

**LIFE
LABS**

We love because God first loved us.
1 JOHN 4:19

Who can talk to God?


**Jesus
centred
Spirit-led
Hope
revealed**

LEADER MATERIAL

LIFE LABS 2026 | TERM 3
SALVOS YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS



TOPIC OUTLINE:

In the first half of the term, we will explore how can we talk with God. In the second half of the term, we will explore how we can go deeper in prayer.

PART ONE — HOW WE CAN TALK WITH GOD?

LIFE LAB 1: Who can talk to God? (page 04)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on assumptions we make about who can or cannot talk to God and to explore the Good News that all of us can talk to God.

Scripture: The Scripture (Luke 18:9-14) explores the Good News that all of us can talk to God.

LIFE LAB 2: How can we learn about prayer and connect with God through it? (page 09)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on the people and things that have helped them learn about prayer and to explore the Good News that Jesus teaches us how to pray.

Scripture: The Scripture (Matthew 6:9-13) explores the Good News that we can deepen our experience of prayer by following Jesus' example and teaching.

LIFE LAB 3: How can we hear God? (page 14)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on what it is like to struggle to hear God clearly and to explore the Good News that the Holy Spirit can help us hear God in big and small ways.

Scripture: The Scripture (1 Kings 19:9-13) explores the Good News that the Holy Spirit can help us hear God in big and small ways.

LIFE LAB 4: Who can we talk to when we feel upset or angry? (page 18)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on how it feels when we have big emotions and to explore the Good News that God cares about us and wants us to bring everything to him, no matter what we are feeling.

Scripture: The Scripture (Psalm 142) explores the Good News that God wants us to bring everything to him, no matter what we are feeling. He cares about us.

PART TWO — HOW WE CAN GO DEEPER IN PRAYER?

LIFE LAB 5: How can I pray in a way that feels natural to me? (page 23)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on some of the assumptions we have made about how to pray and to explore the Good News that God has given us many different ways to pray.

Scripture: The Scriptures (Mark 1:35, Acts 1:14, Ephesians 5:19b, Psalm 23:2-3 and Ephesians 6:8) explore the Good News that God has given us many different ways to pray.

LIFE LAB 6: How can we pray about the problems we see in the world? (page 28)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on the things that discourage us from praying about the world's problems and to explore the Good News that God wants us to pray for the world, and our prayers can bring change.

Scripture: The Scripture (Romans 8:26-27) explores the Good News that when we can't find the words to pray, the Holy Spirit speaks to God on our behalf.

LIFE LAB 7: Who can pray for us when we need help? (page 33)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on what it is like when other people pray for us and to explore the Good News that God can strengthen and encourage us through the prayers of other Christians.

Scripture: The Scriptures (1 Thessalonians 5:11 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11) explore the Good News that God can strengthen and encourage us through the prayers of other Christians.

LIFE LAB 8: How can we trust that God hears our prayers? (page 37)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on what it feels like when we doubt whether God hears our prayers and to reflect on the Good News that God always hears our prayers.

Scripture: The Scripture (Matthew 6:25-33) explores the Good News that God always hears our prayers.

APPENDIX — ACTIVITY SESSIONS

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY SESSION (page 41)

For the first session of the term, you can take the opportunity to welcome the young people back and introduce them to the theme. Rather than a structured Life Lab session, the material explores some activities you could do that are fun, will connect the young people and help introduce the ideas we'll look at in Life Labs. For example, in this session, you can help young people explore the idea of prayer through activities like *Stand, Kneel, Go!*, *Different ways of talking — Skit Game*, *Open Line and Emoji Prayer Challenge*.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY SESSION (page 43)

The Reflection Activity session provides an opportunity to reflect on the topic idea in a session that is less structured than a Life Lab. You can use the ideas to create a fun and social session that will help develop the topics. For example, you can help young people explore the idea of prayer through activities like *Mask Off*, *Sardines* and *Three-legged Race*.

SPEAKER BRIEF (page 44)

The Speaker Brief provides the outline of a short Good News message to share with young people. The message will connect with young people's experiences, wondering who can or cannot talk to God. Using the Scripture (Luke 18:9-14) we explore the Good News that everyone can talk to God.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

At the start of each session, acknowledge the Country and Traditional Owners of the land your group is gathering on. Below is a template you could use.

"Today we meet on _____ Country.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters from which we've all come or crossed over to arrive here today. We commit ourselves to being voices of reconciliation."

LIFE LABS

1. Who can talk to God?

HOW TO RUN A SESSION:

- Read the introduction and play the game
- Do the activity and discuss the questions
- Read the Scripture and discuss the questions
- Read the conclusion and close the session

Adapt this session to suit the needs of your group as required.

SESSION OUTLINE

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on assumptions we make about who can or cannot talk to God, and to explore the Good News that all of us can talk to God.

Game: The *Ask the king* game gets young people to experience not being able to speak directly to someone.

Activity: The *Is it true?* activity helps young people to reflect on true and untrue statements about who can pray.

Scripture: The Scripture (Luke 18:9-14) explores the Good News that all of us can talk to God.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR THE SESSION:

- ☐ A variety of household items
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pens or markers
- ☐ [Two set of the statements](#) , printed and cut out

READ THE INTRODUCTION AND PLAY THE GAME

READ THE INTRODUCTION

As young people, we may feel like our voices are sometimes ignored. At times adults don't seem to listen, or they tell us to be quiet, or they misunderstand what we're saying without giving us a chance to explain. If that has been our experience, we can wonder why God would listen to us and if he cares about what we have to say.

Some of us might feel like we are not 'good enough' to pray. If we haven't been to church much or if we've done the wrong thing we can feel like we are not worthy of talking to God. We might think that prayer is just for 'good' people or 'church people'.

In church, we sometimes hear leaders praying confident prayers with special 'churchy' words. If we don't know those special words or don't feel confident praying in that style, we can wonder if prayer is really for us.

***Can only certain people talk to God?
Who can talk to God?***

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the 'Ask the king' game.

PLAY THE 'ASK THE KING' GAME

EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ 10 random household items
- ☐ 2 x sets of 10 small pieces of paper, with each of the random items written on each piece (x 2 sets)
- ☐ Pens or markers

- Nominate one person to be the 'king'. The king has all the random items. The king should ignore everyone except for the 'speakers'.
- Divide everyone else into two teams. Each team must nominate a 'speaker'.
- Each team is given the same 10 words on 10 pieces of paper.
- The speaker cannot look at the pieces of paper and the other team members cannot speak.
- The team members must communicate to their team's speaker what they need by only using actions. They can work through their pieces of paper in any order. Once the speaker correctly guesses what is being asked for, they can ask the king for the item, and the king will give it to them.
- Once a team has an item, both teams should move to the next piece of paper in their team's pile.
- The team who collects the most items wins.

***How did you go with the game?
How did it feel when you couldn't talk to the king for yourself?***

Why do you think young people sometimes feel like they can't talk to God?



DO THE ACTIVITY AND DISCUSS QUESTIONS

LEADERS, WATCH THE PARTICIPANTS FOR:

- what they say to each other
- what they find hard
- what they find easy
- what worked
- what caused conflict

HOW TO DO THE 'IS IT TRUE?' ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT:

☐ [Two set of the statements](#) , printed and cut out

- Form two groups.
- Each group is given a set of the printed statements.
- Each group needs to sort the statements into three categories: 'True', 'Not true' and 'Not sure'.
- Let each group know they might not agree on all of them, and that is okay!

God listens to some people more than others

You have to believe in God before you can talk to him

People who doubt God can still talk to him

God is more likely to listen to good people

People who have done really wrong things can still talk to him

Some people have done too many bad things for God to listen to them

God will listen to children just as much as adults

Church leaders have a special connection to God that other people don't

God listens more to people who go to church

People who don't believe in God can still talk to him

You have to be part of the 'right' religion for God to hear you

People who don't know much about God can still talk to him

God takes some people more seriously than others

You need someone more spiritual to help you talk to God

God listens to new Christians just as much as long-time believers

Some people are naturally better at connecting with God

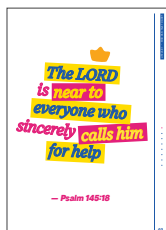
God only listens to people who are trying their best

DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY

- How did you go with the activity?
What was it like to sort the statements into those categories?
- Did you all agree with each other about what was true or false? Why or why not?
- Are there any ideas that sometimes *feel* true to you, even though you know they aren't?
- What difference would it make if everyone knew that anyone can talk to God?

In the group material
(page 03):

Psalms 145:18



READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

A HUMBLE, HONEST PRAYER

Luke 18:9-14

⁹ There were some people who thought they were very good and looked down on everyone else. Jesus used this story to teach them: ¹⁰ “One time there was a Pharisee and a tax collector. One day they both went to the Temple to pray. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood alone, away from the tax collector. When the Pharisee prayed, he said, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not as bad as other people. I am not like men who steal, cheat, or commit adultery. I thank you that I am better than this tax collector.’ ¹² I fast twice a week, and I give a tenth of everything I get!”

¹³ The tax collector stood alone too. But when he prayed, he would not even look up to heaven. He felt very humble before God. He said, ‘O God, have mercy on me. I am a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, when this man finished his prayer and went home, he was right with God. But the Pharisee, who felt that he was better than others, was not right with God. People who make themselves important will be made humble. But those who make themselves humble will be made important.”

DISCUSS THESE TOPIC QUESTIONS

What do you think about what we’ve just read? How does it relate to the question, ‘Who can talk to God?’

The tax collector could only get out the words “...have mercy on me, I am a sinner” — why do you think that was enough?

Have you ever felt too messy or too far gone to talk to God? What do you think this story suggests about that?

If the message of this story is true, what does that say about who can talk to God?

NOTES ON THE SCRIPTURE FOR FACILITATORS:

- Many young people today struggle with shame and may deeply relate to the tax collector in this story.
- Through this story, Jesus teaches us to be humble when we pray. The Pharisee focuses on himself. In his short prayer he repeats the word “I” five times and lists reasons why he believes he is good enough to approach God, but the tax collector recognises his sin and knows he can only talk to God because of God’s mercy. It is the tax collector, not the Pharisee, who goes home right with God.
- In the Bible, there are many examples of people admitting their failures to God. Each of these examples reminds us that we don’t need to be perfect to start a conversation with God.

READ THE CONCLUSION AND CLOSE THE SESSION

READ THE CONCLUSION

As young people, we may feel like our voices are not always heard. If that has been our experience, we can wonder if God will listen to us and care about what we have to say.

Some of us might feel like we're not good enough to talk to God — like we've done too many things wrong or ignored him for too long. Or some of us might feel like we don't know the right words to say. If the prayers we have heard others pray use special, churchy words we don't know, we might not feel confident enough to try. We might be unsure if we're qualified to talk to God.

The Good News is that everyone can pray. It doesn't matter who we are, what we've done or how many churchy words we do or don't know — we can all talk with God.

ASK THE GROUP:

- Get each person to share a takeaway from the session.
- Ask if anybody would like prayer for this topic or would like to pray. Then lead the group in prayer.
- Ask if anybody wants to discuss anything further about this topic with a leader or support person.
- Remind them when the next session is.

CLOSE THE SESSION

2. How can we learn about prayer and connect with God through it?

HOW TO RUN A SESSION:

- Read the introduction and play the game
- Do the activity and discuss the questions
- Read the Scripture and discuss the questions
- Read the conclusion and close the session

Adapt this session to suit the needs of your group as required.

SESSION OUTLINE

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on the people and things that have helped them learn about prayer and to explore the Good News that we can deepen our experience of prayer by following Jesus' example and teaching.

Game: The *Cup* song game gets young people to experience learning by watching the example of others.

Activity: The *Web of support* activity helps young people to reflect on the people and things that can help us learn how to pray.

Scripture: The Scripture (Matthew 6:9-13) explores the Good News that we can deepen our experience of prayer by following Jesus' example and teaching.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR THE SESSION:

- ☐ Plastic cups, one for each person
- ☐ A way to play/show YouTube (optional)
- ☐ A large sheet of butchers' paper
- ☐ Pens / markers



READ THE INTRODUCTION AND PLAY THE GAME

READ THE INTRODUCTION

Some of us grew up with a parent or leader who showed us how to pray — giving instructions, prompts or acronyms to follow. But not all of us have had that experience. Many of us have relied on the example of others, which can be confusing if all the different examples we see don't match up with each other. We might feel confused about which way is 'right' and might feel self-conscious about praying in front of others.

In desperate moments, we can pray without even thinking about it, but we might question if we are 'doing it right'.

For some of us, experiences of prayer from different religious or cultural backgrounds add another layer to the question of how to pray. We might feel conflicted or pressured as we work out what carries over and what changes.

In a world where AI provides quick answers to just about everything, we might ask AI for help or might turn to podcasts or other online sources, but how do we know if we can trust them?

Even if we feel fairly confident praying, we might still sense there's more and long for prayer to be deeper or more personal.

All of this can lead us to ask: How can we learn about prayer and connect with God through it?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the 'Cup song' game.

PLAY THE 'CUP SONG' GAME

EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ Plastic cups (one for each person)
- ☐ A way to play/show YouTube (optional)
- Perform the cup song OR play a YouTube clip of someone performing the cup song.
- Teach the cup song using a clip of someone playing the cup song, e.g. [Cup song tutorial](#) .

Play the song a few times to allow group members to practise.

How did you go with the game? Did you find it easy or challenging to learn by watching?

Who has shown you an example of prayer that helped you?



DO THE ACTIVITY AND DISCUSS QUESTIONS

LEADERS, WATCH THE PARTICIPANTS FOR:

- what they say to each other
- what they find hard
- what they find easy
- what worked
- what caused conflict
- Brainstorm all the people or things that have helped you learn more about prayer. There are no wrong answers!
- Write them in the areas provided in the spider diagram on the butchers' paper.

HOW TO DO THE 'WEB OF SUPPORT' ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ A large sheet of butchers' paper with a spider diagram drawn on it (example below)
- ☐ Pens / markers

DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY

How did you go with the activity? Were there any surprises or things you hadn't thought much about before?

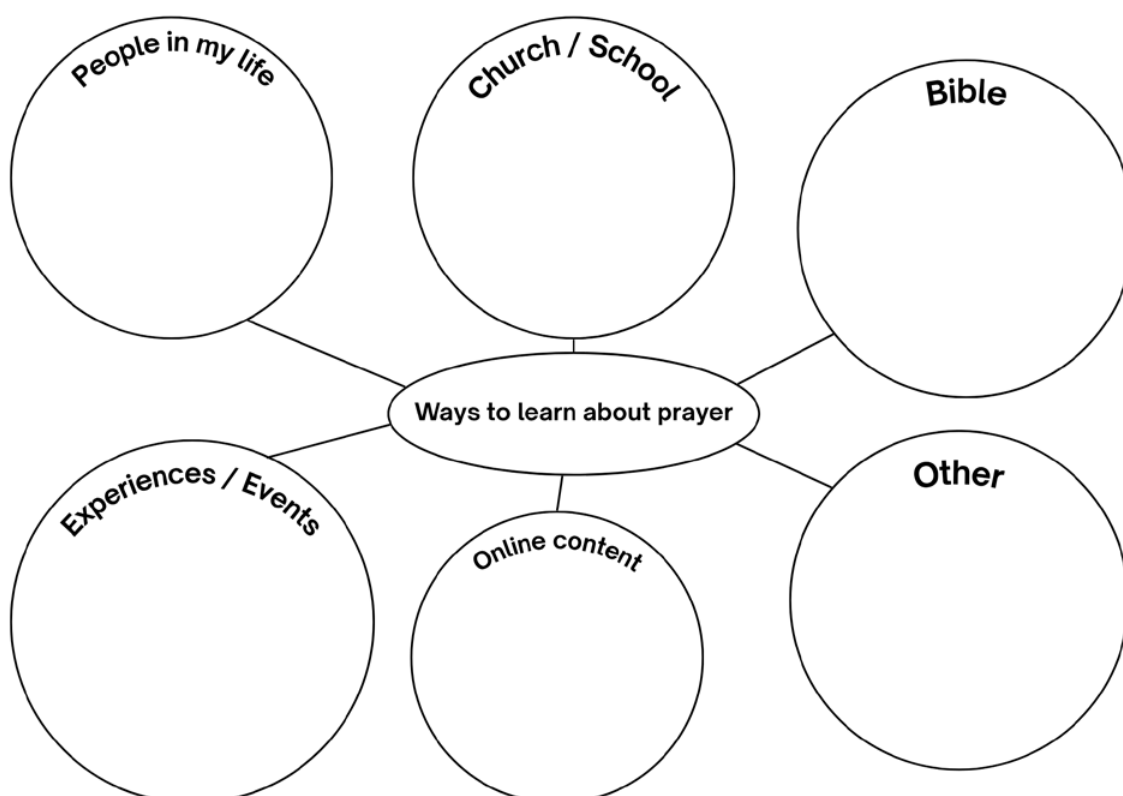
Which area has shaped your idea of prayer the most? Why do you think that might be?

What is one area of prayer that you would like to grow in or understand more?

This week, what is one thing you could do to deepen your understanding of prayer?

In the group material (page 06):

ACTS and TSP models of prayer



READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13

⁹“So this is how you should pray:

‘Our Father in heaven,

we pray that your name will always be kept holy.

¹⁰ We pray that your kingdom will come—

that what you want will be done here on earth, the same as in heaven.

¹¹ Give us the food we need for today.

¹² Forgive our sins,

just as we have forgiven those who did wrong to us.

¹³ Don’t let us be tempted,

but save us from the Evil One.

For the kingdom and the power and the glory belong to you forever and ever. Amen.”

DISCUSS THESE TOPIC QUESTIONS

What do you think about what we’ve just read? How does it relate to the question, ‘How can we learn about prayer and connect with God through it?’

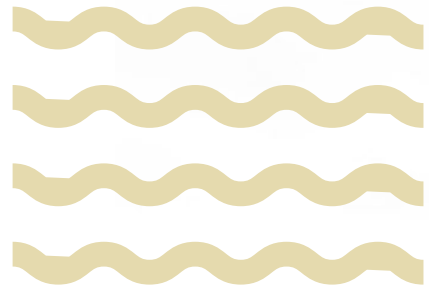
Why do you think Jesus teaches his disciples to call God “Father” when they pray?

What do think verse 12 means? Why would this be an important part of prayer?

What different aspects of prayer do you notice in this passage? (e.g. Asking for what we need – verse 11). Which of these types comes most naturally to you? Why do you think that is?

NOTES ON THE SCRIPTURE FOR FACILITATORS:

- The prayer focuses on God’s priorities (his name, his kingdom, his will) before turning to our needs (bread, forgiveness, deliverance). Jesus’ lesson is not just about what to pray for — it’s also about putting God and his priorities first in our hearts.
- The prayer sits after two warnings: one against praying only to be seen (verses 5–6) and one against praying with empty repetition like people who don’t know God (verses 7–8). Jesus is carving out a different way to pray, one that doesn’t ‘perform’ or is simply a meaningless ritual.
- Calling God *Father* would have been radical for Jesus’ listeners, but it highlights how God was calling them into a new kind of intimacy through prayer.



READ THE CONCLUSION AND CLOSE THE SESSION

READ THE CONCLUSION

Lots of things can shape our ideas about how to pray — our leaders, family, culture, personal experiences and the things we watch and read. But we don't always feel confident we are doing it right. When we are confused or uncertain about how to pray, we might feel self-conscious or nervous about praying in front of others. And when we feel unsure, we might also be reluctant to pray when we're alone.

Even if we feel fairly confident praying, we might still sense there's more — that prayer could be deeper or more personal. We want to really connect with God through prayer.

The Good News is that we can learn about prayer through Jesus' example and teaching. As we spend time connecting with him, our experience of prayer can become deeper and more personal.

ASK THE GROUP:

- Get each person to share a takeaway from the session.
- Ask if anybody would like prayer for this topic or would like to pray. Then lead the group in prayer.
- Ask if anybody wants to discuss anything further about this topic with a leader or support person.
- Remind them when the next session is.

CLOSE THE SESSION



3. *How can we hear God?* *

HOW TO RUN A SESSION:

- Read the introduction and play the game
- Do the activity and discuss the questions
- Read the Scripture and discuss the questions
- Read the conclusion and close the session

Adapt this session to suit the needs of your group as required.

SESSION OUTLINE

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on what it is like to struggle to hear God clearly and to explore the Good News that the Holy Spirit can help us hear God in big and small ways.

Game: The *Telestrations* game gets young people to experience a message not being received clearly.

Activity: The *Listening to God* activity helps young people to experience listening to God.

Scripture: The Scripture (1 Kings 19:9-13) explores the Good News that the Holy Spirit can help us to hear God's voice in big and small ways.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR THE SESSION:

- ☐ A4 Paper
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ [List of Bible verses](#) 
- ☐ Art supplies: colouring pencils, paint, paper



READ THE INTRODUCTION AND PLAY THE GAME

READ THE INTRODUCTION

Many of us have heard people talk about God speaking to them, but we can wonder what that means. Did they hear God's audible voice? Or was it just a thought or feeling they had? Or something else? If we haven't sensed God speak to us, we might feel embarrassed or jealous and might question why we haven't heard him in the way others have.

There might be times when we are faced with a big decision and don't know which way to go, and we may wish God would show us what to do. If we don't know how to hear his voice, we might feel lost and unsupported and may long for a way to hear some direction from God.

Some of us might have had special times when we felt like God was speaking to us but may feel frustrated that it is not an everyday thing. Are there things we can do to help us hear God's voice?

All of this can lead us to ask the question: How can we hear God?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the 'Telestrations' game.

PLAY THE 'TELESTRATIONS' GAME

EQUIPMENT:

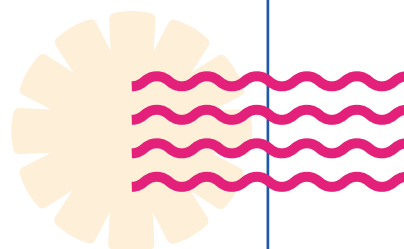
- ☐ Two sheets of A4 paper
- ☐ Pens

- Break into two teams. Each team gets a piece of paper and pen.
- Each team sits in a circle.
- The first player on each team is given the same word/phrase.
- They draw a very small picture of the word in the first section of the sheet of paper, then pass it to the next person who writes down their guess about what has been drawn.
- Continue alternating: Draw → Guess → Draw → Guess.
- Fold the paper so after each guess the previous drawing/guess is covered.
- Continue around the circle until you run out of space on your page.
- The last player says their final guess out loud. Compare it to the original word/phrase. The team that is closest wins.

How did you go with the game?

What was going through your mind when you weren't sure what the message was?

How does it feel when we are not sure what God is saying to us?



DO THE ACTIVITY AND DISCUSS QUESTIONS

LEADERS, WATCH THE PARTICIPANTS FOR:

- what they say to each other
- what they find hard
- what they find easy
- what worked
- what caused conflict

HOW TO DO THE 'LISTENING TO GOD' ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ [List of Bible verses](#) 
- ☐ Art supplies: colouring pencils, paint, paper
- Provide the list of Bible verses on some tables along with art supplies.
- Group members spend five minutes praying about one of the verses then draw, paint or write something they think God is saying to them through that verse.

DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY

*How did you go with the activity?
Did anything surprise you?*

Would anyone like to share what they drew or wrote down?

When do you find it easiest to sense God leading or speaking to you? What is that like for you?

What is one way that you could create space to listen to God this week?

In the group material (page 09):

How can we know what we are hearing is from God?



READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

GOD SPEAKS WITH A QUIET, GENTLE VOICE

1 Kings 19:9-13

⁹ There Elijah went into a cave and spent the night. Then the Lord said to him, “Elijah, why are you here?” ¹⁰ Elijah answered, “Lord God All-Powerful, I have always served you the best I can, but the Israelites have broken their agreement with you. They destroyed your altars and killed your prophets. I am the only prophet left alive, and now they are trying to kill me!”

¹¹ Then the Lord said to Elijah, “Go, stand in front of me on the mountain. I, the Lord, will pass by you.” Then a very strong wind blew. The wind caused the mountains to break apart. It broke large rocks in front of the Lord. But that wind was not the Lord. After that wind, there was an earthquake. But that earthquake was not the Lord. ¹² After the earthquake, there was a fire. But that fire was not the Lord. After the fire, there was a quiet, gentle voice.

¹³ When Elijah heard the voice, he used his coat to cover his face and went to the entrance to the cave and stood there. Then a voice said to him, “Elijah, why are you here?”

DISCUSS THESE TOPIC QUESTIONS

What do you think about what we’ve just read? How do you think it might relate to the question, ‘How can we hear God?’

Are you surprised that Elijah heard God in the quiet and stillness? Why/why not?

In what ways do you think God speaks to people today?

Have you ever felt like God was speaking to you or showing you something? What happened?

**NOTES ON THE SCRIPTURE
FOR FACILITATORS:**

- Sometimes people hear from God or see him working in dramatic ways. God had performed amazing miracles through the prophet Elijah,¹ so Elijah might have expected God to show up in a dramatic way this time, too. However, in this story, God comes to Elijah with a quiet, gentle voice.
- The times when God speaks in quiet, everyday ways can be powerful and significant. God gave Elijah a new mission, and Elijah was refreshed and strengthened to continue in his ministry.

**READ THE CONCLUSION
AND CLOSE THE SESSION****READ THE CONCLUSION**

People talk about God speaking to them, but we can wonder what that looks like. Did they hear God's audible voice or was it a thought or something else? If we haven't sensed God speaking to us, we might question why we haven't heard him in the way others have.

We may have been faced with a big decision and wish God would show us what to do. Or some of us might have felt like God was speaking to us but wish we could hear God's voice and direction more often.

The Good News is that we can all hear God in big and small ways. It may not be the same every time or the same way for everyone, but everyone who follows Jesus can hear from God and be guided by him.

ASK THE GROUP:

- Get each person to share a takeaway from the session.
- Ask if anybody would like prayer for this topic or would like to pray. Then lead the group in prayer.
- Ask if anybody wants to discuss anything further about this topic with a leader or support person.
- Remind them when the next session is.

CLOSE THE SESSION

¹ e.g. 1 Kings 18

LIFE LABS

4. *Who can we talk to when we feel upset or angry?*

HOW TO RUN A SESSION:

- Read the introduction and play the game
- Do the activity and discuss the questions
- Read the Scripture and discuss the questions
- Read the conclusion and close the session

Adapt this session to suit the needs of your group as required.

SESSION OUTLINE

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on how it feels when we have big emotions and don't know how to process them, and to explore the Good News that God cares about us and wants us to bring everything to him, no matter what we are feeling.

Game: *The Keepy uppy* game gets young people to experience something building up and becoming more difficult to handle.

Activity: The *Write a psalm* activity helps young people practise expressing their feelings to God in prayer.

Scripture: The Scripture (Psalm 142) explores the Good News that God cares about us and wants us to bring everything to him, no matter what we are feeling.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR THE SESSION:

- ☐ 10 balloons
- ☐ A printed copy of the [psalm handout](#)  for each group member
- ☐ Pens and colouring pencils
- ☐ Reflective music (optional)

READ THE INTRODUCTION AND PLAY THE GAME

READ THE INTRODUCTION

Sometimes we go through tough things that create big, painful feelings like anger, sadness, hurt, fear or jealousy.

These feelings might make it difficult for us to focus, and they can affect our confidence. We might lash out and do things we'll regret. If we hold these emotions for too long, they can start to build up or feel like they are eating away at us.

When we find someone we trust, who we can share our emotions with, it can help a lot. We can feel heard, loved and supported, and it may be clearer to us how to manage our emotions.

But sometimes we are not sure we trust anyone that much. We may hesitate to share our feelings with people. We may worry that they might judge us, treat us differently or tell others what we shared. If we've had a bad experience after opening up to someone, we can feel even more cautious.

Are there people who will support us without judgment?

Who can we talk to when we feel upset or angry?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the 'Keepy uppy' game.

PLAY THE 'KEEPY UPPY' GAME

EQUIPMENT:

□ 10 balloons, blown up.

- Players play one at a time.
- On their turn, a player starts with one balloon and has to keep it off the ground.
- One balloon is added every 10 seconds.
- If a balloon touches the ground, that player's turn is over.
- The player who keeps the most balloons off the ground at once wins.

How did you go with the game? What was it like for you as the balloons were building up and becoming more difficult to handle?

How does it feel when our emotions build up within us?



DO THE ACTIVITY AND DISCUSS QUESTIONS

LEADERS, WATCH THE PARTICIPANTS FOR:

- what they say to each other
- what they find hard
- what they find easy
- what worked
- what caused conflict

HOW TO DO THE ‘WRITE YOUR OWN PSALM’ ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ A printed copy of the [psalm handout](#)  for each group member
- ☐ Pens and colouring pencils
- ☐ Reflective music (optional)

- Give everyone a piece of paper and let them know they are each going to write or draw their own psalm.
- Let the group know their psalms will be confidential. No one will see them, unless they choose to share them at the end.
- Allow five minutes for everyone to write their psalm, using the prompts provided.
- You might like to play reflective music while they do this.

Create space for group members to share their psalms if they want to but ensure there is no sense of expectation or pressure.

DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY

How did you go with the activity? What was it like to tell God how you really feel?

Do you find it natural to talk to God in this way? Why do you think that is?

Why do you think is it helpful to begin our prayers by remembering who God is?

What difference do you think it would make if everyone knew they could bring their feelings to God?

In the group material (page 12):

Framework for writing your own psalm.



READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

A PRAYER FOR HELP

Psalm 142 (CEV)

¹ I pray to you, Lord.

I beg for mercy.

² I tell you all my worries
and my troubles,

³ and whenever I feel low,
you are there to guide me.

A trap has been hidden
along my pathway.

⁴ Even if you look,
you won't see anyone
who cares enough
to walk beside me.

There is no place to hide,
and no one who really cares.

⁵ I pray to you, Lord!

You are my place of safety,
and you are my choice
in the land of the living.

Please answer my prayer.
I am completely helpless.

⁶ Help! They are chasing me,
and they are too strong.

⁷ Rescue me from this prison,
so I can praise your name.
And when your people notice
your wonderful kindness to me,
they will rush to my side.

NOTES ON THE SCRIPTURE FOR FACILITATORS:

- Psalm 142 is a 'Maskil' — which is a psalm of instruction or reflection. The context is that David is fleeing from Saul (1 Samuel 22 or 24). Knowing this helps make sense of the raw desperation in the language David uses.
- This psalm fits into the 'Lament Psalms' category in Scripture. To 'lament' is to bring your pain, confusion and desperation to God. Around a third of the psalms fit into this category. These types of prayers do not display doubt but honesty with God.
- In verse 4 David says no one cares and there is nowhere to hide. Yet by verse 5 he calls God his "place of safety". Nothing in his circumstances has changed but prayer has shifted David's attentions to God rather than his circumstances.
- This psalm is useful to correct the idea that prayer needs to be polished or confident. David begs, complains and admits defeat through prayer, and God still faithfully responds.

DISCUSS THESE TOPIC QUESTIONS

What do you think about what we've just read? How do you think it relates to the question, 'Who can we talk to when we feel upset or angry?'

What do you think this psalm tells us about how God wants us to talk to him?

David felt trapped and still talked to God. What stops us from praying when things get tough?

What would it look like for you to pray like David does in this psalm — no filter, just honest?



READ THE CONCLUSION AND CLOSE THE SESSION

READ THE CONCLUSION

When we go through tough times that create big, painful feelings we might find it difficult to focus. We can lack confidence or lash out and do something we'll regret. When we hold our emotions in for too long, they can start to build up or feel like they are eating away at us.

Finding someone we can talk to about our feelings can help a lot but sometimes we feel embarrassed or concerned about how people will react. We might wonder who we can talk to when we feel upset or angry.

The Good News is that God cares about us and wants us to bring everything to him, no matter what it is. We can be open and honest with God about our emotions, and he will love, help and support us.

ASK THE GROUP:

- Get each person to share a takeaway from the session.
- Ask if anybody would like prayer for this topic or would like to pray. Then lead the group in prayer.
- Ask if anybody wants to discuss anything further about this topic with a leader or support person.
- Remind them when the next session is.

CLOSE THE SESSION



5. How can I pray in a way that feels natural to me?

HOW TO RUN A SESSION:

- Read the introduction and play the game
- Do the activity and discuss the questions
- Read the Scripture and discuss the questions
- Read the conclusion and close the session

Adapt this session to suit the needs of your group as required.

SESSION OUTLINE

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on some of the assumptions we have made about how to pray, and to explore the Good News that God has given us many different ways to pray.

Game: The *Stand, kneel, go!* game gets young people to experience following some of the ‘rules’ we have heard about prayer.

Activity: The *Try it out* activity helps young people to experience different ways of praying.

Scripture: The Scriptures (Mark 1:35, Acts 1:14a, Ephesians 5:19b, Psalm 23:2-3a and Ephesians 6:18) explore the Good News that God has given us many different ways to pray.

EQUIPMENT:

The Prayer Station cards, printed and cut out

Word station:

- ☐ [Printed word cards](#)
- ☐ Pretty journal paper
- ☐ Highlighters and pens
- ☐ Printed Scripture verses

Art station:

- ☐ Assorted art supplies for drawing/painting
- ☐ Pinboard with a cross in the middle
- ☐ String
- ☐ Sticky notes

Body station:

- ☐ Stones
- ☐ Bucket
- ☐ Pieces of paper with footprints on them, spaced out in a loop around the room

Music:

- ☐ Headphones
- ☐ Worship song ready to play
- ☐ One copy of the lyrics of the worship song, printed out

Nature:

- ☐ Assorted flowers (dried and fresh) and leaves
- ☐ Water fountain (optional)

Technology:

- ☐ Headphones
- ☐ Device with [Lectio 365](#) app prayer sequence queued up

READ THE INTRODUCTION AND PLAY THE GAME

READ THE INTRODUCTION

In church or at Youth there are certain types of prayer that happen more often than others, for example: praying in a circle, praying out loud or praying silently. If we struggle to connect with those kinds of prayer, we may feel bored, left out or jealous of people who find it easy to connect in these ways. We might also feel embarrassed and wonder if we are doing something wrong.

We may have heard about or tried out some different ways of praying — for example: prayer walking or hands-on prayer stations — and we might have felt more of a connection with those. Or we might have had times when we felt connected to God in unexpected ways — for example: while painting, surfing or playing an instrument. In these times we may feel like something clicks, but we might question whether this really counts as prayer or we might be unsure about how we can make this type of prayer a regular part of our lives.

All of this can lead us to wonder: How can I pray in a way that feels natural to me?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the 'Stand, kneel, go!' game.

PLAY THE 'STAND, KNEEL, GO!' GAME

This game is based on Captain's Calling / Ship to Shore.

- Explain the commands (below) to the group.
- Have someone call out the commands.
- Each time round, the last person to complete the command is out.
- The last person remaining (not out) is the winner.

Commands:

- *Go to church*
(Run to the left side of the room)
- *Pray at home*
(Run to the right side of the room)
- *Pray at the park*
(run to the back of the room)
- *Kneel down*
(Kneel down with hands together)
- *Whisper*
(Put finger to lip in a "shhh" position)
- *Prayer circle!*
(Link arms in a circle)
- *And they all said!*
(Shout "Amen!")

How did you go with the game? What was it like to act out those ways of praying?

What is it like to pray in a way that doesn't feel natural to us?

DO THE ACTIVITY AND DISCUSS QUESTIONS

LEADERS, WATCH THE PARTICIPANTS FOR:

- what they say to each other
- what they find hard
- what they find easy
- what worked
- what caused conflict

HOW TO DO THE ‘TRY IT OUT’ ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT:

The Prayer Stations cards, printed and cut out

Word station:

- ☐ [Printed word cards](#)
- ☐ Pretty journal paper
- ☐ Highlighters and pens
- ☐ Printed Scripture verses

Art station:

- ☐ Assorted art supplies for drawing/painting
- ☐ Pinboard with a cross in the middle
- ☐ String
- ☐ Sticky notes

Body station:

- ☐ Stones
- ☐ Bucket
- ☐ Pieces of paper with footprints on them, spaced out in a loop around the room

Music:

- ☐ Headphones
- ☐ Worship song ready to play
- ☐ One copy of the lyrics of the worship song, printed out

Nature:

- ☐ Assorted flowers (dried and fresh) and leaves
- ☐ Water fountain (optional)

Technology:

- ☐ Headphones
- ☐ Device with [Lectio 365](#) app prayer sequence queued up

Copy on cards:

WORDS

Write a prayer for someone

OR

Take two of the word cards and write a prayer, using these words as inspiration

OR

Take one of the word cards and create a prayer spider diagram, with different branches of prayer, related to that word

ART

Create an artwork that expresses your love for God

OR

Create an artwork that expresses a prayer request

OR

Doodle a prayer on a sticky note and add it to the pinboard with some string, linking it to the cross in the middle

BODY

Hold a stone and tell God something that has been weighing you down. Pray a prayer giving it to God and drop the stone into the bucket

OR

Pray a head/heart/feet prayer:

- Hands on head — Pray for thoughts
- Hands on heart — Pray for feelings
- Hands on feet — Pray for actions

OR

Slowly follow the footprints around the room while praying that Jesus would help you to follow him more closely

OR

Breathe in and out:

- Breathe in: “God, I receive your peace”
- Breathe out: “God, I give you my worries”

MUSIC

- Put headphones on and listen to a worship song
- (Optional) read the lyrics as you listen
- What do you sense God saying to you?

NATURE

Smell and touch the different natural elements and praise God for his creation

TECHNOLOGY

Listen to today’s prayer on the Lectio 365 app

DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY

How did you go with the activity?

What stood out to you about the different ways of praying?

Which of the prayer activities felt most natural to you? Did this surprise you? Why/why not?

Which of the prayer activities felt least natural to you? What was it that didn’t feel natural?

What’s one style of prayer you would like to try more of?

In the group material (page 15):

Different ways to connect with God



READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

DIFFERENT WAYS TO CONNECT WITH GOD

Praying alone

The next morning Jesus woke up very early. He left the house while it was still dark and went to a place where he could be alone and pray.

— Mark 1:35

Praying with others

They all joined together constantly in prayer.

— Acts 1:14a (NIV)

Praying with music

Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord.

— Ephesians 5:19b

Praying in nature

He gives me green pastures to lie in.
He leads me by calm pools of water.
He restores my strength.

— Psalm 23:2-3a

Praying at all times

Pray in the Spirit at all times. Pray with all kinds of prayers, and ask for everything you need. To do this you must always be ready. Never give up. Always pray for all of God's people.

— Ephesians 6:18

DISCUSS THESE TOPIC QUESTIONS

What do you think about what we've just read? How do you think these Scriptures relate to the question, 'How can I pray in a way that feels natural to me?'

Which of these verses surprises you or encourages you today? In what way?

Some Bible verses support praying alone and some talk about praying with others. What do you think this shows?

Do you think more people would pray if they knew they could do it in a way that feels natural to them?

NOTES ON THE SCRIPTURE FOR FACILITATORS:

- In Mark 1:35, Jesus goes to a quiet place to pray after a busy time, showing that making space to be alone with God was important to him.
- In Acts 1:14, the people pray together constantly as they wait for the Holy Spirit to come. Praying together was a key trait of the early Christian church.
- Ephesians 6:18 comes at the end of Paul's teaching about the armour of God. His words show that prayer is an important part of staying strong in faith, encouraging believers to keep praying for each other, especially in difficult times.

READ THE CONCLUSION AND CLOSE THE SESSION

READ THE CONCLUSION

In church or at Youth there are certain types of prayer that usually happen and if we struggle to connect with those, we may feel bored, left out or jealous of people who find it easy to connect in those ways. We might also be embarrassed and wonder if we are doing something wrong.

We may have heard about or stumbled across ways of praying that are more unusual or creative. If these feel more natural to us we can wonder if they really count as prayer, or we could be unsure how they could become a regular part of our lives.

The Good News is that God has created many different ways for us to pray and we don't all need to pray in the same way. We can connect with God in ways that feel natural to us.

ASK THE GROUP:

- Get each person to share a takeaway from the session.
- Ask if anybody would like prayer for this topic or would like to pray. Then lead the group in prayer.
- Ask if anybody wants to discuss anything further about this topic with a leader or support person.
- Remind them when the next session is.

CLOSE THE SESSION

6. *How can we pray about the problems we see in the world?*

HOW TO RUN A SESSION:

- Read the introduction and play the game
- Do the activity and discuss the questions
- Read the Scripture and discuss the questions
- Read the conclusion and close the session

Adapt this session to suit the needs of your group as required.

SESSION OUTLINE

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on the things that discourage us from praying about the world's problems, and to explore the Good News that when we can't find the words to pray, the Holy Spirit speaks to God on our behalf.

Game: The *Steal the toilet paper* game gets young people to experience trying to accomplish something that feels impossible.

Activity: The *Pick a problem* activity helps young people to practise praying for a problem with helpful prompts.

Scripture: The Scripture (Romans 8:26-27) explores the Good News that when we can't find the words to pray, the Holy Spirit speaks to God on our behalf.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR THE SESSION:

- ☐ 5 x toilet paper rolls
- ☐ Painters'/masking tape
- ☐ Sticky notes and pens



READ THE INTRODUCTION AND PLAY THE GAME

READ THE INTRODUCTION

We don't have to look far to see that there are problems with our world — nations fighting, mental health crises surging, some people are rich while others struggle for food and shelter.

Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by anger or sadness at the ways people are suffering. But how do we turn that into a prayer? We might be unsure of the words we should say and what we should actually ask God for.

If we are not well informed about the problems, we might doubt whether we are even qualified to pray about them. Or sometimes the huge number of problems can send us into a spin. Where do we begin? Even if we've tried before, we can feel a bit lost and deflated, and we might avoid this type of prayer altogether.

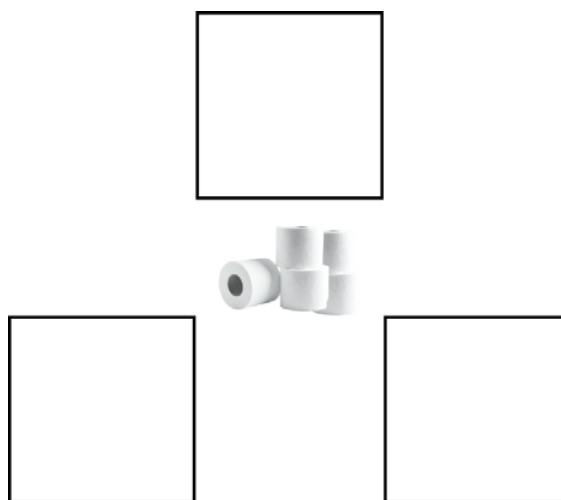
How can we pray about the problems we see in the world?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the 'Steal the toilet paper' game.

PLAY THE 'STEAL THE TOILET PAPER' GAME

EQUIPMENT:

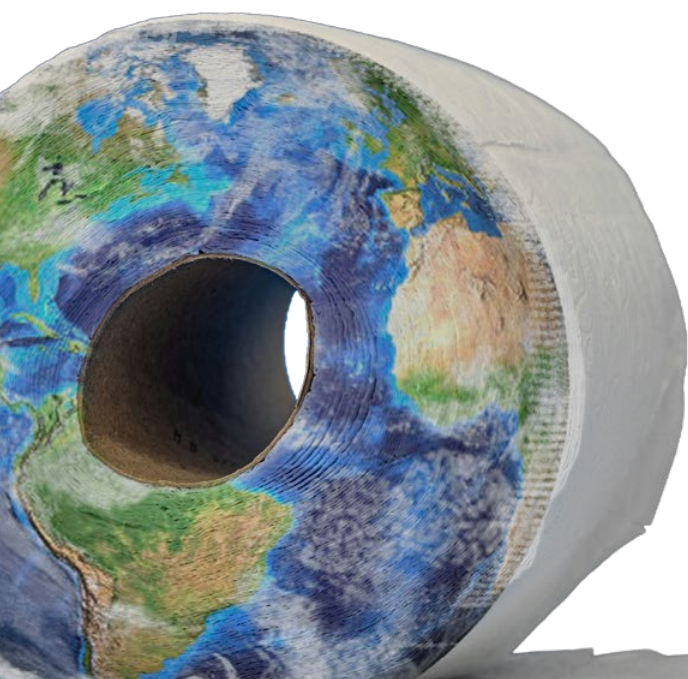
- ☐ 5 x toilet rolls
- ☐ 3 x squares marked out in painters' / masking tape — two metres apart, in a triangle formation (see below)



- Ask three volunteers to start in the middle of the triangle with the toilet paper at their feet.
- The aim is to get three rolls of toilet paper in your own square in one minute.
- You can only steal **one** roll of toilet paper from someone's square at a time.
- The first person to get three rolls in their square, wins.

***How did you go with the game?
What was it like to put energy into
something that wasn't working?***

***Do you ever feel discouraged when praying
about the problems you see in the world?
Why/why not?***



DO THE ACTIVITY AND DISCUSS QUESTIONS

LEADERS, WATCH THE PARTICIPANTS FOR:

- what they say to each other
- what they find hard
- what they find easy
- what worked
- what caused conflict

HOW TO DO THE ‘PICK A PROBLEM’ ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ Sticky notes
- ☐ Pens

- As a group, brainstorm some problems in the world that concern you.
- Write them on a sticky note and put them somewhere you can all see them.
- Each person chooses a sticky note to pray for, using the following prompts.
 - Thank God for who he is (e.g. for his power and love)
 - Tell God what the problem is and why you think it's a problem
 - Tell God your feelings and concerns about the problem
 - Tell God what help or change you want him to bring
- Prayers can be shared out loud or silently — whatever works best for your group.
- Let everyone know they can pray with their eyes open, so that they can see the prompts as they pray.
- Let them know their prayers can be short and they don't need to use any special words.

DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY

How did you go with the activity?

What was it like to use the prayer prompts?

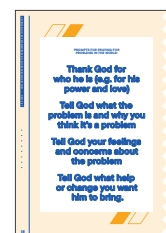
How does it feel when we pour out our concerns to God? What do you think is the point of expressing these emotions?

What would you say to someone who felt like there was no point in praying about big problems in the world?

How could you make praying for the world part of your regular routine?

In the group material (page 18):

Prompts for praying for problems in the world



READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKS TO GOD FOR US

Romans 8:26-27

Also, the Spirit helps us. We are very weak, but the Spirit helps us with our weakness. We don't know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit himself speaks to God for us. He begs God for us, speaking to him with feelings too deep for words.²⁷ God already knows our deepest thoughts. And he understands what the Spirit is saying, because the Spirit speaks for his people in the way that agrees with what God wants.

DISCUSS THESE TOPIC QUESTIONS

What do you think about what we've just read? How do you think it might relate to the question 'How can we pray about the problems we see in the world?'

When you have prayed about problems in the world, have you ever struggled to find the right words? How does it feel to know that the Holy Spirit helps us express our prayers to God — even when we don't know what to say?

Do you usually find it easier to talk to God out loud or in your head? After reading this Scripture, do you think it matters? Why/why not?

Verse 27 talks about how the Spirit speaks for people in a way that matches up with what God wants. What do you think this means?

NOTES ON THE SCRIPTURE FOR FACILITATORS:

- There are things we can't put into words, that we don't know how to pray about, and so the Holy Spirit helps us — he intercedes for us: he stands in for us and helps us know in our minds and hearts what and how to pray. He tells God what we need and helps us to get past discouragement and fear.²
- Even if we say nothing, God knows our thoughts — he still hears and understands us when we don't have the words to say out loud.
- The Holy Spirit knows our hearts — he knows when we're for real. And when we are sincere, he helps us pray what God wants us to pray (it's not always what we think we need), according to his will and plan.
- The Holy Spirit helps us in the same way someone would help another person lift up a heavy box or a piece of heavy furniture. He is with us in it: not us trying on our own, and not God doing it without us.³

2 [Rom 8:26-27 NIV - In the same way, the Spirit helps us in - Bible Gateway](#) - Matthew Henry commentary, verses 26-28.

3 [Rom 8:26-27 NIV - In the same way, the Spirit helps us in - Bible Gateway](#) - Matthew Henry commentary, verses 26-28.

READ THE CONCLUSION AND CLOSE THE SESSION

READ THE CONCLUSION

Sometimes we can feel overwhelmed by the problems in the world — the fighting, mental health crises, suffering and poverty, and the unfairness of it all.

We can feel angry, sad or anxious about the ways people are suffering — but how do we turn that into a prayer? We might be unsure of the words we should say or even what to ask for. We can feel unqualified to pray, or — even if we've tried before — we can feel a bit lost and give up before we begin.

The Good News is that we don't need to know exactly what to pray. Even when we don't know the words to say, the Holy Spirit can step in and speak to God on our behalf. He knows our minds and hearts and helps us to pour out our concerns to God.

ASK THE GROUP:

- Get each person to share a takeaway from the session.
- Ask if anybody would like prayer for this topic or would like to pray. Then lead the group in prayer.
- Ask if anybody wants to discuss anything further about this topic with a leader or support person.
- Remind them when the next session is.

CLOSE THE SESSION



7. *Who can pray for us when we need help?*

HOW TO RUN A SESSION:

- Read the introduction and play the game
- Do the activity and discuss the questions
- Read the Scripture and discuss the questions
- Read the conclusion and close the session

Adapt this session to suit the needs of your group as required.

SESSION OUTLINE

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on what it is like when other people pray for us, and to explore the Good News that God can strengthen and encourage us through the prayers of other Christians.

Game: The *Stuck in the mud* game gets young people to experience being helped by others.

Activity: The *Prayer request swap* activity helps young people to reflect on what it is like to help and be helped by praying for each other.

Scripture: The Scriptures (1 Thessalonians 5:11 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11) explore the Good News that God can strengthen and encourage us through the prayers of other Christians.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR THE SESSION:

- ☐ Reflective music and speaker
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Art supplies — pens, markers, paint, etc.



READ THE INTRODUCTION AND PLAY THE GAME

READ THE INTRODUCTION

Sometimes, after someone prays for us, we feel like a weight has been lifted or a chain has been broken. We might feel stronger, or like we can see our situation more clearly.

But what if we want someone to pray for us, but we don't know how to ask? We might be unsure if our need is big enough to ask for prayer. Or we might simply feel shy or nervous to ask.

Some of us might have experienced people praying for us in a way that made us uncomfortable or embarrassed. If that has happened, we can be guarded and cautious about letting someone pray for us in person again.

At church, we are told that it's important to pray for each other, but we might wonder: who can pray for us in a way that makes us feel supported rather than uncomfortable?

Who can pray for us when we need help?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the 'Stuck in the mud' game.

PLAY THE 'STUCK IN THE MUD' GAME

- To set up, mark out a space large enough for the group to run around in.
- Choose a participant to be 'it'. Depending on the size of the group, you might need more than one player to be 'it'.
- When the 'it' participant tags another player, that player becomes stuck and stands with their hand in the air.
- To unfreeze a participant, any other player must high-five their raised hand.
- Allow approximately 1-2 minutes per round. Whoever is not stuck at the end, wins.
- If everyone seems to be enjoying themselves, play several rounds.

How did you go with the game? How did it feel when someone helped you get unstuck?

How does it feel when people pray for us?

DO THE ACTIVITY AND DISCUSS QUESTIONS

LEADERS, WATCH THE PARTICIPANTS FOR:

- what they say to each other
- what they find hard
- what they find easy
- what worked
- what caused conflict

HOW TO DO THE 'PRAYER REQUEST SWAP' ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ Reflective music and speaker
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Art supplies — pens, markers, paint, etc.

- Each person writes down a prayer request they are happy for the group to know about at the top of a page.
- Everyone takes someone else's paper and has five minutes to draw, paint or write their prayer for that person.
- Come together as a group and explain/read the prayers you have drawn/painted/written.
- You might need to allow more time than usual for this activity.

DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY

How did you go with the activity? What was it like to be prayed for?

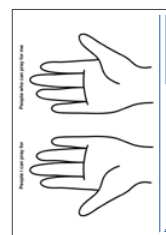
Have you ever been helped a lot by someone praying for you? What happened?

When do you find it easy/difficult to ask others to pray for you?

What difference could it make if we all prayed for each other regularly?

**In the group material
(page 21):**

People I can pray for
and people who can
pray for me.



READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

BUILDING EACH OTHER UP THROUGH PRAYER

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ERV)

So encourage each other and help each other grow stronger in faith, just as you are already doing.

2 Thessalonians 1:11b (CEV)

We pray for God's power to help you do all the good things you hope to do and your faith makes you want to do.

DISCUSS THESE TOPIC QUESTIONS

What do you think about what we've just read? How do you think it might relate to the question 'Who can pray for us when we need help?'

Based on these verses, do you think we should only ask for prayer when we are facing something very serious?

Why/why not?

Who could help you "grow stronger in faith"?⁴ Why do you think God wants to strengthen and encourage us all?

2 Thessalonians 1:11 says, "We pray for God's power to help you do all the good things you hope to do..." What kinds of things would you like God to help you do? What would that mean for you?

**NOTES ON THE SCRIPTURE
FOR FACILITATORS:**

- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 encourages us to help each other: to pray for each other, build each other up, and be active in our care for each other. When we prioritise caring for others, God will take care of us.
- Praying and caring for others is not something that only 'gifted' people or leaders can do — God wants us to all be a part of caring for each other.
- In 2 Thessalonians 1:11 Paul assures people that he (and other leaders) would continue to pray for them and were believing for these people to grow in what God had called them to do. God wants us to continue to pray, support each other and grow.⁵

**READ THE CONCLUSION
AND CLOSE THE SESSION****READ THE CONCLUSION**

Sometimes, after someone prays for us, we feel like a weight has been lifted or a chain has been broken. We may feel stronger, or like we can see our situation more clearly.

But what if we want someone to pray for us, but we don't know how to ask? We might be unsure if our need is big enough for us to ask for prayer. Or we might feel shy or nervous to ask.

If we have experienced people praying for us in a way that made us uncomfortable or embarrassed, we might be concerned it will happen again. We might want to be prayed for, but only in a way that makes us feel supported rather than uncomfortable.

The Good News is that God can strengthen and encourage us through the prayers of other Christians. When we are facing something difficult, we can find help and support by asking other Christians to pray for us.

ASK THE GROUP:

- Get each person to share a takeaway from the session.
- Ask if anybody would like prayer for this topic or would like to pray. Then lead the group in prayer.
- Ask if anybody wants to discuss anything further about this topic with a leader or support person.
- Remind them when the next session is.

CLOSE THE SESSION

5 [1 Thessalonians Chapter 5 - Enduring Word](#) ;
[2 Thessalonians Chapter 1 - Enduring Word](#)

Adapt this session to suit the needs of your group as required.

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on what it feels like when we doubt whether God hears our prayers, and to reflect on the Good News that God always hears our prayers.

Game: The *Message mash-up* game gets young people to experience feeling unheard.

Activity: The *Remember when* activity helps young people to reflect on prayers God has answered.

Scripture: The Scripture (Matthew 6:25-33) explores the Good News that God cares about us deeply and wants to hear our prayers.

- ☐ 2 x boxes — one labelled 'Questions', the other 'Answers'
- ☐ Paper and pens
- ☐ A print-out of the ['Message mash-up' PDF](#), cut into four, scrunched up and placed in the answer box
- ☐ Optional: Whiteboard or butchers' paper

READ THE INTRODUCTION AND PLAY THE GAME

READ THE INTRODUCTION

Some of us might find it easy to believe God hears our prayers, but it's natural to struggle with this sometimes.

Sometimes prayer can feel like speaking into a void — there's no reply, no nodding or eye contact, just quiet. We might be frustrated there isn't more obvious evidence of God listening, or we might doubt whether he hears us.

Some of us have prayed and believe God answers, and when we look back, we find out he was listening — even though we didn't see it at the time.

Others have had people in our lives who have not listened to us, or they've treated us like our voice didn't matter. This can make us wonder whether God would really listen to us, or if we can trust him.

And what if the things we pray for don't happen? Or a different answer comes than the one we were expecting? We might wonder if we're being ignored, or if we're doing something wrong. Waiting can be uncomfortable, especially when we're used to quick answers everywhere else in life.

All of this can cause us to wonder: How can we trust that God hears our prayers?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the 'Message mash-up' game.

PLAY THE 'MESSAGE MASH-UP' GAME

EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ Two deep boxes (or containers/hats) to draw pieces of paper from — one will be the Question box and one will be the Answer Box
- ☐ Two small, blank pieces of paper per person
- ☐ A print-out of the ['Message mash up' PDF](#) , cut into four, scrunched up and placed in the answer box.

- The goal of the game is to get two actual answers to your questions.
- Before you start playing, give each group member two small blank pieces of paper. Each person writes down two questions. They can be silly or serious — but not too personal.
- Place the questions in the Question Box.
- In the Answer Box, place the four pieces of paper from the printout.
- Players takes turns. When it is a player's turn, they choose who will answer their question.
- The players draws a question from the Question Box. The person they have chosen then draws from the answer box and responds accordingly.
 - If the paper they pick up says to 'Ignore', they don't say anything
 - If the paper says to 'Mishear', they answer something completely unrelated
 - If the paper says, 'Delay' they wait 5 seconds before answering
 - If the paper says, 'Answer straight away', they answer without delay
 - If the player gets an answer that relates to the question (immediately, or after 5 seconds), they get a point
- The first player to get two points (i.e. two answers that make sense), wins.

How did you go with the game?

What was it like when you didn't get a response to your question?

How does it feel when God doesn't seem to be answering our prayers?

DO THE ACTIVITY AND DISCUSS QUESTIONS

LEADERS, WATCH THE PARTICIPANTS FOR:

- what they say to each other
- what they find hard
- what they find easy
- what worked
- what caused conflict

HOW TO DO THE ‘REMEMBER WHEN...’ ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ Optional (whiteboard or a large sheet of butchers’ paper)
- Ask the group to sit in a circle.
- Brainstorm prayers that have been answered — big and small — e.g. God helped me make up with a friend OR God made a way for my family to be in Australia.
- Optional: write the answered prayers on the whiteboard or some butchers’ paper.
- Leader: Prepare some examples from your own life and from people in your church. You might like to ask your church leaders for some ideas.

DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY

How did you go with the activity? What was it like to hear all these examples?

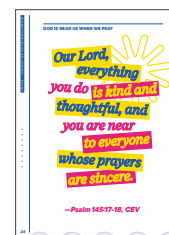
Have you ever felt disappointed or confused when a prayer wasn’t answered in the way you had hoped? How did that land for you?

Has God ever answered your prayer in a way that was different to what you expected? What was that like for you?

What helps you to keep trusting, even if you don’t always see answers?

In the group material (page 24):

Psalm 145:17-18



READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

GOD CARES ABOUT YOU

Matthew 6:25-33

²⁵ “So I tell you, don’t worry about the things you need to live—what you will eat, drink, or wear. Life is more important than food, and the body is more important than what you put on it. ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don’t plant, harvest, or save food in barns, but your heavenly Father feeds them. Don’t you know you are worth much more than they are?

²⁷ You cannot add any time to your life by worrying about it. ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothes? Look at the wildflowers in the field. See how they grow. They don’t work or make clothes for themselves. ²⁹ But I tell you that even Solomon, the great and rich king, was not dressed as beautifully as one of these flowers. ³⁰ If God makes what grows in the field so beautiful, what do you think he will do for you? It’s just grass—one day it’s alive, and the next day someone throws it into a fire. But God cares enough to make it beautiful. Surely he will do much more for you. Your faith is so small!

³¹ Don’t worry and say, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’

³² That’s what those people who don’t know God are always thinking about. Don’t worry, because your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. ³³ What you should want most is God’s kingdom and doing what he wants you to do. Then he will give you all these other things you need.”

DISCUSS THESE TOPIC QUESTIONS

What do you think about what we’ve just read? How do you think it might relate to the question ‘How can we trust that God hears our prayers?’

What does it mean to you that God feeds birds and ‘dresses’ flowers? How would knowing this help you not to worry about the things you need?

If God cares about birds and flowers and other parts of the world he created, what makes us think he wouldn’t care about us and listen to us?

What do you think happens to us when we pray about the things that we need, and/or the things that worry us? How do you think praying helps us to trust God more?

NOTES ON THE SCRIPTURE FOR FACILITATORS:

- Many people underestimate how much God loves and values them. This can lead them to thinking he wouldn’t listen to them if they prayed.
- Worrying adds nothing to our lives but robs us of our faith and trust in Jesus.
- When we pray, our faith in God increases, and we learn to trust that he is listening and he knows what’s best for us.
- Jesus is showing us here how to prioritise what we can do and let God do what he can do. His part is looking after us — which he does — and our part is looking to him and focusing more on the things of eternal value, rather than all our focus being on what to wear.



READ THE CONCLUSION AND CLOSE THE SESSION

READ THE CONCLUSION

Some of us might find it easy to believe that God hears our prayers, but it’s natural to struggle with this sometimes. We might have prayed and believed God would answer, but it’s only when we look back that we find out he was listening. We might not see it at the time.

Sometimes prayer can feel like speaking into a void — we might be frustrated there isn’t more obvious evidence of God listening, or we might doubt whether he is listening at all. If we pray for things and they don’t happen the way we expect, we might wonder if we’re doing something wrong.

If we’ve had people in our lives who haven’t listened to us, we can wonder if God would really listen, or if we can trust him.

The Good News is that God always hears our prayers. He cares deeply about us and all the details of our lives. We can trust that he listens to us and cares about our worries and needs.

ASK THE GROUP:

- Get each person to share a takeaway from the session.
- Ask if anybody would like prayer for this topic or would like to pray. Then lead the group in prayer.
- Ask if anybody wants to discuss anything further about this topic with a leader or support person.
- Remind them when the next session is.

CLOSE THE SESSION

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY SESSION — HOW CAN WE TALK TO GOD?

The Introduction Activity session provides an opportunity to introduce the topic of the term in a less structured session than a Life Lab. You can use the ideas to create a fun and social session that will help introduce the concepts. For example, for this topic we share ideas for activities that explore the ways we can talk to God — through activities like ‘Stand, Kneel, Go!’, ‘Different ways of talking — Skit Game’, ‘Open Line’ and ‘Emoji Prayer Challenge’.

INTRODUCTION:

Through the Life Labs sessions this term we will look at how we can talk to God.

WHAT YOU COULD DO:

Here are some ideas that tie in with this term’s theme:

‘STAND, KNEEL, GO!’ GAME

This game is based on Captain’s Calling / Ship to Shore.

- Explain the commands (below)
- Have someone call out the commands
- The last person to complete the command is out
- The last person remaining is the winner

Commands:

- *Go to church*
(Run to the left side of the room)
- *Pray at home*
(Run to the right side of the room)
- *Pray at the park*
(Run to the back of the room)
- *Kneel down*
(Kneel down with hands together)
- *Whisper*
(Put finger to lip in a “shhh” position)
- *Prayer circle!*
(Link arms in a circle)
- *And we all said!*
(Shout: Amen!)

DIFFERENT WAYS OF TALKING — SKIT GAME

Divide into teams of 5-6 people.

Each team creates three short skits (30-60 seconds each) based on the same situation, but in different styles.

Give each group a different scenario (see below) and get them to choose three different styles (listed below).

Scenarios

- You are getting excited about school camp
- One of you is inviting the other person to hang out
- You are trying to work out
- One of you is apologising to the other person
- You are saying goodbye, because one of you is moving to a different state
- You are making up after a fight
- Add your own: _____

Styles

- Rigid and formal
- Silly and playful
- Quiet and serious
- Not thinking clearly and jumping to conclusions
- Loud and overly expressive
- Very positive
- Very negative
- Add your own: _____

Wrap up by talking about how wonderful it is that we can pray in so many different ways.

As long as our prayers are real and honest, it doesn't matter what style they come in.

OPEN LINE — PRAYER PHONE BOOTH GAME

There's no one right way to talk to God — he listens to us, no matter how we present our prayers.

Set up different 'phone booths' around the room with signs like:

- 'Thank you' phone booth
- 'Help' phone booth
- 'Sorry' phone booth
- 'Listening' phone booth

Young people rotate in groups. At each station, they have 1-2 minutes to "call God" in that way (spoken, written, or even silently).

Optional: Paper Cup Phones:

- Have some paper cups and string. Have pairs build their paper phones.
- Ask the pairs to try speaking some prayers to each other.
- Experiment with a slack string and a taut string. What worked better?
- How might having a slack string between you and God impact your prayer life?

EMOJI PRAYER CHALLENGE GAME

There are many ways to express what's on our hearts.

- Divide everyone into two teams.
- Young people create a prayer using only emojis, then others in their group try to interpret it.
- Everyone has five mins to prepare their emoji prayers, using at least four emojis.
- Shout "Go!" and groups have to guess as many of their fellow group member's emoji prayers before the time runs out.

Example: 🙏😓➡️😊 = "God, I'm stressed and I need your peace."

DISCUSSION:

Take the opportunity to explore young people's experiences with the topic before we spend the next few sessions on it. You can ask questions like:

- Have you ever talked to God? What was it like?
- Do you find prayer easy or difficult — or does it depend on the situation? Why do you think that is?
- Do you think God listens to our prayers? What makes you think so, or think not?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

— HOW CAN WE GET CLOSER TO JESUS THROUGH PRAYER?

The Reflection Activity session provides an opportunity to reflect on the topic idea in a less structured session than a Life Lab. You can use the ideas to create a fun and social session that will help reflect on the concepts of the term. For example, for this topic, we will explore the idea of getting closer to Jesus through prayer through activities like 'Mask Off', 'Sardines' and 'Three-legged race'.

INTRODUCTION:

This term we've explored the Good News that God gives us ways to deepen our prayer life and know him more closely. This concluding activity session is a way to reflect on and celebrate how prayer deepens our relationship with God.

WHAT YOU COULD DO:

You could use this session to help your group reflect on the topics explored this term. Here are some ideas that would be fun to incorporate into your end-of-term celebration.

- **'Mask off'** — Give each person a craft mask (purchased from a bargain store). On the front of the mask, draw or write some surface level prayers. On the back, write or draw what you are really thinking and feeling.
- **'Sardines'** — One person hides. As others find them, they hide with them until the last person finds the group.
- **'Three-legged race'** — Do a traditional style three-legged race. If you have a big group, you could run heats and a final. Remember to carry out the necessary risk assessment and take care to keep your young people safe.

DISCUSSION:

Take the opportunity to explore with young people their experiences of the topic in informal ways. You could ask questions like:

- What are some things that have helped you connect with God in prayer?
- What is one thing that has stood out to you from Life Labs this term?
- What do you wish everyone knew about prayer?

SPEAKER BRIEF —

WHO CAN TALK TO GOD?

MESSAGE:

The purpose of this session is to help young people reflect on the assumptions we make about who can or cannot talk to God, and to reflect on the Good News that all of us can talk to God.

LIVED EXPERIENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE:

- Young people may feel like their voices are not always heard. Sometimes adults tell them to be quiet or misunderstand what they're saying without giving them a chance to explain. If that has been their experience, they can wonder whether God will listen to them and care about what they have to say.
- Some young people might feel like they're not 'good enough' to pray. If they haven't been to church much or if they've done the wrong thing they can feel like they're not worthy of talking to God. They might think that prayer is just for 'good' people or 'church people'.
- In church, young people can hear leaders pray confident, expressive prayers that use special 'churchy' words. If they don't know those special words or wouldn't feel confident praying in that style, they can wonder if prayer is really for them.
- Young people can think that only certain people can talk to God and they dismiss even trying.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- As a teenager, was praying something you knew about, either through your family, school or people you knew? What did prayer look like to you?
- As a teenager, what was your relationship to prayer? Was it something you naturally did, did you struggle with it, or did you feel unworthy to pray?
- If you prayed as a young person, and connected with God through it, what impact did that have on your life? Did you see prayers answered? What effect did that have on the people and things you prayed for?

SCRIPTURE:

A humble, honest prayer

Luke 18:9-14

⁹There were some people who thought they were very good and looked down on everyone else. Jesus used this story to teach them: ¹⁰“One time there was a Pharisee and a tax collector. One day they both went to the Temple to pray. ¹¹The Pharisee stood alone, away from the tax collector. When the Pharisee prayed, he said, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not as bad as other people. I am not like men who steal, cheat, or commit adultery. I thank you that I am better than this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week, and I give a tenth of everything I get!’

¹³The tax collector stood alone too. But when he prayed, he would not even look up to heaven. He felt very humble before God. He said, ‘O God, have mercy on me. I am a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, when this man finished his prayer and went home, he was right with God. But the Pharisee, who felt that he was better than others, was not right with God. People who make themselves important will be made humble. But those who make themselves humble will be made important.”

SCRIPTURE POINTS:

- In this parable, prayer is seen differently in the two men who prayed. The Pharisee didn't pray, he spoke with himself, not with God. In his short prayer he repeated the word "I" five times. His focus, and worship, was on himself — on his own will and agenda.
- The tax collector stood back, bowed his head in shame and physically showed his 'sorry' to God. He named himself a 'sinner', owning his guilt. His only hope was God's mercy, forgiveness and atonement. Many young people today struggle with shame and may deeply relate to the tax collector in this story.
- Through this story, Jesus teaches us to be real and humble when we pray. The Pharisee lists reasons why he believes he is good enough to approach God, but the tax collector recognises his sin and knows he can only talk to God because of God's mercy. It is the tax collector, not the Pharisee who goes home right with God.
- In the Bible, there are many examples of people admitting their failures to God. Each of these examples reminds us that we don't need to be perfect to start a conversation with God. He knows us, we don't need to try to impress him, and we can't 'earn points' with him — we come to him, humbly, through Jesus.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- When have you prayed, but you were focusing more on yourself? Or when have you felt you weren't connecting with God in prayer because of distractions or pride?
- When have you prayed while feeling ashamed — like the tax collector? What did you feel was God's response to you?
- What difference does it make for us to come to God with a humble, repentant heart, rather than thinking we've got it all sorted?

THE GOOD NEWS MESSAGE:

Some young people may wonder if God will listen to them if they pray, or they might not feel 'good enough' to talk to God because of the things they've done wrong. Others may not know the 'right words' to say or might not feel qualified to pray.

The Good News is that everyone can pray. It doesn't matter who we are, what we've done or how many churchy words we do or don't know — we can all talk with God.

RESPONSE OPTIONS:

- For young people who aren't followers of Jesus, this message is an invitation. It doesn't matter who they are or what they've done, everyone can talk with God. God is waiting and is ready to listen to what they have to say to him.
- For young people who are followers of Jesus but may not feel 'good enough' to pray, or feel like they don't pray as well as others, this is a message of encouragement. They don't need to use special words to pray, they can be real with God and use their own words to talk to him.
- For young people who follow Jesus and prayer is an important part of their life, this message is a reminder to keep talking to God, praying for others and with others. They can see God do amazing things in the lives of people around them when they continue to pray with a humble heart, knowing God wants to answer.



LIFE LABS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted,
are taken from the Easy-to-Read Version (ERV).
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