



vibrantfaith

+ Generations Together

Outdoor Prayer Stations

Here is an intergenerational session for all members of the congregation exploring different types of prayer, all of which are enhanced by being outdoors. This session is designed to be conducted in about 90 minutes, and can be adapted for a shorter or longer timeframe.

Introduction

Each prayer station in this session will expose you to a different form of prayer, each of which is enhanced because you get to do it outdoors. Some prayer stations are more appropriate for younger families, while others are better for teen families and/or adults. Visit as many of the prayer stations as you can!

Needed

Copies of the following activities:

- Lightning Bug Prayers (Young Family)
- Insect Prayers (Young Family)
- Praying for Animals (Young Family)
- Whole Body Prayer (Everyone)
- Talking Stick Prayers (Teen Family, Young Adult or Adult)
- H2O Prayers (Teen Family, Young Adult or Adult)
- Discover Centering Prayer (Teen Family, Young Adult or Adult)

Read through each activity. If you do not plan to offer a station for each activity, decide which ones you will use. Collect the items needed for each activity, and gather enough of each for numerous families/small groups to engage in the activity simultaneously.

Prepare in Advance

- Find the appropriate outdoor space for the prayer stations you have chosen. There should be enough space separating each station so that they don't disturb one another.
- Create a sign for each learning station.
- Place all the necessary items in each learning station.
- Arrange to have one or two helpers at each station. These persons will assist families and small groups as they come through to do the station activity. The helpers should carefully read their assigned activity and make any necessary adaptations since the activity will not be done in a home setting for which it was originally intended.
- Some activities call for the use of technology. This may be challenging outdoors (though not impossible). Be creative and adaptive!

I. Gather

Invite all participants to gather in your outdoor space as one large group. Welcome them all and provide this introduction:

Certain places are conducive for prayer, such as inside the church, the comfort of your bed, perhaps you have a prayer corner at home. Today, we're going to recognize that being outside is also conducive for prayer. Being under the sun (and clouds) helps us appreciate all of God's creation, and so we have a host of prayer ideas to help you and your family pray well outdoors. Visit as many of the prayer stations as you can!

II. Stations

1. Ask participants to form family groups or small groups of no more than 5-6 persons.
2. Explain that each family/group will be invited to visit the prayer stations that you have set up, and engage in a particular prayer activity at each station. They will receive a printed copy of the prayer activity that they can take home with them. Tell them that each activity will take about 10-15 minutes to complete, and that there are helpers at each station. Encourage participants to respect the other groups as they engage in each activity by remaining relatively quiet throughout the process.
3. Before sending people off to stations, have a helper from each station give a brief teaser/introduction to each activity, especially indicating the preferred audience group for the activity:
 - **Lightning Bug Prayers** (Young Family): School's out, and it's time to ditch the busy schedule. Since prayer is always in season, use this activity to help your family be in conversation with God all summer long!
 - **Insect Prayers** (Young Family): Ants, beetles, crickets, lightning bugs, mosquitoes—bugs are everywhere during the summer months. Instead of squashing them, learn about them and then say a prayer for others related to the bug's purpose.
 - **Praying for Animals** (Young Family): On July 1, 1874, the first U.S. zoo opened in Philadelphia. Celebrate your children's love for animals by including animals in your prayers.
 - **Whole Body Prayer** (Everyone): In 1 Corinthians, Paul describes the church as the body of Christ. Use this image to guide your intercessions and prayers.
 - **Talking Stick Prayers** (Teen Family, Young Adult or Adult): The indigenous peoples of the northwest coast of the United States have used talking sticks to pass around a circle to allow the person holding the stick to talk while others listen. Use a talking stick as a form of prayer.
 - **H2O Prayers** (Teen Family, Young Adult or Adult): Water is an important part of summer fun for many families. Pools, lakes, oceans, and streams provide recreation. Bottles of water are guzzled after playing in the hot sun. For families in some parts of the world today, water is a luxury. Spend some time praying for those who need water.
 - **Discover Centering Prayer** (Teen Family, Young Adult or Adult): Looking for a way to make space in your life for listening to God and finding your own spiritual center? Try Centering Prayer.
4. Allow 45-60 minutes for families/groups to visit the stations they wish.

III. Go Forth

Conclude the session by following the adapted steps of the activity My (Lord's) Prayer as follows.

Needed

Bible, bookmarks or slips of paper, My (Lord's) Prayer worksheet, pens or pencils

Prepare in Advance

Place bookmarks in your Bible at Matthew 6:9-14 and Luke 11:1-4. Make a copy of the My (Lord's) Prayer worksheet for each person.

Activity Plan

1. Ask participants to remain in their family/small groups.
2. Read aloud Matthew 6:9-14 and Luke 11:1-4 from your Bible. Invite general comments about how these passages compare to the version of the Lord's Prayer you are familiar with. Ask what are people's favorite parts of the Lord's Prayer, and perhaps any parts you wish you could change.
3. Give each person a copy of the My (Lord's) Prayer worksheet and a pen or pencil. Allow enough time for each person to complete the worksheet. Make sure no one feels rushed. Remind everyone that this is not "mad-libs," and ask them to be serious about it.
4. After everyone has finished the worksheet, ask family/group members to tell about what they wrote. Make sure not to judge anyone's work.
5. Conclude the session by asking all participants to stand, and on the word "Go" ask everyone to say her/his prayer out loud, simultaneously.

My (Lord's) Prayer

By Lee Yates

Many Christians can recite the Lord's Prayer from memory. This makes the prayer both special and easy to take for granted. What do the words mean? What are we really praying for when we pray these words? It is time to look at the words and make them our own.

For

Teen Family

Season

Summer

Needed

Bible, bookmarks or slips of paper, My (Lord's) Prayer worksheet, pens or pencils



Prepare in Advance

Place bookmarks in your Bible at Matthew 6:9-14 and Luke 11:1-4. Make a copy of the My Lord's Prayer worksheet for each family member.

Activity Plan

1. Gather as a family and begin with prayer:
All-knowing God, bless us as we gather to explore your Word and pray. Amen.
2. Ask a family member to read aloud Matthew 6:9-14 and Luke 11:1-4 from your Bible or from the text at the end of this activity. Compare these two Bible passages with the version of the Lord's Prayer your family or your church uses most often. Discuss your favorite parts of the Lord's Prayer and any parts you wish you could change.
3. Give each person a copy of the My (Lord's) Prayer handout and a pen or pencil. Allow enough time for each person to complete the worksheet. Make sure no one feels rushed. Remind everyone that this is not "mad-libs," and ask them to be serious about it.
4. After everyone has finished the worksheet, ask family members to tell about what they wrote. Make sure not to judge anyone's work.
5. Close by praying your family's prayers. You can pray them all at the same time (don't worry about the parts where the words don't match) or one at a time.

Matthew 6:9-13

⁹ Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

¹² and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Luke 11:1-4

¹ Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." ² And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread,

⁴ and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

My (Lord's) Prayer

- My favorite name for God:
- The place where I feel God's presence most strongly:
- My favorite thing about God is:

My Prayer

O _____, *who is in* _____, *you are* _____.
(favorite name) (place) (favorite thing)

- I hope for _____.
- I need _____.
- Forgive me for _____.
- Help me forgive others for _____.
- Help me deal with _____.
- Protect me from _____.

God, you are all I need, now and always. Amen.

Lightning Bug Prayers

By Beth Gier

School's out, and it's time to ditch the busy schedule. Since prayer is always in season, use this activity to help your family be in conversation with God all summer long!

For

Young Family

Season

Summer

Needed

Bible, paper, pencil

Prepare in Advance

Mark at your Bible at Psalm 119:105; Matthew 5:14-16; and 1 John 1:5.

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin.
God of light, we joyfully greet the arrival of summer and the unhurried fun it brings. Remind us to watch for signs of your loving light in all that we do, and help us to be light to others. Amen.
2. Say that throughout the Bible, the image of light is used to describe God's love for us. Read aloud Psalm 119:105, Matthew 5:14-16, and 1 John 1:5 from your Bible. Discuss:
 - In the Psalm verse, what does God's light do for us and for all people?
 - In the Matthew passage, who is the "light" that Jesus is talking about? What does it mean to "be light" to someone else?
 - In the 1 John verse, what does it mean to say, "God is light"? What does that say about God?
3. Working together, make a list of the special "lights of summer" you might see. (For example: lightning bugs, campfires, fireworks, lightning, sunshine . . . you may think of others!)
4. Talk about how these lights of summer might remind your family to pray. For example, you may agree that whenever you spot a lightning bug, you'll pray for God's loving light to shine on someone who is sick. You may decide that whenever you're sitting around a campfire, you'll pray for God's help to "be light" by doing a random act of kindness the next day.
5. Post your list of summer lights and the prayer prompts you've agreed upon in a prominent place in your home.
6. Close your time together by singing, "This Little Light of Mine."

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine! (repeat 3 times)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine! (repeat 3 times)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Insect Prayers

By Christy Huffman

Ants, beetles, crickets, lightning bugs, mosquitoes—bugs are everywhere during the summer months. Instead of squashing them, learn about them and then say a prayer for others related to the bug's purpose.

For

Young Family

Season

Summer

Needed

Insect guide book or access to insect information online: [University of Minnesota Extension Insect Guide](#) or [The Old Naturalist Insect Guide](#)

Activity Plan

1. During the summer months all types of bugs thrive. Each insect has a purpose, though sometimes it can be detrimental to human beings. Invite children to help you research the insects they see in an insect guidebook or on a website.
2. When a child sees a bug, stop and say a prayer that reflects the bug's purpose. Use the examples below and add your own:
 - Ants: Pray for people who carry heavy loads, like construction workers or truck drivers.
 - Bees: Pray for florists and gardeners who provide flowers to brighten our day.
 - Beetles: Pray for farmers and those who harvest crops.
 - Butterflies: Pray for artists and painters who catch our attention in beautiful ways.
 - Crickets: Pray for musicians who fill our lives with song.
 - Dragonflies: Pray for pilots and rescue squad workers.
 - Firefly/Lightning Bug: Pray for someone who is sad.
 - Mosquitoes: Pray for people who are sick with malaria or West Nile disease and those who care for them.
 - Spiders (are not insects): Pray for people who weave cloth or make clothing.
 - Ticks (are not insects): Pray for people who are sick with Lyme disease or another tick-borne illness and the doctors and nurses who care for them.

Praying for Animals

By Jolene Roehlkepartain

On July 1, 1874, the first U.S. zoo opened in Philadelphia. Celebrate your children's love for animals by including animals in your prayers.

For

Young Family

Season

Summer

Needed

Bible or children's Bible, information about the Philadelphia Zoo: [The Philadelphia Zoo](#)

Prepare in Advance

Mark your Bible or children's Bible at Genesis 1:20-25.

If it is possible for your family to visit a zoo or aquarium, set a date to do so.

Activity Plan

1. Gather as a family and say this prayer aloud to begin:

God, thank you for all the animals you created. Amen.

2. Ask someone to read aloud Genesis 1:20-25 from your Bible or children's Bible or from the text at the end of this activity. Talk about how God created all kinds of animals.

3. Take turns making sounds and acting like an individual animal and having other family members guess which animal is being imitated. Consider these animals:

- Elephant
- Kangaroo
- Alligator
- Rabbit
- Lion
- Dog
- Bird
- Monkey
- Cat
- Duck
- Owl
- Wolf
- Bear
- Fish
- Butterfly
- Frog

4. As a family, choose three animals you enjoyed imitating. Pray for these three animals, and include the sounds they make. For example:

Thank you, God, for lions (roar) that run through the grass. Thank you, God, for ducks (quack) that waddle and swim. Thank you, God, for cats (meow) that purr when we pet them. Take care of all the animals you created. Amen.

5. Look at the website [The Philadelphia Zoo](#). Point out that this was the first zoo to open in the United States. Look at some of the animals that live there.

6. Optional: Visit a local zoo or aquarium. See which animals you like the most. Talk about them.

7. Over the next few days, choose other animals you are thankful for and pray for them.

Whole Body Prayer

By Chip Borgstadt

In 1 Corinthians, Paul describes the church as the body of Christ. Use this image to guide your intercessions and prayers.

For

Adult, Couple

Season

Summer

Needed

Bible, Whole Body Prayer worksheet,

Prepare in Advance

Mark your Bible at 1 Corinthians 12:12-30.

Make a copy of the Whole Body Prayer worksheet for each person.

Activity Plan

1. Approach this activity with a willingness to think creatively and be surprised by the Spirit. Begin by praying aloud:

God, thank you for giving us wonderful bodies, whose parts work together to give us life. Hear our prayers for the body of Christ, and help us work together to glorify you. Amen.

2. Read aloud 1 Corinthians 12:12-30. What is your favorite image from Paul's description?
3. Look over the Whole Body Prayer worksheet. Start with the suggested prayers. Add your own "body part prayers" as the Spirit guides you.
4. Variations: If praying with others, you might take turns praying from toe to head, each person praying for a different body part. Or you can do a bidding prayer, announcing the body part for which you are praying and allowing people time to add their own petitions for that part.
5. After using this approach for a few days, try praying without the guide sheet. You can capture moments at work or during your day when you might pray for the body parts. If those times are very limited, focus on one or two parts that are most in use in your own life at the moment. For example, you might pray for the legs as you are walking on the treadmill at the gym.

Whole Body Prayer

Head: Pray for those who teach.

Eyes: Pray for those who watch out for the safety of others.

Mouth: Pray for those who proclaim the good news of God's love.

Shoulders: Pray for those who carry the burdens of others.

Arms: Pray for those who reach out and care for those who are lonely.

Hands: Pray for those who gather aid for those in need.

Heart: Pray for those who have helped you learn to love.

Backbone: Pray for those who keep you aligned with your traditions and beliefs.

Knees: Pray for those who are faithful in prayer for you and others.

Ankles: Pray for those who help you walk with balance through difficult situations.

Feet: Pray for those who carry the love of Christ to others.

As the Holy Spirit guides your prayers, you will be delighted and surprised by fresh insights into God's work done through the Body of Christ.

Talking Stick Prayers

By Jolene Roehlkepartain

The indigenous peoples of the northwest coast of the United States have used talking sticks to pass around a circle to allow the person holding the stick to talk while others listen. Use a talking stick as a form of prayer.

For

Teen Family

Season

Summer

Needed

Wooden stick, a Bible

Prepare in Advance

Mark your Bible at 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and Philippians 4:6.

Find a wooden stick, such as a yardstick, walking stick, or a stick that's fallen from a tree.

Activity Plan

1. Sit as a family in a circle, perhaps outdoors, and say this prayer aloud to begin: *God, hear our prayers today. Amen.*
2. Read aloud 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and Philippians 4:6 from your Bible or from the text below:

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing.

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

3. Talk about why it's important to pray. What do you think happens when you pray? What are your earliest memories of praying?
4. Hold up the wooden stick and ask who would like to pray first. Give that person the stick to hold while saying a prayer aloud. Encourage a sense of sacredness by having everyone else in the circle listen closely.
5. When the person finishes his or her prayer, have that person give the wooden stick to the person on his or her left. That person prays aloud. Continue in this way around the circle until everyone has had a chance to speak his or her prayer.
6. If teenagers don't know what to pray for, suggest topics such as: what I'm thankful for; what worries me; help the people in this situation, God; or be with me, God, in this situation.
7. Use the talking stick for family prayers in the future.
8. Variation: Decorate a stick to create a family talking stick for prayer. Carve it or add designs with paint or permanent markers.

H₂O Prayers

By Lee Yates

Water is an important part of summer fun for many families. Pools, lakes, oceans, and streams provide recreation. Bottles of water are guzzled after playing in the hot sun. For families in some parts of the world today, water is a luxury. Spend some time praying for those who need water.

For

Teen Family

Season

Summer

Needed

Bible, bowl of water, Internet-connected device

Prepare in Advance

Mark your Bible at Genesis 1:1-10.

Preview the website, [The Water Project](#) and this video [Restoring Hope](#)

Activity Plan

1. Pour water into a bowl and gather around it as a family. Open in prayer. Here are some words if you need them:

Lord of Life, may we enjoy your blessings without taking them for granted. Amen.

2. Read aloud Genesis 1:1-10 from your Bible. Talk about the important role of water in creation—in the world and in your personal lives.
3. Make a list of all the ways you will use water over the summer. These might include water for recreation, hygiene, gardening, laundry, or any other use. It can be a little bit or a lot of water. It can be personal or communal. Work on the list together as a family.
4. Watch the video [Restoring Hope](#). Learn more about the shortage of clean water in many parts of world at [The Water Project](#). Pray for the people you learn about on this site. Be creative about a way to raise money to support this work or another water project. Perhaps you could assign a different amount of money to each water use on your list to contribute to a collection jar each time you use water in that way. You're your donation at the end of the summer.
5. Over the summer, say a specific prayer of thanks each time you use water. You may write a prayer together or use the prayer below:

Creator God, thank you for the gift of water. Help me to have compassion for those who lack clean water. Amen.

Discover Centering Prayer

By Rich Nelson

Looking for a way to make space in your life for listening to God and finding your own spiritual center? Try Centering Prayer.

For

Teen Family

Season

Summer

Needed

A quiet, comfortable place free of interruptions; optional: Internet-connected device

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

God, help us learn to pray with our ears as much as our minds and our mouths. Amen.

2. Comment that people of faith have always searched for a connection with God, and indeed, there are many ways to do this. Oftentimes, this connection is called “prayer,” but for many people that word has a very narrow definition of “saying things to God.” However, prayer can be as much about listening for what God is saying to us! For centuries, Christians have done such listening through a practice called “Centering Prayer.” Given our crazy busy lives, where we hardly ever sit still and de-stress, this prayer practice has a double gift of providing a way to center ourselves in God and to find our own spiritual centers.
3. Centering prayer is not difficult. Follow these steps:
 - Find a comfortable place to sit where you can be quiet for a full 20 minutes. Silence all electronics. Anything shorter than this will not be as effective. If time is a worry, set a timer for 20 minutes, so you don’t have to keep checking the clock.
 - Choose a “sacred word.” Sacred words are short, usually one or two syllables, and are used to help clear your mind of other words. Your sacred word can be anything, such as: silence, Jesus, peace, hope, grace, mercy.
 - Begin by closing your eyes, breathing deeply a few times, and then slowly repeating your sacred word in your mind.
 - After saying your sacred word to yourself for a few minutes, sit silently and stay centered in God’s presence. Try not to think of or say anything during this time.
 - Your mind will wander, and that’s OK. If you find your mind wanders, go back to saying your sacred word. After a while, you will find it easier to be still and calm down.
 - When your 20 minutes is up, you will likely find you feel much more at ease, at peace, and connected with God.
4. If you would like a little more instruction on Centering Prayer, view this [video of Father Thomas Keating](#), who is widely acknowledged as an expert teacher of this prayer practice.
5. Make a commitment to practicing Centering Prayer at least once each week.