



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Direct Message / Week 1

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SERIES SUMMARY

Series Summary: A 2-week series about prayer.

Series Bottom Line: The right way to pray.

WEEK 1: Prayer connects you to God.

WEEK 2: Prayer isn't about the words you say, but the way you pray.

SCRIPTURE

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth (Psalm 145:18 NIV).

TEACHING SLIDES

*All Scripture, bottom lines, and prompts that are bolded in this script are also provided as teaching slides.

OPTIONAL MEDIA

OPTIONAL MEDIA for this week available for purchase through the [XP3 MS Media Package](#):

- Direct Message Countdown Video (10 minutes)
 - Direct Message Teaching Video – Week 1
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TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- Have you ever gone online only to lose your signal, have an unstable connection, or run out of screen time?
- Wi-fi connects devices to the Internet; it's a connection.
- Wouldn't it be great if we had a connection like that to God? One that always worked? Like sending God a direct message whenever we needed?

TENSION

- When we pray, it's like sending God a DM with our thoughts, needs, questions, and concerns.
- Just like our devices get us online and connected to our friends, when we pray, it's like a direct connection between us and God.
- Sometimes we pray when . . .
 - We need God's help.
 - We feel lonely.
 - We want to celebrate good things happening in our lives.
 - We feel desperate because we're going through something really difficult.
- *Tell a personal story about a time when you needed help from God.*
- We all have something in us that wants to connect with God through prayer.
- Sometimes prayer feels like sending a direct message that goes unanswered, and we end up not feeling connected to God.
- Sometimes when we pray, we feel like the connection to God is lost, and that can make us want to give up on prayer.

TRUTH

- Psalms are songs, but many of them are written as prayers. We can use the prayers and songs to connect with God the way the writers did.
- The prayers in Psalms aren't fancy or perfect. They're honest and full of requests for help, cries of loneliness, exclamations of happiness, and moments of hurt.
- The Psalms show us that God is interested in everything we're going through; God wants direct messages about it all.
- King David wrote the biggest portion of the book of Psalms. *[Give background information on David.]*
- Throughout his life, David followed God and was honest with God no matter what.
- *The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth (Psalm 145:18 NIV).*
- David explained that if we go to God with honest prayers, God will be near, no matter what we're feeling, saying, or going through.
- Prayer connects you to God.
- When we show up and choose to be honest with God, that's when the connection with God grows.
- God already knows what we're thinking and feeling, so we don't need to make our prayers perfect or hide what we're going through.

APPLICATION

- Maybe we need to start giving prayer a try by sending some real, honest direct messages to God.
- Try two things . . .
 1. Show up. Commit to giving prayer a try.
 2. Be honest. Whatever you pray, be open and honest with God about what you're feeling or going through.
- Prayer connects us to God.

LANDING

- Try talking to God this week in the same way you would DM a friend.
 - What's one thing you could be honest with God about in prayer?
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THINK ABOUT THIS

This week, be quick to affirm the comfort level your students say they're at when it comes to prayer. Keep in mind that they may be even less comfortable inwardly than they express outwardly. No matter where they are when it comes to prayer, you want your ministry to be a safe space to be honest about that. Because being honest about this in your ministry is going to help them take a step toward potentially being honest with God in prayer. If your students express doubts or questions about prayer, that's okay! Your job isn't to provide all the answers, but instead, to encourage them to keep going and giving honest, real prayer a try! Keep in mind students who may have tried these real, honest prayers but haven't seen them answered in the way they hoped. Allow them to be honest about that as well and encourage them to take that feeling to God in prayer, too!

INTERACTIVE: Sending a DM

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll use a smartphone to help illustrate how prayer is similar to picking up the phone to send a direct message to God.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A smartphone
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TEACHING SCRIPT

Direct Message / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

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GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

PRAYER CONNECTS YOU TO GOD.

INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

Hey friends! We're starting a new series called *Direct Message* today that I think is going to be really great! But before we dive in, can we talk about one of the most frustrating things on the planet?

Picture this: Your notifications let you know your friends are online. They're all gaming, or posting, or sending you DMs. Maybe you got that app that lets you all watch the latest Marvel movies together on Disney+. You're down to jump into whatever is happening online, but then it happens.

Your wi-fi signal just drops.
Your Internet connection is unstable.
You're out of screen time.
You can't download, upload, or get online.
The connection is lost.

Anybody else *hate* when that happens?

Sure, it's frustrating, but what does that have to do with our new series? Believe it or not, a lot! Wi-fi is something that allows digital devices to connect to the Internet. That's exactly what a **connection** is. It's **something that directly connects you to something else.**

INTERACTIVE: Sending a DM

This is where you'll use a smartphone to help illustrate how prayer is similar to picking up the phone to send a direct message to God. Throughout your message, interact with this prop any time you talk about connecting with God through sending a direct message.

Now let me ask you this: Wouldn't it be great if we had a connection like that to God? If we could connect ourselves to God as easily as our phones connect to the Internet? I mean, if God is so powerful, and cares about us, and wants to help us, wouldn't it be nice if we had a connection that we knew would always work? One that wouldn't feel like a bad wi-fi connection? Almost like a way to send God a direct message whenever we needed?

TENSION

5 MINUTES

If you've spent any time at church, then you may know that a lot of people consider prayer to be that connection. When we pray, it's our way of talking to God. It's like sending God a DM with our thoughts, needs, questions, and concerns.

Think about it this way: When you're going through something in your life, what's one of the first things you do? If it's good, if it's bad, or if it's somewhere in between, you probably text, DM, Twitch, Discord, or FaceTime your best friend about it! You find ways to connect with the important people in your life to let them know what's going on.

Well, that's exactly what it's like when we pray. **Prayer** is like **a direct message between God and us**. Just like our devices get us online and connected to our friends, when we pray, it's like a connection between us and the One who cares about us the most!

And just like with our friends, there are a lot of things that we might want to connect with God about. In other words, **there are a lot of reasons why we might pray**.

Sometimes we pray when we realize we need God's help. Maybe you studied really hard for an important test in school. But when the day of the test came, you were still really nervous. So, you stopped and asked God to help you do your best.

Or maybe you pray when you're feeling lonely. You've tried to make new friends, but it doesn't seem to be working. You feel like you're walking through the halls of your school completely invisible to everyone. So, you pray that God would give you a place where you don't feel so alone.

Maybe you pray to celebrate the good things happening in your life. When you have the best day ever and you want to tell someone about it? That's when you talk to God.

Or maybe, you pray the prayers we all do when we're desperate. When a parent gets sick, or someone we love is hurting, or we're going through something really, really hard in our lives. Those are the times we pray that God would just help us get through it.

TELL A PERSONAL STORY

Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following idea . . .

- Talk about a time in your own life when you desperately needed help from God.
- Maybe you were struggling through an illness, a loss, a bad choice, or a difficult relationship. Whatever example you choose, just make sure it's age and phase appropriate for middle schoolers!
- Be sure to illustrate how you felt the desire to connect with God during that time.
- If you have a picture or prop that supports your story, show it here.

Maybe you can relate. In fact, I think on some level we all know what it feels like to wish we could connect with someone bigger, more powerful, and always available. Someone who we think can help us when we need it the most. Someone who will be with us, in the good and in the bad. No matter where you are with all this faith stuff, I think we all have something in us that wants to connect with God. Something that leads us to pray.

But if we're being honest, I think we'd also say that sometimes, prayer feels a lot like sending a direct message that goes unanswered. It's like God leaves us on read, right? We pray, we try to connect, we send that direct message, and . . . nothing. We don't feel better, our circumstances don't change, and we definitely don't feel connected to God.

So, what's the problem?

Is the connection not there?

Is God even there?

Are we not praying the right way?

Is there a right way to pray?

When it comes to prayer, I think we can all agree that **sometimes, it just feels like the connection is lost**. And I don't know about you, but sometimes that makes me want to give up on this whole prayer thing altogether!

TRUTH

3 MINUTES

Here's the good news for all of us who have felt this way before: There's actually an entire book of the Bible that can help us figure out what to do with this feeling. It's called **Psalms**. The Psalms are songs, but a lot of them are songs that were written as prayers. And when we read them, we can use the prayers and songs to connect with God the same way the writers did.

As you read through Psalms, you'll notice something interesting: The prayers in them don't sound like super fancy prayers. They're not full of perfect language that always talks about how great life is and how amazing God is. In fact, some of them are just the opposite! They're honest prayers, full of requests for help, cries of loneliness, jump-around exclamations of happiness, and moments of deep hurt. And I think that's what makes them so great! The Psalms make it obvious to us that God is interested in all of it.

Our deepest **frustrations and fears**,
our **anxiety and concerns**,
our **sadness and hurts**,
and our **praises and celebrations**.

God wants our direct messages about it all!

While the Psalms were written by a bunch of different people, a guy named King **David** wrote the biggest portion of the book. Maybe you've heard the story of David and Goliath. That young guy who used a slingshot to sink a rock into a giant's forehead and take him down? Yeah, *that* David. He's the guy we're talking about here. David ended up becoming king of Israel and ruling over the Jewish people. But along the way, he messed up a lot. He made some not-so-great choices. But what's cool is that David kept following God no matter what. He was honest with God no matter what. He tried to connect with God no matter what it was about. And as we read through his words in the Psalms, I think it's pretty easy to see this guy knew a thing or two about prayer!

So, let's check out something David learned about prayer that I think can help us when we feel like our own DMs just aren't getting through. Take a look:

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth (Psalm 145:18 NIV).

It's cool that as David was praying *to* God, he was also talking *about* prayer. He wrote from his own experience. And what David said is this: When we call on God with honest prayers, God will

be near. No matter what we're feeling, or saying, or thinking, God will be there to listen. The only thing we need to do to find that connection with God? Show up and be honest!

King David understood this, experienced it, and practiced it all the time. He showed up and prayed honestly about what he was dealing with. He knew God was near and listening. And because of that, he felt connected to God. And that's the whole point!

See, **prayer connects you to God.**

When we speak with God, that's prayer. When we tell God the good, the bad, and the ugly, that's prayer. When we beg for God's help, that's prayer. When we talk to God about our day, that's prayer. When we show up and choose to be honest with God, that's when the connection grows. Because **prayer connects you to God.**

And here's the cool thing: God already knows what you're thinking and feeling. Before you say a word, God already knows what's going on. So, there's no need to try and clean up how you feel before you say it. There's no need to hide that you're hurting, or angry, or disappointed. God already knows it, and more than that, God wants you to share it in a real, honest way. The Psalms teach us that!

Ultimately, **prayer connects you to God.** And it's our honest prayers that will help the connection stay strong.

APPLICATION

1 MINUTE

So maybe this week, we need to re-think how strong that connection is. Maybe we need to start sending some real direct messages to God, believing that God is near and ready to receive them. Maybe we need to start by just giving prayer a try.

To do that, I want you to try two things:

1. **Show up.** God is already there, ready and waiting for us to speak. So, start by simply showing up. Commit to giving prayer a try. Remember, this doesn't have to be perfect, or formal, or anything other than truthful. You can pray alone in your room or you can ask friends, like your small group, for help. Your small group is actually a great place to start to find the encouragement you might need to show up to God in prayer this week.
2. **Be honest.** Whatever you pray, commit to being honest with God as you do. Tell God about your day. Tell God about your concerns and fears. Tell God what you're excited about. Tell God what you're nervous about. Tell God your hopes and the things that have you stressed out. Whatever you share, just be honest. Remember that when you do, you're making a connection to God. That's the point!

Because **prayer connects us to God.**

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Now you might be thinking, "But prayer is just so awkward! I don't know what words to use or what to do with my hands. I get super distracted when I pray!" Don't worry! We're going to talk about that stuff next week. But in the meantime, I'd encourage you to try simply talking to God this week, the same way you would DM a friend. See what happens!

Now, here's a question for you to think about as you move to small group: **What's one thing you could be honest with God about in prayer?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
