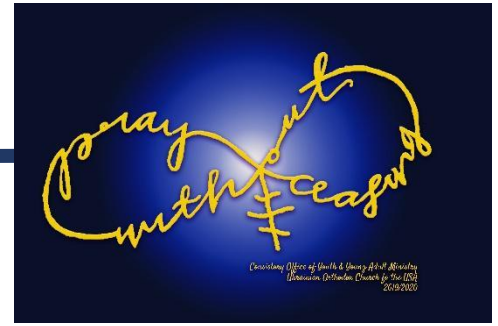


HOW SHOULD WE PRAY? Part 1

Session Four



Objective: To give the participants an understanding of:

1. The difference between private and public (corporate) prayer
2. Where to pray in private – Prayer Corners
3. Reverence in Prayer
4. Praying from the Heart (developing personal prayer)
5. Personal Rule of Prayer

Items Needed: Copies of worksheets, pencils, bibles, lined paper.

Items in [\(blue\)](#) are notes for the Session Leader.
The symbol “→” indicates a question for the students.

Pre-session preparation: Include in your notice about the youth group session or youth day activities, that your participants should bring a picture of their personal and/or family prayer corner, if they have one. Also ask your youth to bring their prayerbook with them or consider purchasing prayer books for any youth who may not have their own.

Select 10 – 15 prayers and print them out so that they will fit onto a page in the notebooks or journals. Cut the card stock to approximately 5” x 3.5” rectangles.

Begin the Session with prayer to the Holy Trinity, *O Heavenly King*.

Begin with some short, age appropriate games and/or introductions, then begin the lesson below. For younger children read for them – you may want to paraphrase and ask questions often to keep their interest. For older children, allow them to read aloud or to themselves.

When we go to Church every week, we *worship* God with our parish family. This is a very, very important form of prayer that also allows us to receive Holy Communion. There are also times, like here and today, when we pray in a group outside of church services. We should try to find various times to pray as a family when we are home, as well.

Jesus taught us that we must also pray privately, which means to have our own personal time with God. Private prayer doesn't take the place of going to church or praying with others. It's an important addition...like a plant needs light **and** water, we need public and private prayer to grow.

→ [Read Matthew 6: 6.](#) Where does Jesus tell you to pray? [\(in your room with the door closed\)](#)

That certainly doesn't sound like it would make it possible to pray without ceasing! But Jesus is telling us that our prayer should be between God and ourselves. We don't have to announce to the world that we are praying. Sometimes the room we go into can be a room in our hearts. Whether we are praying in words or through our actions and attitudes, we can trust that God is receiving our message...and that's what matters.

How we pray is very important. First, we must try very hard to clear our minds of everything else. This is very difficult at first because we have so much around us and so many things in our life to think about, but with practice it will get easier. Having a certain place to pray will help; maybe in your room or somewhere else in your house that is quiet. We should have at least one icon in our prayer corner to help us focus on what we are about to do. Maybe you can ask your parents to help you set up a family prayer corner that everyone can use. This can have a candle and incense or oil *(but these should only be used with your parents' permission and when they are at home with you!)* [Share the photos of different prayer corners.](#) [Have participants share what their prayer corners are like at home.](#)

Once we've cleared our minds we should think about what we want to say...for what do we need to ask forgiveness, do we have something for which we are especially thankful, do we know someone who needs extra help? Now we are ready to start.

You should have your own Orthodox prayer book. Many of the prayers may be difficult for you now, but you will "grow into" them. Your parents, priest, church school teachers, or godparents can all help if you have trouble with any of the words. When you are saying the words of the prayers in your prayer book, you are using words from our Holy Tradition. The Church has prayed these words for centuries so we can trust that they are true and proper and pleasing to God.

Explain that Holy Tradition has been passed down from Christ through the apostles to us. We also have traditions in the church that are special but do not have the same importance as Holy Tradition. We call these "small-t" traditions. Play a short game deciphering "Big-T" and "little-t" traditions.

(Discuss briefly Holy Scripture and Tradition. Here is a list of "traditions". Have the group decide if it is a "Big-T" or "little-t" tradition of the church.

Having Kovbasa in your Pascha Basket – little-t

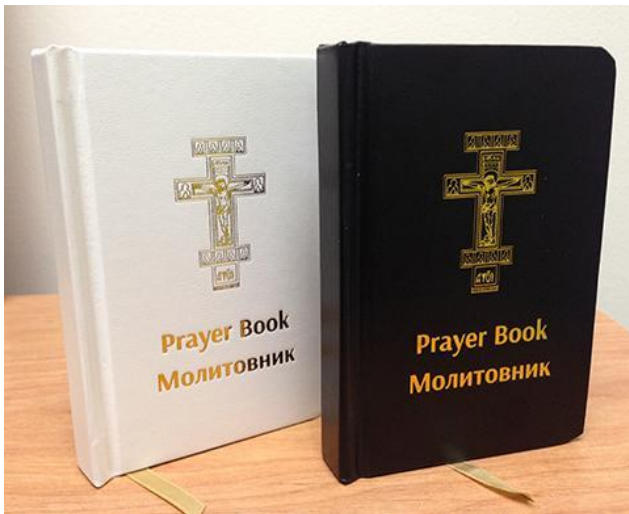
We use icons to help us pray – Big-T

We put rushnyks over icons – little-t

Partaking of Holy Communion – Big-T

Reading Holy Scripture – Big-T

While we use prayers from a prayer book to guide us through Holy Tradition of the Church, this doesn't mean that you can *only* say prayers from a prayer book. You shouldn't skip prayer if you don't have your book. Perhaps you would like to add a prayer in your own words when you have finished the prayers of the Church. This is fine, and sometimes necessary for us. Just remember, who you are talking to! Even in our own words, prayer should be *reverent*.



Discuss what *reverence* means. Ask them how they would greet the Patriarch, the President, or the King of England, when starting a conversation. Then ask them how they would greet one another, their sibling or a stranger. What makes the difference? If we would greet a President or King with reverence and respect, with how much more reverence and humility should we greet our God and Creator in prayer – our conversation with Him?

One way to make your own words into a reverent prayer is to remember it can be G-R-E-A-T. (see below)

Greeting...the special way we call upon God

Reason...are you asking for help, or giving special thanks, or just saying, "I love you?"

Emotion...explain how you feel: sad, afraid, happy?

Action...ask God for what you want...help with a special problem, good health, etc., and remember that it will be according to His Will

Thanks...thank God for His blessings in the past and for accepting your prayer

Write a GREAT prayer here.

Example: Loving Father, I'm asking for help because grandma is sick. She is going to have an operation and I am afraid for her. Please be with her, and if it is Your will, make her well again. Thank you for your love and mercy, now and always. Amen

At this point allow the participants time to create their great prayer. Check in with them to see if they need any assistance.

Silent Contemplation Time: Scripture Reading on Longsuffering - Psalm 11 (12)

GREAT!