



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Direct Message / Week 2

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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

*"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one'" (Matthew 6:9-13 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 2
- Direct Message – “Anterior Cingulate Brain Image” – Week 2

# TEACHING OUTLINE

## INTRODUCTION

- Prayer is like sending God a direct message, and it's a chance to talk to God about anything and everything in our lives.
- *Tell a personal story about a question you've had about prayer in the past.*
- Sometimes prayer can feel confusing—like there's a right and wrong way to do it.

## TENSION

- Part of your brain, the Anterior Cingulate, shapes your experience with God and helps you understand and experience God as personal and compassionate.
- When you pray, you exercise and grow the Anterior Cingulate.
- It's normal to have a lot of questions about what to say in our prayers, where we're supposed to pray, and how to actually pray.
- People have been asking questions about prayer for a really long time, even when Jesus was on Earth!

## TRUTH

- We can find some answers to our questions about prayer in the book of the Bible called Matthew.
- The Sermon on the Mount was documented by Matthew as an account of Jesus giving a sermon on top of a mountain. In this sermon, Jesus talked about prayer.
- *"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one'" (Matthew 6:9-13 NIV).*
- This is a prayer people often say at church called The Lord's Prayer, and we use it because Jesus told us to!
- Jesus also said that when we pray, we should be honest, avoid trying to impress people, and make it a consistent part of our lives.
- When we aren't sure what to pray or how to say it, Jesus gives us the answer:
  1. Thanks: Give thanks for God's greatness.
  2. Please: Ask God for what you need.
  3. Sorry: Ask for God's forgiveness for any mistakes or wrongdoings.
- Maybe the words Jesus spoke when He shared the Lord's prayer are the words you want to pray.
- The more you pray, the more comfortable you'll become with prayer, the more you'll have to say, and the stronger your connection with God will be.
- Prayer isn't about the words you say, but the way you pray.
- It's not about fancy language, the right timing, or the perfect setting. Prayer is about sharing your heartfelt honesty with God.

## APPLICATION

- Everyone here has different levels of experience with prayer, but wherever you're at, try one of these things . . .
  - Write down the words "Thanks," "Please," and "Sorry" as a reminder for how to connect with God in prayer.
  - Be real and honest with God when you pray.

- Be consistent in prayer and connect with God every day.

## LANDING

- Prayer isn't about the words you say, but the way you pray.
- Your small group is a great place to talk about prayer and even to pray together!
- What's one thing that might keep you from giving prayer a try?

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## THINK ABOUT THIS

Good news: There isn't a wrong way to pray! Knowing that not only gives us freedom to go to God in prayer, it can encourage your students to do the same, too! It's not wrong to pray the Lord's Prayer or other scripted prayers your church or community might use often. And it's not wrong to pray in your own words or off the cuff. God hears both, and that's important to remind students of this week. They can use things like Jesus' prayers in Scripture to guide them or they can speak openly and honestly in their own words. Give your students the freedom to try what works for them in prayer. Also, encourage them to not see prayer as something that only works at specific times of day, like before bed, at meal time, or in the morning. Instead, help them see how prayer can become an active part of their lives every day throughout the day. They can pray at any time in any place to connect with God when they need it.

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## INTERACTIVE 1: Shaping Your Brain

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll display an image to show students the part of the brain that's affected by prayer.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- An image of the Anterior Cingulate of the brain
- A way to show the image to everyone in your ministry

[OPTIONAL MEDIA](#) available for purchase through the XP3MS Media Package:  
[Direct Message – “Anterior Cingulate Brain Image” – Week 2](#)

## INTERACTIVE 2: Message Fails

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll show examples of texts or direct messages that didn't go exactly the way the writers intended to draw parallels to how it can feel when we talk to God.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 3 examples of text or direct message conversations that didn't go as planned, like:
  - When someone thought the other person was saying one thing, but it was the opposite of what they actually meant
  - Sending the wrong emoji response
  - Using an abbreviation that didn't mean what the sender thought it meant

- Using lingo/slang incorrectly (just make sure it's age appropriate!)
- A way to show the conversations to your whole ministry



# TEACHING SCRIPT

Direct Message / Week 2

PRELUDE SOCIAL WORSHIP STORY GROUPS HOME

## BOTTOM LINE

PRAYER ISN'T ABOUT THE WORDS YOU SAY, BUT THE WAY YOU PRAY.

## INTRODUCTION

4 MINUTES

Hey everyone! We're in the final week of our series called *Direct Message*. And I am so here for it because this series is all about something I want to know more about, and that's prayer. What I love about prayer is that it's our direct connection to God. It's like sending God a direct message. It's a chance to talk to God about anything and everything happening in our lives. Pretty cool, right?

Now, I know you might be thinking, *Talk to God? Don't I have to be like, super spiritual to do that?* If that's what you're thinking, I get it. Because honestly, prayer can feel a little weird sometimes.

### TELL A PERSONAL STORY

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

- Talk about a question or confusion you've had about prayer in the past.
- Maybe you thought you had to pray alone with your eyes closed, or you prayed out loud and said something embarrassing, or you thought you had to use really fancy words.
- If you can, make this example light and funny. The goal is to set up that prayer can feel complicated or confusing, especially when we're first giving it a try!

Maybe you can relate! There's just something about prayer that can be a little confusing, right? And when we think about prayer like that, it can almost feel impossible to even want to try to talk to God. Like if we can't even figure out the most basic stuff about prayer, should we even try? If we don't get it right, is our connection going to be lost?

# TENSION

5 MINUTES

Well, here's some good news for you: There is a right way to pray! But before I tell you what it is, can we pause for a little science lesson? Yes, it's random, but stick with me here because it's actually super interesting!

Did you know that there's a part of your brain that actually shapes your experience with God? That means that things like prayer can actually play a part in shaping your brain! How cool is that?

## **INTERACTIVE: Shaping Your Brain**

*This is where you'll display an image to show students the part of the brain that's affected by prayer.*

OPTIONAL MEDIA available for purchase through the XP3MS Media Package:

Direct Message – “Anterior Cingulate Brain Image” – Week 2

Now get ready for a big fancy word. Well, it's actually two words. That part of your brain is called the **Anterior Cingulate** [NOTE: It's pronounced an-TEER-ee-or SIN-gew-let]. [Show the image of the brain.] When that part of your brain is strong and built up, it helps you understand and experience God as personal and compassionate. In other words, it helps you really experience the way God knows and cares about you.

Recently, scientists discovered that the number one way to grow the strength of your Anterior Cingulate [motion to the image of the brain] is through a daily practice of prayer.<sup>1</sup> When you give just ten minutes a day to prayer, you're exercising that part of your brain in the same way you exercise a muscle. The more you do it, the more that part of your brain grows.

Now, you may be sitting here thinking, “Um, ten minutes a day? That feels like a lot! I mean, I do pray, or I want to pray, but I'm just not sure how. I can't even give one minute to prayer if I can't figure out how to do it!”

## **INTERACTIVE: Message Fails**

*This is where you'll show examples of texts or direct messages that didn't exactly go the way the writers intended to draw parallels to how it can feel when we talk to God.*

We all have questions about how to pray, and I think that's because we aren't sure what to say or if we're saying it right. It's kind of like when we're totally misunderstood in a text message or DM. Like these! [Show examples of DMs and text messages.]

These were awkward, confusing, and even funny! And sometimes, that's how prayer makes us feel.

For starters, how do we even know what to say? Are we supposed to use a bunch of fancy words? Or is there some script we should read? How do we know if we're saying the right things?

Are we supposed to only pray in church? Or can we pray anywhere? Should it be some quiet, private place? Do we have to be alone or can we be with other people?

And then there's the question of what we're supposed to do! Do we say our prayers aloud or in our heads? Should we write them down? Is there supposed to be some time limit? I mean, I

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<sup>1</sup> Newberg, Andrew B., and Mark Robert Waldman. *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist*. Ballantine Books, 2010.

know we said ten minutes is a good place to start, but is it ten minutes *every* single time? Should it be longer? Can it be shorter?

On top of all that, you might be wondering how God will respond or maybe even if God will respond. How do we know our prayers “work”? Can our prayers make God mad if we don’t say them “right”? Should we feel something when we pray? And if we don’t, does that mean we’ve messed it up?

It’s pretty easy to see why talking to God can be a challenge, right? Well, here’s a truth that might surprise you: People have been asking questions about prayer for a really, really long time. In fact, all sorts of people were asking the same types of questions even when Jesus was on Earth. So, if you’re wondering about any of that stuff about prayer, you’re in good company!

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## TRUTH

4 MINUTES

We can actually find some answers to our questions about prayer right in the middle of a book of the Bible called **Matthew**. What’s cool is that this book is actually a collection of writings from one of Jesus’ disciples named . . . yes, Matthew. He wrote down everything he saw and experienced while following Jesus. And I think that’s because Matthew knew that knowing Jesus changes everything. It did back then, and it does for us today, too!

So, the part of Jesus’ life that we’re going to look at today is often called the “**Sermon on the Mount**.” That’s because it’s an account of Jesus giving a sermon on the side of a mountain. Clever, right? Anyway, as Jesus was talking, He started to share a little about prayer. Here’s what He said:

***“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one’” (Matthew 6:9-13 NIV).***

Now this may sound familiar to some of you. This is a prayer people often say at church called The Lord’s Prayer. And the reason we use it is because, well, Jesus told us to! He literally said, ***“This is how you should pray.”***

It’s important to note that before Jesus shared this prayer, He pointed out some other things about praying in His sermon. He encouraged us to be real. To avoid praying just to impress other people. To be honest. God already knows how we feel, so why not be honest about it when we pray? Finally, He encouraged us to be consistent. To not just pray once and walk away, but to make it a part of our lives.

So, what’s the right way to pray? By **being real and being consistent**. That’s all there is to it. And that’s exactly what Jesus modeled for us in The Lord’s Prayer.

You see, this simple prayer can really give us a lot of answers to the questions we have about prayer. When we’re not sure what to say, or if we’re doing it right, or how we’re supposed to start, Jesus gave us this prayer to be the answer.

And really, it all comes down to three simple things:

- **Thanks**
- **Please**
- **Sorry**

That's all there is to it! Jesus modeled the way we can pray by doing those three things. He began by speaking words of thanks. By talking about God's greatness and showing gratitude for how awesome God is. Then, Jesus shared His requests with God, asking God to do things like provide and forgive. Finally, He took a moment to confess any mistakes or wrongs and ask for God's forgiveness.

Thanks.  
Please.  
Sorry.

It's as simple as that.

Some days, those may be the only words you have to pray. Other days, you may have more words to offer. Maybe the words Jesus spoke when He shared The Lord's Prayer are the words you want to pray, and that's awesome, too! But if you're struggling with where to start when you're being honest and real with God, saying "Thanks," "Please," and "Sorry" can also be a starting place for you.

Tell God what you're thankful for.  
Then, tell God what you need.  
And finally, let God know where you need forgiveness.

Again, this is just a starting place. The more you pray, the more comfortable you'll become with prayer. And the more comfortable you become, the more you'll have to say. The only thing you have to remember? Be real and be consistent! The rest is up to you! If you just want to tell God about your day, or your crush, or how annoying your little brother is, God wants to hear it. God is 100% completely and totally on team YOU, and that means God wants every direct message you've got to send through prayer.

See, here's the thing we really want you to understand about prayer: **Prayer isn't about the words you say, but the way you pray.** It's your heart that matters. It's not about the fancy words, or the right timing, or the perfect setting, or any of those things. It's about your heart to connect with God. Your heartfelt honesty is what connects you to God through prayer. So, if you're being real and being consistent when it comes to prayer, then you can be sure you're going to find that connection with God.

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## APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

Remember, **prayer isn't about the words you say, but the way you pray.**

I'm sure everyone in this room has different levels of experience with prayer. Some of you might pray regularly, while others of you may be wondering how to start. Some of you might not be interested at all! But wherever you are, I want to encourage you to give it a try this week.

Maybe try one of these things:

1. Write down these words: **Thanks. Please. Sorry.** If you're not sure what to pray or maybe have never even tried to pray before, start here. Follow this model Jesus gave us and let it be an example for how you can directly connect with God in prayer.
2. **Be real with God.** As you pray, be honest with God. Remember, it's your heart that God wants to meet with through prayer, and the best way to let that happen is to be honest about what's going on in your heart, good or bad. Prayer is a judgment-free zone, so there's no reason not to be real!



3. **Be consistent.** Remember what we said about the Anterior Cingulate in your brain? It takes daily commitment to prayer to start changing it. So, this week, try making that commitment to be consistent in prayer. Even if it's just two minutes on the way to school or five minutes before bed, commit to giving prayer a try this week. I think as you do, you'll be surprised how quickly your connection to God grows.

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## LANDING

1 MINUTE

Remember, **prayer isn't about the words you say, but the way you pray.** So, would you commit to giving it a try? In fact, maybe we could all give this prayer thing a try together today! Your small groups are a great place to start talking about and even trying out prayer. It's a safe space where you can ask questions, be honest, and encourage each other to connect with God in prayer. So, as you head to your small groups today, I want you to think about this question: **What's one thing that might keep you from giving prayer a try?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS

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