



PRAYER DISCUSSION STARTERS



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Simple surveys or questionnaires can be effective tools to stimulate discussion among your youth group.

Give each young person a copy of the prayer survey. Ask them to circle the number on each scale which represents their view. For example, if you believe God always answers prayer, circle 1. If you think he doesn't answer all prayers, circle 3. If you think he never answers prayer, circle 5. Explain that there are no correct answers to the survey and encourage them to answer honestly.

Use the survey as a discussion starter to help your group express their own views and opinions. Do they have any questions about prayer? Share your own experiences and, if you wish, use one of the other two discussion starters to discover more about what the bible says on prayer, or Jesus' teaching on prayer.

*Luke records three parables Jesus told about prayer.
What do they teach us about our attitude and God's
attitude to prayer?*

The friend at midnight. Luke 11: 5-13

The persistent widow. Luke 18: 1-8

The pharisee and the tax collector Luke 18: 9-14

PRAYER SURVEY

I believe that God always answers prayer.	1 2 3 4 5	I think God is not interested in our prayers.
Even though I don't always see an obvious answer to prayer, I believe that God has answered.	1 2 3 4 5	When I don't see any obvious answers to prayer, I doubt that he has heard.
If God appears to say 'no' to my prayer, I realise it is for my own good.	1 2 3 4 5	I find it difficult to accept a 'no' answer.
When God answers my prayers, my faith is strengthened.	1 2 3 4 5	When prayers appear to be answered, it's really just a coincidence.
I'm always talking to God.	1 2 3 4 5	There are days when I never pray.
I'm always praising and thanking God in prayer.	1 2 3 4 5	My prayers are just like a shopping list of requests.
When I don't feel like praying, that's when I pray even harder.	1 2 3 4 5	If I don't feel like praying, then I don't.
I feel relaxed praying with other people.	1 2 3 4 5	I am always embarrassed about praying with others.
I feel my prayer life is really growing.	1 2 3 4 5	My prayer life is dead.

THE BIBLE ON PRAYER

Ask the young people to find out what the Bible tells us about prayer. Divide into pairs and give each pair one or more of the references. Allow 3 or 4 minutes for the young people to find the answers to each reference. Then ask the pairs to report back by writing their answer(s) on a whiteboard or large piece of paper.

Psalm 55: 17	We should pray regularly
Matthew 5: 44	We should pray for our enemies
Matthew 6: 5-7	We should pray secretly and honestly
Matthew 18: 19-20	We should pray with others
Matthew 21: 21-22	If we pray, we will receive
Matthew 26: 41	Prayer will keep us from sin
Luke 18: 1	Prayer will give us courage
John 14: 12-14	We can talk to God about anything
John 15: 7-8, 16	We should pray with confidence
John 16: 23-26	Prayer involves asking. We should pray in Jesus' name
Philippians 4: 6-7	We should pray about everything. We should be thankful
1 Thess. 5: 16-18	We should pray at all times
James 5: 13-14	We should pray for the sick and others in need
1 John 1: 9	Prayer involves confessing our sins

Discuss

Review the answers together. Are any difficult to understand? Do some seem hard? Illustrate from your own experience where appropriate.

Ask the young people to spend some time praying together in small groups of 4. In their prayers ask them to apply some of the principles discovered in the study e.g. pray for enemies, pray for the sick, confess sin, pray for strength to overcome temptation.

*'Prayer is conversation with God' Clement
of Alexandria*

*'Some people pray just to pray and some
people pray to know God.'* Andrew Murray

*'When I pray, coincidences happen, and
when I don't pray, they don't.'* William
Temple

'Pray, and let God worry.' Martin Luther

THE BIBLE ON PRAYER

Using the symbol Bible study method, examine Jesus' teaching on prayer.

Ask a member of the group to read Luke 11: 1-13.

Give everyone a sheet of paper and ask them to draw the five symbols down the left side (see table). After quietly reading through the Bible passage again, each person writes (next to the appropriate symbol) what they think the passage is saying.

Allow 10 minutes of individual work.

Go through the symbols, leading a time of feedback and discussion. Ask the group to share their answers. Where there are questions, encourage a group discussion to try to find out the answers together.

Take a few minutes to summarise what you have discovered and close with a prayer to act on anything learned.

The symbol method is a very effective method of introducing young people to Bible study and encourages the participation of everyone. It can be used with parables, psalms and many sections of the epistles.

ARROW POINTING UP	Write something these verses tell us about Jesus/God.
ARROW POINTING DOWN	Write something these verses tell us about human nature.
A LIGHT BULB	Write any new discovery you've made reading these verses.
EXCLAMATION MARK (!)	Write down the most exciting verse in your opinion and why?
QUESTION MARK (?)	Write anything you don't understand or want to ask about.
ARROW POINTING TO SIDE	Write down something these verses say we should do.

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