

Small Group Guide

praying their way

24

PRAYER
PRACTICES
FOR KIDS
AND
THE ADULTS
WHO LOVE
THEM



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Praying Their Way: 24 Prayer Practices for Kids and the Adults Who Love Them

Small Group Guide

The book *Praying Their Way* is designed to be used in a number of ways. Parents and guardians can use it in their homes to engage kids in conversation about prayer and guide their praying together. Children's ministers, youth ministers, and Sunday school teachers can use the book as a resource to host conversation about prayer with kids and to teach prayer practices to kids. Adults themselves might find the book a meaningful resource to support their own spiritual lives!

The book can also be used fruitfully in a small group setting, where adults who have kids in their lives can read together, discuss, and pray as a way to support one another in fostering the spirituality of kids. As a seven-week study, this book can be used during Lent or any other time of the year, though if used during Lent, the first two weeks will need to be combined.

Some notes to the groups leader about having a positive group experience:

- Use nametags if there's any chance the participants might not know one another well.
- Sit in a circle, if possible.
- Remember, as the leader, you are not the *teacher*. Your job is simply to facilitate discussion and engagement with the book. You don't need to be an expert!
- Agree at the beginning of your first gathering that what is said in the group stays in the group. In order to share vulnerably about life with God and the joys and struggles of leading kids in prayer, participants need the assurance that nothing they say will be repeated outside of the group.
- Remind participants to come to the material with open, honest curiosity and to set aside the tendency to judge—"I like this! I don't like this!" Rather, encourage participants to stay curious and inquisitive when they encounter an idea in the book that seems foreign to them or their experience, or when someone in the group says something they don't understand or they disagree with.
- Make sure the session is not just discussion. Be sure to spend time actually doing some of the prayer practices outlined in the book!
- Encourage participants to read the material *before* coming to the session, having already considered some of the conversation starters at the end of each chapter.
- Communicate with participants between sessions, encouraging them to experiment with using the book in their homes and reminding them which chapters to read for the upcoming session. And remember to thank them for their participation and contribution!

Week One:

Introduction

Week Two:

Chapter 1, "Friendship with God"

Chapter 2, "God Is Here"

Chapter 13, "Ways to Pray with Scripture"

Week Three:

Chapter 3, "God Is Smiling at You"

Chapter 4, "Big Feelings"

Chapter 14, "Ways to Pray That Are Quiet"

Week Four:

Chapter 5, "No Right Way"

Chapter 6, "Answered Prayer"

Chapter 15, "Ways to Pray with Your Body"

Week Five:

Chapter 7, "Open, Available, Responsive"

Chapter 8, "Prayer Is Natural"

Chapter 16, "Ways to Pray in Nature"

Week Six:

Chapter 9, "God the Initiator"

Chapter 10, "Prayer Doesn't Accomplish Anything"

Chapter 17, "Ways to Pray Together"

Week Seven:

Chapter 11, "There's More, So Much More"

Chapter 12, "When and Where"

Chapter 18, "Ways to Pray for Justice"

Outline for a 60-Minute Group Meeting

Gathering (10 minutes):

- Get nametags, grab a snack, settle in. The leader offers an opening prayer.
- In the first meeting, use this time for introductions. Invite participants to say, in one-minute, their name and one thing that draws them to a book/study group on supporting kids in a life of prayer.
- In subsequent sessions, have a brief conversation at the beginning about how it went using the book during the previous week in the home or with kids. Was anyone able to have a conversation about prayer inspired by the book or to use one of the prayer practices? Discuss how it went, what they learned, what was challenges, and where they found joy.

Digging In: (30 minutes):

- Week One: Participants should take time to discuss the Introduction. How do they experience the obstacles the chapter mentions in their own lives and families? Give time for participants to discuss their own longing for a deeper prayer life and longing to help the kids in their lives grow closer to God through prayer. How do

they notice this longing? What have they done before to help the kids in their lives learn to pray? How do they feel like it's going? What are their hopes for their kids' spiritual lives?

- Weeks 2-7:
- Before the session begins, the group leader should select one or two conversation starters at the end of each of the "On Prayer" chapters to use during discussion.
- Discuss the two "On Prayer" chapters one at a time. Give participants two minutes in silence to review the chapter, remembering any questions the chapter raised, insights that struck them in a particular way, how they can see this chapter relating to the kids in their lives, or anything else that seemed worthy of note.
- Lead discussion of the chapter, using the conversation starter to get things going.
- Continue discussion of the chapter by asking, "What else in this chapter struck you that you would like to mention or discuss?" or "What is the one takeaway from this chapter (or conversation) that seems most relevant to you and the kids in your life right now?"
- Repeat with the second "On Prayer" chapter.

Practicing a Way of Prayer: (15 Minutes)

- Before the session begins, the leader should choose one of the practices in the "Ways of Prayer" chapter for the week that they would feel comfortable leading in the group. The leader should take some time to reflect on how they want to do this, remembering they don't have to be an expert—this is simply a chance to experiment with a potentially new way of prayer! The leader should feel free to adapt the script for the practice in any way that seems appropriate.
- Briefly discuss the prayer practice: Has anyone done anything like this before? How do they understand this to be prayer?
- Using the script for the practice, guide the participants in the prayer practice. Remember not to rush and to pause frequently, giving time for the participants to really experience the practice.
- After the practice is finished, the leader can ask: "What was that like? How was that experience? How can you imagine using this practice with the kids in your life?"

Closing: (5 minutes)

- To close the session, the group discusses how they hope to use the book in their lives during the week. Are their possibilities for engaging the kids in their lives in conversation about prayer during the week or using one of the prayer practice in the chapter read for this session? Give participants a chance to name how they hope to do something with the kids in their lives during the week to come.
- Close with prayer, asking especially that the Spirit would guide the participants as they seek to help the kids in their lives grow in friendship with God through prayer.