



# The Struggle: Overcoming Obstacles in Prayer

KNOWN: EXPERIENCING GOD IN DAILY PRAYER  
SESSION 07



## Overview:

In this final session, your group will have a chance to discuss common obstacles in having a habit of daily prayer such as distraction, spiritual dryness, and sin. They will also be given practical tools to overcome these obstacles. You will conclude by taking the building blocks you have learned so far and putting them together and practicing what daily prayer could look like.

There will be approximately 17 minutes of video.

## Theme Scripture:

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14-22

We urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient with all. See that no one returns evil for evil; rather, always seek what is good [both] for each other and all. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil.



## 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. Ask what they are working on.

In the previous session, they committed to praying through their lists of petitions and intercessions each day. Ask them how this went for them.

## 3. Optional Activity

### **OPTION 1: AH-SO-KO** *(Best for in-person)*

Everyone stands in a circle and we start with AH (hand on forehead-salute) SO (hand on chin) and KO hands together pointing at another player. The way the game works is that the player yells Ah and uses their left or right hand... wherever the fingers are pointing indicates who goes next. The group repeats this Ah So Ko until only one person remains. Those who are out can heckle those still in the game without interfering with the game flow. This is to be pretty fast-paced so a wrong point or stall in the flow will result in being called out.



## OPTION 2: “I AM GOING TO AND I AM BRINGING”

*(Online or in-person)*

This is a guessing game. If there are fewer than ten people in the group, one person thinks of a word - if there are 10 people or more, two people think of a word together, without the rest of the group knowing what the word is. They should sit at opposite ends of the circle so that clues are only given once every few turns. One of them gives the first clue by saying, “I am going to...,” and “I am bringing...” - something that starts with the first letter of the word. Participants then try to guess the next letter of the word by saying, “I’m going to...,” and “I’m bringing...” - something that starts with what they think is the next letter of the word. If they guess correctly, the leader(s) says, “Yes, you can come,” but if they guess incorrectly, the leader says, “No, you can’t come.”

You can adapt this game to the seasons of the year by changing the location of where you are going to - for example, during Lent, you can say, “I am going through the desert,” or “I am going to Jerusalem,” or in Advent, you can say, “I am going to Bethlehem,” or during the season before Pentecost, you can say, “I am going to the Upper Room to pray with the Apostles,” etc.

**SAMPLE:** The word is “Christmas”

*Start:* “I am going to Bethlehem and I’m bringing a cat.”

*1st Guess:* “I am going to Bethlehem and I’m bringing an apple.”

*Response:* “No, you can’t come.”

*2nd Guess:* “I am going to Bethlehem and I’m bringing a hat.”

*Response:* “Yes, you can come.”

This signifies to the whole group that the second letter has been guessed correctly, and now they use the same process to guess the third letter.

Once they have it, they then continue around the circle until they get the fourth letter, and so on, until someone guesses the word. That person becomes the next leader.

*After the game:* Just like with this game, this session is going to be about putting all the pieces together. We have talked a lot about prayer. We have even practiced different types of prayer. Now, we are going to put all the pieces together and talk about what a daily prayer routine would look like.

# Discuss

## Watch Video Segment #1

- ALI ASKED, “WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO MAKE SURE YOU SHOW UP TO PRAYER EVERY DAY?”
- WHAT ELSE STOOD OUT TO YOU IN ALI’S STORY?
- SHE TALKED ABOUT ALL THE THINGS SHE KNEW ABOUT GOD SINKING INTO HER HEART. DO YOU EVER EXPERIENCE A DISCONNECT BETWEEN OUR HEAD-KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GOD AND WHAT WE TRULY BELIEVE IN OUR HEARTS?
- WHY DO YOU THINK THAT JOURNEY IS “SO LONG?”
- WHAT DOES HAVING A HABIT OF DAILY PERSONAL PRAYER HAVE TO DO WITH THAT JOURNEY FROM OUR HEADS TO OUR HEARTS?
- HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO COMMIT TO ANYTHING (EX. SPORTS, MUSIC LESSONS, SERVICE WORK)? DID YOU FEEL LIKE DOING IT EVERY TIME YOU SHOWED UP? IF NO, WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WHEN YOU DIDN’T FEEL LIKE IT, AND WHY DID YOU KEEP SHOWING UP?

## Watch Video Segment #2

- THE CATECHISM DESCRIBES PRAYER AS A “BATTLE... AND IT ALWAYS PRESUPPOSES EFFORT.” A BATTLE ASSUMES THAT THERE IS A FIGHT GOING ON. WHAT SORTS OF THINGS DO YOU HAVE TO FIGHT WHEN IT COMES TO PRAYER?

- **WHAT ARE YOUR TOP EXCUSES FOR NOT PRAYING?**

“You cannot pray at all times unless you pray at specific times, consciously willing it.” (CCC 2697)

- **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE A SET PRAYER TIME?**

- **WHAT TIME OF DAY WOULD BE BEST FOR YOU TO PRAY? (IS NIGHTTIME REALLY THE BEST TIME? WHAT ABOUT FIRST THING IN THE MORNING?)**

- **WHAT SPOT IN YOUR HOUSE WOULD BE THE MOST COMFORTABLE (BUT NOT TOO COMFORTABLE!) SPOT FOR YOU TO PRAY?**

- **ALI MENTIONED HAVING HOLY IMAGES IN HER PRAYER SPACE (YOU CAN SEE THEM IN SOME OF THE SHOTS!) TO HELP HER FOCUS HER ATTENTION ON GOD. DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE IMAGE OF JESUS? WHAT IMAGES WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR YOU TO PRAY WITH?**

- **AGAIN, SHE TALKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A PHYSICAL COPY OF THE BIBLE DURING PRAYER. DOES ANYONE STILL NEED A BIBLE?**

Setting a time to pray also means setting an amount of time you will pray every day. Start with 15 minutes. If that seems like a lot, realize that 15 minutes is equivalent to just 1% of your day.

### Leader Tip

Be honest and share yours. It is important for them to see transparency in you.

### Leader Tip

Leaders, now is a great time for you to share about your own prayer habits. Where do YOU pray?

## Watch Video Segment #3

- **WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST DISTRACTIONS YOU FIND IN YOUR PRAYER?**

- **ALI GIVES THE ADVICE TO NOT TRY TO PUSH DISTRACTIONS ASIDE BUT TO ACTUALLY BRING THOSE THINGS TO JESUS IN PRAYER. WHY MIGHT THIS BE HELPFUL?** *If something is distracting us, there is a good chance it is important to us. Bring that to the Lord!*

One of the biggest challenges we face is our short attention span! Help yourself to pay attention in prayer by making sure you don't have any devices even in the same room when you pray like your phone or tablet.

- **WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS WE CAN FIGHT DISTRACTION?**


## Watch Video Segment #4

- **WHAT STOOD OUT TO YOU IN THAT CLIP?**
- **MOTHER TERESA DID NOT EXPERIENCE FEELING GOD'S PRESENCE IN PRAYER, ALSO KNOWN AS "SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION" FOR 50 YEARS! KNOWING THIS, HOW DOES IT IMPACT YOUR VIEW OF THE WORKS OF CHARITY SHE IS KNOWN FOR?**
- **HOW DOES SIN IMPACT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?**  
*"Serious sin destroys the divine power of love in a person's heart, without which there can be no eternal beatitude. Hence, it is also called mortal sin. Serious sin breaks with God, whereas venial sin only strains the relationship with him." (YouCat, 316)*

Enough talk! Now let's put the pieces together that we have discussed using the easy-to-remember method Ali outlined: P.A.L.

*Leaders: You will be actually praying with them. Keep your time prayerful and focused. You are acting as a guide, so they can do this on their own. While they will be praying on their own silently, you will be guiding them through the steps. This should take at least 15 minutes.*

- Begin with the sign of the cross.
- Take 30 seconds of silence to focus the prayer time and set a tone of reverence.
- **Begin with P, PRAISE.** What are you thankful for? What has God done in your life? Where have you seen him act? Write down or speak out loud your gratitude. Even consider just saying, "Thank you, Jesus. I love you, Jesus."
- **Next is A, ASK.** This again is what Dan talked about with petition and intercession. What do you need from the Lord? Be bold. Ask him. Who in your life needs prayer? Write down or pray them silently in your heart.

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- **Finally, is L, LISTEN.** Read aloud one of the scripture verses we have used in this study such as Psalm 23 or 1 Thessalonians 5:14-22. Read through it 3 times slowly. Underline words or phrases that stand out. Ask God, “What are you telling me?” Then, be silent for at least 30 seconds to let him respond. Write down what you hear.
  - End with a traditional vocal prayer like the Our Father prayed out loud together.
  - End with the sign of the cross.

## Commit

Did you know that 15 minutes is just 1% of your day? Can we commit to giving God our undivided attention for 1% of our day, every day?

This week, commit to a prayer time (morning, before bed, when you get home from school) and choose a place you will pray. Then spend 15 minutes, 1% of your day, walking through the P.A.L. method every day.

## Follow-up Checklist

- Send the Parent Sheet.
- Before you jump into the next YDisciple series, take a break from videos. Do a service project, something social or even go to adoration together.
- Consider using the content of the Prayer Journal (YDisciple.shop) as the content for your next several meetings.
- Continue checking on the habit of prayer every time you meet. This isn't just for this series, but for the life of a Catholic Christian.