

Prayer Ideas for Youth Meetings

“Our ordinary views of prayer are not found in the New Testament. We look upon prayer as a means for getting something for ourselves; the Biblical idea of prayer is that we may get to know God Himself.”

—Oswald Chambers

News Prayer

Materials: TV news headlines (hard copies or online)

Collect some of the TV news headlines (local, national, global) from the previous week as a short video or slide montage. Alternatively, select 3-4 headlines from newspapers and stick them on a piece of newsprint or cardstock. Ask the group members to write a prayer about one of the subjects or events, then read them aloud. Or, give out copies of the day's newspapers and ask the young people to cut out or highlight stories or people they wish to pray for. This may also be done with current issues of magazines such as Newsweek, Time, or The New Yorker.

Photo Prayers

Materials: Photos from magazines, newspapers, online articles

Sometimes we all have a hard time praying for specific events or people outside of our own families, churches, and communities. This exercise will help young people consider the needs of God's world and God's people locally, nationally, and globally. Cut out or print off photos and images from magazines or online articles and place them in the center of the room. As the young people enter the room, invite them to choose an image that resonates with them on some level. Ask each person to share their image and how they feel connected to the particular people, region, or event. At the end of the group, encourage each person to take their image home with them and pray for that specific event, place, or people in the coming week.

Prayer Walk

Invite young people to go for a walk around your neighborhood, city, or town. If you have a large youth group, divide into smaller groups, with at least one adult advisor per group. As you walk, encourage everyone to really pay attention to what you see like homes, schools, restaurants, stores, and people. What do you notice? What smells do you notice? What colors? What kind of transportation? Bikes? Buses? Cars? At the end of the walk, gather together as a whole group to share a meal together, either in one of the restaurants nearby, outside in a park, or back in your meeting space. During your meal, ask each group member what they observed, and what they would like to pray for based on their observations.

Pipe-Cleaner Prayers

Materials: Multi-colored Pipe Cleaners

Give several pipe cleaners to each group member and invite them to create an image that represents a prayer need in their lives. When everyone has completed this, invite each member to place their creation in the center of the room, then work together as a group to connect all of the creations together. After the larger creation is finished, pray together as a group, inviting folks to pray aloud or silently as they feel comfortable. Keep this creation in your youth space a visual reminder that each of us has something we need to turn over to God and each of us needs each other.

Candle Prayers

Materials: One large candle, Many votive/tea light candles

Place unlit votives or tea light candles throughout your worship space, with one lit larger candle in the middle as the Christ candle. Invite each group member to light a votive/tea light from the Christ candle to represent a prayer for a person or persons in need. Allow this to be more of an unstructured time so youth may light a candle or candles as they feel comfortable, remembering that sitting together in silence is a powerful act in itself.

Sand Prayers

Materials: Large container with sand, Music

Set out a large plastic container filled with sand in the center of your meeting space. Have some music playing on your laptop or iPod throughout this ritual. Invite each person to go to the container, one by one, and trace a word or symbol of an action or feeling they want to confess to God. After they have “written” their confession, invite them to “erase” their confession by passing their hands through the sand again as a way of representing God’s gift of forgiveness and grace.

Prayers in a Hat

Materials: Scrap Paper, Hat/ Bowl

Ask everyone in the group to put their name on a piece of paper. Place the pieces of paper into a hat, bowl, or other container. Then, pass the container around the group and ask each young person to take a piece of paper. Encourage them to pray for that person throughout the coming week. This also makes a very good weekly ritual as a way to close your meeting time together.

Prayer Wall

Materials: Bulletin board, Thumb tacks, Post-its, Markers, Etc.

This is an idea for an ongoing prayer wall where youth and advisors are able to post prayers by naming either the person, place, or situation that needs prayer any time you all gather in that space. These may be as specific or anonymous as each person is comfortable. (“Mary Smith’s diabetes,” “Those who are hurting,” “Children in Sudan,” etc.) Establish a bulletin board on a centralized wall space in your room, where youth and advisors may post photos, stories, messages, articles lifting up the joys and concerns of your group and our world.

Magnetic Poetry Prayers

Materials: Magnetic Paint & Magnets or Chalkboard Paint & Chalk

This suggestion is a bit more ambitious, but similar to the Prayer Wall concept. Create a wall in your youth room painted with magnetic paint and provide an ample supply of magnetic poetry words for youth to create a wall of creative prayers each week to share with others. Similarly, paint a section of a wall with chalkboard paint and allow youth to graffiti their joys and concerns on the wall each week. In terms of costs, the chalkboard paint and chalk is less expensive. However, one way to save costs with the magnetic poetry is to have youth bring their own that they already have at home or in their lockers. Or, buy magnetic letters in bulk online or at a toy store so the youth may spell people's names, initials, or a word to represent their joys and concerns.

Tinfoil Prayers or Play-Doh Prayers

Materials: Aluminum Foil or Play-doh

Distribute a sheet of aluminum foil or ball of Play-Doh to each group member. Invite them to take time in silence to craft the foil or dough into the shape of something they want to offer up to God in prayer. They may create an object, an initial of a person's name, or something more abstract-wherever their creativity takes them. When everyone is finished, they may choose to tell the group about their creations or not. At the end of this time, place all creations in the center of the room for a closing prayer. Invite each young person to leave their creation in your meeting space, so the next time you all meet they may share where they be reminded of where they've seen God's love in that situation in the past few days/weeks.

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