal" prayer.

Now we are going to take time to pray out loud as a group using these lists.

- *Remind them of confidentiality.* What people pray out loud is not meant to be shared outside of this group.
- Remember, many of us might be new to praying out loud. Be kind. Don't laugh. God is delighted by your effort.
- You will go around the circle and each person will be able to say out loud their prayers of praise (What is good about God) by simply stating, "God you are _____." Each person should say one thing from their list.
- After that, go around the circle and thank God directly for 3 of the things they listed, "Thank you God for _____."

Then...

- Begin with the sign of the cross
- Say something like, "God we know you are good. We are here to praise you. Please hear the praise we lift to you now."
- The leader should start by saying something on his/her list of praise, then asking the person to his/her left to go.
- Once everyone has prayed a prayer of praise, move to thanksgiving. Say something like: "God, in your goodness you give us so much. Please hear our prayer of thanksgiving!"
- The leader should start by praying at least 3 things on their list. Then go around the circle.
- Once everyone has prayed, end with a common prayer like the Our Father, Hail Mary, or Glory Be.

Leader Tip

Did you know we have a prayer journal that corresponds with this series? Check it out on YDisciple.shop.

Leader Tip

Do you have a musical talent? Try beginning with a praise and worship song!



Commit

As we embark on this journey of building a habit of daily prayer, it is important to remember that it is just that: BUILDING. We don't expect you to go and spend an hour in prayer every day immediately. We are going to add one block at a time. The first block is vocal prayer.

So this week, commit to a few minutes of intentional vocal prayer every day. And remember "vocal" prayer can include things like journaling.

Choose one of the following you will commit to:

- Writing down or saying out loud different things you are grateful for to God every day.
- Pick a Psalm to read out loud slowly (some great Psalms you can look at: Psalm 8, 23, 27, 62, 63, 96, 103, 123, 131, 139, 145).
- Invite the Lord into your day and actions by praying, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

Follow-up Checklist

- Send the Parent Sheet.
- Remind them to bring a Bible to every meeting.
- Consider sending them a reminder between sessions of the COMMIT.
- Did you know we have a Prayer Journal designed to go with this series? They aren't required but will greatly benefit your students. Check them out at YDisciple.shop.
- Pray! As you are helping them build a habit of prayer, take time to deepen your own prayer life.