

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Thoughts and Prayers / Week 1

BEFORE GROUP

BOTTOM LINE

Honest prayer is greater than fancy prayer.

SCRIPTURE

James 4:8a NIV
Psalms 145:18 NIV

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To give students the freedom and encouragement to start praying real, honest prayers.

THINK ABOUT THIS

At this phase, students may have a variety of comfort levels when it comes to praying out loud. Since everyone gets comfortable with prayer at a different time, never pressure a student to pray out loud in a group. Instead, lean in with empathy as they share how they feel about prayer and encourage them to take their next step, no matter what that step might be.

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed, and don't feel like you need to answer all of them.

DURING GROUP

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Underclassmen Icebreaker:** What is your favorite vending machine snack?
2. When you hear the word “prayer,” what comes to mind? (**Leader note:** After students share their answers, explain that we define prayer as talking to and listening to God.)
3. What are some reasons people don't pray? (ex. Intimidated by not saying the right things, they don't have time, don't believe it works or matters, etc.)
4. In the talk, we said honest prayer is better than fancy (or “right”) prayer. How comfortable do you feel being 100% honest with God? (**Leader note:** students may be reluctant to share their answers. Allow them to speak up on their own without putting them on the spot. Feel free to make this a rhetorical question.)
5. Prayer is about connecting with God, not just getting something from God. What's the difference between a genuine connection with someone versus just talking when you need something from them?
6. “The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth” Psalm 145:18 NIV. How does knowing this change the way you pray? How would you pray differently if you knew that God truly wanted to connect with you?
7. This week we talked about how you can make prayer a habit. Pick one thing you can do this week:
 - a. Write your honest prayers down and read them out loud to God.
 - b. Spend time listening for God. You might do this by sitting in silence, reading a scripture passage, listening to a worship song, etc.
 - c. If you never tried praying before, invite someone to pray with you until you are comfortable praying by yourself.

TRY THIS

Leaders—Sometime this week, reach out to your students, reminding them that “God wants to connect with you today.” Remind your students that you are praying for them daily and ask how you can pray for them specifically.