

ANDY STANLEY COLLECTION

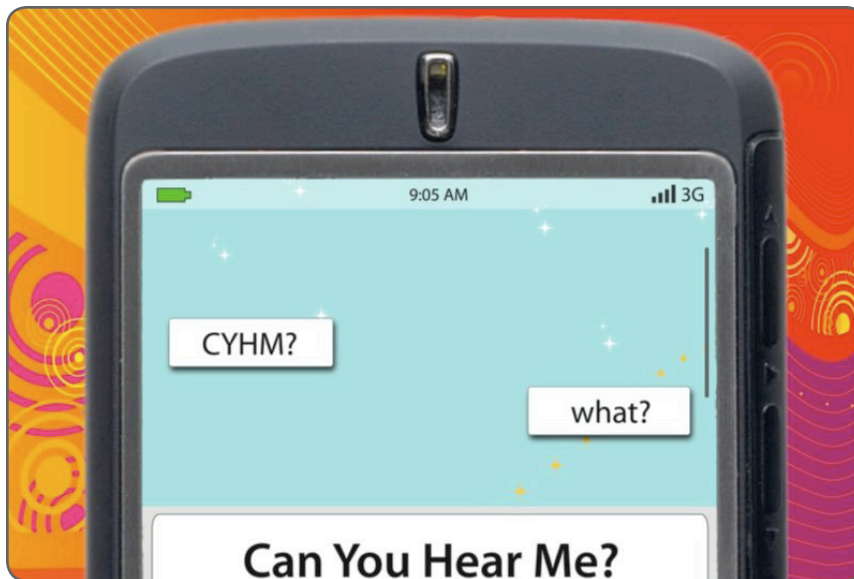
CAN YOU HEAR ME? (1): CUL8R (SEE YOU LATER)

XP3

BOTTOM LINE: INTENTIONAL PRAYER PAVES THE WAY FOR INTIMACY AND RELATIONSHIP.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever noticed how relationships seem to drift apart when we don't get to spend time together? There's just something significant that happens when we intentionally carve out time to connect with a friend or a family member. We get to hear what's on their minds and hearts. We get to see the person beyond just what he or she can do for us, and see who he or she really is. That's the heart of prayer—it's our chance to connect with God in a way that goes beyond "Help me, bless me, protect me, give to me."



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XP3

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DISCOVERY.
PASSION.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Reggie Joiner

WRITER

Andy Stanley

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Jared Herd

XP3 TEAM

Tim Walker
Sarah Bragg
Kristen Ivy
Sarah Anderson

CONTRIBUTORS

Mike Hancock
Laura Whelan
Brian Witham

GRAPHICS & VIDEO

Scott Bragg

TECHNICAL & WEB SUPPORT

Hadley Brandt
Alex VanRossum

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Reggie Goodin

PARTNER SUPPORT

Kristie McCollister
Debbie Joiner

STATEMENT OF FAITH

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ABOUT GOD

God is the one and only true God, yet He exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God is the Creator, so everything belongs to Him and is under His control. God is holy, so He is righteous, majestic and loving. God is all knowing and purposeful, so He's at work to bring about His will. No person, thing or idea compares to God.

ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES

God reveals Himself to us through the Bible, and it is 100% accurate, reliable and authoritative.

ABOUT PEOPLE

People are made in God's image and for His pleasure. But everybody falls short of God's intention, or ideal, for people. In other words, everyone has sinned. As a result, we are all separated from Him, even though He wants an intimate relationship with each of us.

ABOUT SALVATION

That's why Jesus, God's Son, came and lived on this earth, died and rose again. God offers His free gift of salvation to all who believe in Jesus and accept Him as Savior, the only way to be forgiven and reconciled to God. Anyone who accepts this gift is adopted as a son or daughter into God's family and will live with Him forever in heaven.

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CAN YOU HEAR ME? (1): CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT

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We believe that the set, stage, music and everything in your room communicates a message—without you saying a word. That's why we put together a list of production ideas to help you set the stage for the session and the series. From the music you play when students come into the room to the worship set your band plays, we want to make sure that your room conveys "Can You Hear Me?" in a multi-sensory way. There is a downloadable checklist available in your series downloads that will give you all the elements for this session (and the entire series).

BACKGROUND PLAYLIST FOR THE CAN YOU HEAR ME? SERIES

"Livin' On A Prayer" by Bon Jovi (from *Cross Road*)
"Listen" by The Goo Goo Dolls (from *Let Love In*)
"Talk" by Coldplay (from *X & Y*)
"Put Ur Hands Up" by Family Force 5 (from *Business Up Front/Party In The Back*)
"Sitting, Waiting, Wishing" by Jack Johnson (from *In Between Dreams*)
"Give Me Your Eyes" by Brandon Heath (from *What If We*)
"Be My Escape" by Relient K (from *MMHMM*)
"Sweet Talk" by The Killers (from *Sawdust*)
"Awakening" by Switchfoot (from *Oh! Gravity*)
"Don't Speak" by No Doubt (from *Tragic Kingdom*)
"Thank You for Hearing Me" by David Crowder Band (from *Can You Hear Us?*)

WORSHIP PLAYLIST FOR CAN YOU HEAR ME? SESSION 1

"Come and Listen" from David Crowder (from *A Collision*)
"Let God Arise" by Chris Tomlin (from *See the Morning*)
"Our God is Love" by Lee McDerment (from *A Matchlight in the Dark*)
"Walk by Faith" by Jeremy Camp (from *Stay*)
"All Because of Jesus" by Fee (from *We Shine*)

THE SET

When it comes to prayer, most of us are completely distracted by everything around us. For this series, create a sensory and media overload for your students. For instance, you could arrange several TVs around the room or on the stage that are showing different things. They could just be showing static. Do anything that will distract your students while they are gathering. Of course, you will probably want to tone down the distractions once the actual session gets started.

SERIES ART

Art for PowerPoint backgrounds and for series promotional ads is available as a free download with every series. Visit the XP3 web site, log on to your account and download the images to use in your presentation, newsletters and web site.

VIDEO

Both a video bumper and a video communicator are available for the "Can You Hear Me" series as a video download from the reThink store. You can purchase the videos by logging into your XP3 account and clicking on the "XP3 videos" link. The CYHM video communicator was created to be used in Session 3 of this series in place of a live communicator. The bumper video was created to be used as an intro for all three sessions of the CYHM series.

CAN YOU HEAR ME? (1): MIDDLE SCHOOL ADAPTATION

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The following activities and illustrations will help middle school students connect with the subject matter in ways that engage them physically, mentally, socially and sometimes emotionally. You can also adapt *Can You Hear Me?* series for middle school students by using the teaching outline found in this document to edit the teaching script to a 20 minute presentation, and also by using the separate middle school small group dialog questions (found in the series downloads) that are geared specifically for 6th-8th graders.

GAME: TEXTING TRIVIA (Play this game as an icebreaker to Session 1.)

All of our games during this series will be played using cell phones. Today's game is a simple trivia game that everybody can play. Simply ask the entire audience questions and the first one to text you the correct answer is the winner. If you want, you could also play guys vs. girls. Remind your students that normal texting rates apply. You don't want any angry parents! If you have some students who don't have cell phones or are not allowed to text, seat them next to someone else on their team who does have a phone and can text, to help them answer questions. Here are a few sample questions:

1. How many months of the calendar year contain 31 days? 7
 2. What's the last word in the song God Bless America? *Home*
 3. Camels with 2 humps live only on what continent? *Asia*
 4. How many lines long is a haiku poem? 3
 5. Do you have more bones in your body or muscles? *Muscles*
 6. Name one of the first five books of the Old Testament? *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy*
 7. Spell the plural of QUIZ? *Quizzes*
 8. What is $(5 + 7 - 8)$? 4
 9. How many sides does a honeycomb have? 6
 10. What is this new series called we're starting today? *Can you hear me?*
- Tie Breaker. First one to call my cell phone wins!

If you have the ability to put web pages up on a screen, you may also find it fun to create a free texting wall at <http://wiffiti.com>. It's a fun resource that may make it easier to see who the winner is.

ILLUSTRATION: MEET THE PARENTS (Use this clip before teaching point "D" in the INTRODUCTION section of the teaching script.)

When it comes to prayer, we default to those formula prayers because sometimes we're not even sure what we're supposed to do. We may not know what to say or we just don't want to pray out loud. Start the series by playing a clip from the movie *Meet The Parents* starring Ben Stiller as Greg. In this scene, Greg prays a very funny prayer. Start the clip at 24:02 and play until 26:15 at the line "that was interesting."

TEACHING SCRIPT

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The teaching script is divided into five sections.

INTRODUCTION

This introduction is intended to connect you, the communicator, to the audience usually through a personal story or observation. We've included our stories, but you may want to substitute your own story in this section.

TENSION

The tension moves the message from the "me" mentality of the introduction to a "we" mentality. For example, a transition statement might be, "At some point in our lives, we have all been jealous of someone over something."

TRUTH

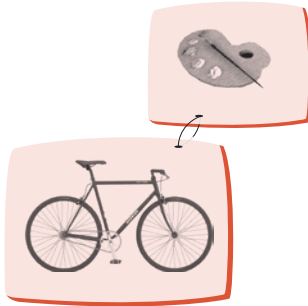
Once the tension builds, the next logical step is to uncover the truth of what the Bible says about the topic.

APPLICATION

At this point, the message moves to a "you" mentality in order to teach the application. The "you" is the student. Take God's truth and unpack how it relates to each student so that he or she can apply it to everyday life.

LANDING

Here it is important to land the message on what each student needs to know and do with what they've heard. Just as the message began with a personal story or observation, the message also ends with a "me" mentality. For example, one possible landing statement might be, "I have a greater sense of purpose knowing that God created me in His image." Leave the students with a clear sense of what all of you should do with what you've heard. Unless otherwise noted, the landing will always set up the small group dialog and give students an opportunity to process and internalize what they've heard.



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**CAN YOU HEAR ME? (1):
CUL8R (SEE YOU LATER)**

TEACHING
OUTLINE

XP3-

PG. 1

BOTTOM LINE: INTENTIONAL PRAYER PAVES THE WAY FOR INTIMACY AND RELATIONSHIP.

INTRODUCTION

Most formula prayers center on the idea of asking God for something.

TENSION

From our perspective, we don't get why God answers some prayers one way, and other prayers a different way.

Some of us decide prayer is just one big flip of a coin.

TRUTH

There was something different about how Jesus prayed.

"Don't be like the hypocrites, for they love standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men" (Matthew 6:5 NIV).

"Don't be like the hypocrites, for they love standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full" (Matthew 6:5 NIV).

"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen (Matthew 6:6 NIV).

"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then, your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:6 NIV).

The reward is the relationship. God invented prayer for you to cultivate a relationship with Him.

APPLICATION

We can talk to God the rest of our lives and never feel connected to Him.

God wants us to understand the fullness of who He is and what He wants for us.

Where is that place? When is that time?

Find a place with few distractions where you can get alone, just you and God.

LANDING

I don't want you to think that prayer is simply asking and waiting.

Where can you carve out time this week to get alone with Him?

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**CAN YOU HEAR ME? (1):
CUL8R (SEE YOU LATER)**

TEACHING
SCRIPT

XP3-

PG. 1

BOTTOM LINE: INTENTIONAL PRAYER PAVES THE WAY FOR INTIMACY AND RELATIONSHIP.

INTRODUCTION

- A. If you're like me, you probably don't remember the very first prayer you ever prayed. I do, however, remember one of the earliest prayers I prayed. It was a prayer that somebody taught me, a prayer where I simply mimicked what I heard. What about you? Maybe your parents taught you a prayer to say at bedtime, or at mealtime, or a prayer asking for safety while you traveled.
- B. One of the first prayers I learned was one I would say every night before I went to bed, and it went something like this:
- “Now I lay me down to sleep.
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.
Amen.”
- Now if you ask me, that prayer seems a little strange—morbid even, especially for a kid. “If I die before I wake”—is that really the last thought a kid should have before he or she falls asleep?
- C. That prayer is what we would call a “formula” prayer. And for a lot of us, that's how our parents, pastors and teachers taught us to talk to God. We just memorized a couple of lines. Most of these formula prayers have one thing in common—they all center on the idea of asking God for something.
- D. Now you may not pray that way anymore, but if you were to evaluate your prayers, you may find that while the words are different from when you were a kid, the intent behind the words is still the same. In fact, all my prayers pretty much go like this, “Help me, bless me, protect me, give to me.” Then if there's time, I also add, “Help, bless, protect and give to everybody in my family and my inner circle of friends.” The names and situations may vary slightly from prayer to prayer, but sooner or later, I usually drift back to me, mine, me, mine, mine. I don't know how it got that way, but it's mostly about me.
- E. There are some of you who used to pray that way, but you don't pray at all now. You quit. And the reason you quit is sort of the same reason I pray. You asked God for something and He didn't answer your prayer. Since you didn't get what you wanted, you quit praying. And the reason I pray is to get what I want, so we're really the same, our motives are the same. We treat prayer the same way. For us, prayer is like putting change in a vending machine and pressing the right buttons so that we can get whatever we want out of it. When we get what we want, it's great, and when we don't, we assume something has drastically gone wrong.
- F. Perhaps in your past you prayed for something really important. Maybe a family member you really loved was dying, and you thought, “God, if there's any prayer to say yes to, it's this one.” Not only did He not answer your prayer the way you wanted, things got even worse. At that point, you decided, “I'm not going to pray anymore; it's just a waste of time. I mean, God doesn't listen. God doesn't answer. God's going to

ANDY STANLEY COLLECTION
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TEACHING
SCRIPT

XP3-

PG. 2

do whatever He wants to do anyway. Why does it even matter? I'm not even sure God's there." And the reason you end up thinking this way is because God didn't do what you thought He should do.

- G. Then there are some of us in here who don't pray at all for other reasons. It's not that we have anything against prayer, in fact we intend to do it, but we just never get around to it. Maybe you just don't feel comfortable praying. Maybe prayer seems silly, or maybe you just don't know what to say. Whatever the reason, prayer is not a part of your life.

TENSION

- A. It feels like we're missing something about prayer, doesn't it? Maybe if we asked differently or maybe if we said just the right words, the answers to our prayers would be different. If we could just find the right formula to unlock all the goodness in the vending machine, then we would be set. But from our perspective, it just doesn't make sense why God answers some prayers one way, and other prayers a different way.
- B. For example, my friend has been out of work for two years now. He's a great guy; smart, professional, funny. He has held his family together through some difficult times, praying like crazy. His wife is praying like crazy; his kids are praying like crazy. But over the course of two years, he cannot find a good job to support his family—even though the entire family has been praying and praying.

But I have this other friend who went car shopping, and had been praying that he would find a car in a ridiculously hard-to-find color in his price range. And sure enough, he went to the car dealership and found a blue car with tan interior, and the price of the car had been slashed to fit his price range.

And I'm thinking, "Okay, time out. God, I don't know how You work this whole thing, but I'm thinking You could have put a little less energy into the car request and shifted it over to the dad who needs a job, right?"

- C. Because of situations like those, some of us decide prayer is just one big flip of a coin, so who cares if you quit praying? Others of us just keep praying because we're afraid not to pray. The whole time we don't know how prayer works, or how God works, but we sure wish we could figure out the code or the combination, get the change in the machine and press the right buttons.

TRUTH

- A. We are going to look at one passage of Scripture this week and next week, and then another passage in our third week, where Jesus actually teaches us how to pray. Now you may be thinking, "I don't need anybody to teach me how to pray. Prayer is just talking to God." I used to think that was all prayer was too. But I think we'll discover in studying these Scriptures that prayer is so much more. It's more than simply talking to God. We're going to look at verses that some of you have read before, and you may be shocked to discover what Jesus says about prayer.
- B. See, there was something different about how Jesus prayed. People noticed it in the words Jesus said and in the way He said them. They noticed it in how He prayed, many times going off in private to pray. There was something different, something appealing, in how Jesus talked to God.

ANDY STANLEY COLLECTION
CAN YOU HEAR ME? (1):
CUL8R (SEE YOU LATER)

TEACHING
SCRIPT

XP3-

PG. 3

- C. So what's the secret? What is so different about how Jesus prays? Listen to how Jesus explains the difference: *"Don't be like the hypocrites, for they love standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men"* (Matthew 6:5 NIV).

From this verse, one thing really stands out to me—it is something that you don't usually hear people make a big deal about, but apparently where you pray is important. You might think, "I can pray anywhere." I agree. I do think you can pray anywhere. I think you can pray anywhere at anytime. But for some reason, when Jesus starts talking about prayer, He talks about a proper place and an improper place to pray.

- D. And the reason isn't because there's something magical about the place, but because the place is tied into something else. Jesus continues to give us insight into what that is:

"Don't be like the hypocrites, for they love standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full" (Matthew 6:5 NIV).

Some people pray just because they like the sound of their own voice. It's not that different from being in a one-sided conversation with someone. You can tell when someone could care less about what you have to say. That person is more engrossed in what he is saying. You're just there so that other people don't think that person is talking to himself. Jesus was referring to people who pray like that, specifically a group of religious people who wanted others to see how religious they were. They prayed public prayers as a spectacle in the synagogues in order to be seen. And Jesus says that people who pray that way will get a reward, but that reward is simply that other people saw them praying and thought how nice that was, or how spiritual that person was. That's all they're going to get. Congratulations. You stood out there for an hour and prayed. That was so moving. That's your reward.

- E. Jesus is explaining prayer as something more than just what religious people do. He's saying that prayer is about more than just the words you say when other people are around—that this conversation with God is more personal, more intimate than that. *"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen"* (Matthew 6:6 NIV).

This is a real shift in how many of us have been taught to pray. Most of us pray on the run. We pray that quick prayer before walking into class for the big test. Or before we walk down that certain hallway at school. *"God, please fix that, help that, stop that."* But there's something different about intentionally carving out time for someone. There's something intentional about meeting someone one on one. It's a different kind of relationship when you've made time to talk and meet with someone.

- F. Now listen to what Jesus says after that: *"Go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen."* Now check this out; here's a promise: *"Then, Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you"* (Matthew 6:6 NIV). The little Greek word here for "reward" means repay. And that might cause you to think, "Now, that's what I'm talking about. If the reason I haven't gotten what I want from God is because I haven't gone into my room and closed the door, I'm going to go home right now, go straight to my room, close the door, and pray that God will get me into college with a full scholarship. If going into my room and closing the door is the magic formula, if that's what it takes to get what I want out of God, then

ANDY STANLEY COLLECTION
**CAN YOU HEAR ME? (1):
CUL8R (SEE YOU LATER)**

TEACHING
SCRIPT

XP3-

PG. 4

I'll go to my room and close the door." But here is the thing, Jesus doesn't promise that—fortunately. The reward of going in your room and closing the door is not that you'll get everything you want from God.

- G. But there is a reward, and this verse promises you that the God who sees you in secret, the God who sees you intentionally carving out time for Him, the God who sees you doing something more than "help me, bless me, give me" while on the run, will take notice. You will be rewarded, and you know what? I think every person listening to this who has made it a habit in the morning or afternoons or evenings to get alone with God in a specific spot at a specific time could tell us what they think that reward is and we would all be on the same page. The reward is the relationship. God invented prayer for you to cultivate a relationship with Him. And this relationship is characterized by closeness and connection.

APPLICATION

- A. The best way to explain it is this: Think about your closest friend. Now, imagine if the only time you ever talked to or spent time with this person was in passing, at random intervals during the week—the only time, ever. Maybe a wave in the hallway, a quick chat in the lunch line, a word or two exchanged while you're changing out for P.E. or whatever. That's it. That's all the interaction you had with this friend. Ever. If your only conversations were like that, you could sit three feet from that person and feel completely disconnected, like you didn't know anything about him or her at all. Why? It isn't because you're not talking, because you are still talking. It's because there is a huge difference between talking to this friend randomly, and intentionally carving out and planning time to connect with that friend. It's just different. One deals with the chaos and randomness of life; the other deals with a closer connection and relationship. That is a mirror of what God wants with you and me.
- B. Because here's the reality—we can talk to God the rest of our lives and never feel connected to Him. If we don't go into our rooms—or wherever that place is where you and God can meet—we are missing out. A connection happens when we decide to spend time with God on a regular basis. There's nothing magic about the place, but there is something amazing about being that focused and that intentional about your time, your relationship with God.
- C. I understand getting discouraged when God doesn't do what we want, but that wouldn't frustrate us so much if we understood the big picture. And the big picture is easier to see and understand when in relationship with God. God wants a relationship with you more than anything. He's proved that time and time again. God wants us to understand the fullness of who He is and what He wants for us. But that's not going to happen randomly and occasionally.
- D. It's not going to happen when there's a real need staring you in the face like that big exam you're walking into or when a friend says, "Shoot up a prayer for me." If that's what your prayer life is limited to, you're not going to get it. If the only time you pray is when you're in this group, or when you break off into your small groups, you're not going to get it. You're not going to experience this. You're not going to be able to identify with people who say they have a personal relationship with God. You'll see people who have this close connection to God and think, "How can I have that with God?"

God says, "That happens when you go into your room, close the door, and you're intentional about spending time with Me."

ANDY STANLEY COLLECTION
CAN YOU HEAR ME? (1):
CUL8R (SEE YOU LATER)

TEACHING
SCRIPT

XP3-

PG. 5

- E. So where is that place? And when is that time? In my life, nothing happens randomly. I have friends all the time who, when I see them, I say, “We should get together,” but it never happens unless I intentionally make a plan to get together with them. The same thing happens with God. I don’t just “find time” to get alone and pray, I have to make time. For me, it’s in the morning, early, before my kids wake up. For you, it may be late at night. If I tried to do that, I would fall asleep. It just works differently for each of us but there is one common denominator—it has to be intentional or it will never happen.
- F. And if you can’t find the time, then take something out of your schedule. Maybe it means that you don’t check your MySpace or Facebook every night. For others, it may mean that you don’t watch TV for hours. For some of you, it means waking up a little earlier. If you don’t have the time, cut something else out. If you don’t make the time, it will never happen.
- G. And the room you decide to pray in may not be your actual room at all—especially if you share it with a brother or sister. Your room may be the den in the basement. Or the back porch. Or the bathroom. Find a place with few distractions where you can get alone, just you and God. Then close the door, and spend time with Him.

LANDING

- A. You know what I don’t want for you? I don’t you to spend your whole life missing out on what God ultimately has for you personally and relationally. I don’t want any of us to wake up one day so disappointed with God because we pleaded and pleaded with Him, thinking that was all there was to prayer.
- B. What a tragedy! I don’t want you to think prayer is simply asking and waiting, or like putting change in a vending machine. Because Jesus so specifically said, “I want you to go in your room and close the door. And here’s the promise—when your unseen Father sees you alone in private, He will reward you with a relationship like none other in your life. I promise.”
- C. And having figured that much out, next week we’ll look at how Jesus teaches us to pray, what we say when we get alone with Him. But for now, I want you to be intentional about the time you do spend talking with Him. How is it going to happen? Where can you carve out time this week to get alone with Him?
- D. If you never do this, it’s not going to bother me. The reality is I won’t know. I would just hate for you to spend your whole life missing out. If we’re going to pray anyway, why not learn how to pray in a way that connects you to God in a deeper way? If we’re going to pray anyway, why not pray the way Jesus instructed us to pray? And when you go into your room, or wherever, and close the door behind you, the unseen Father will see you in secret and reward you.

[TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS]

SMALL GROUP DIALOG: HIGH SCHOOL

CAN YOU HEAR ME?
CUL8R

WEEK 1

XP3

**BOTTOM LINE: INTENTIONAL PRAYER PAVES THE WAY FOR INTIMACY AND RELATIONSHIP.
SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: MATTHEW 6:5-6**

Like having a secret clubhouse or a favorite corner of the playground, God wants to have a special place—a hideout—with each one of us. The big surprise when it comes to prayer is that where we pray matters to God. As revelatory as this may be, your goal this week is to take whatever time is needed to understand where your students are when it comes to the topic of prayer. Have they ever prayed before? What do they think about prayer? Do they have misconceptions or frustrations holding them back from praying? Let this week's conversation open up some of your group's struggles and frustrations. Don't feel the need to give a solution right away. Prayer is complicated and difficult to talk about. It's important to create a space for your students to feel comfortable being honest about a difficult topic.

CREATE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION. ADJUST QUESTIONS AS NEEDED, AND DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO ANSWER ALL OF THEM.

1. What did you think of the talk this week? What did you hear the speaker say?
2. What are your first memories of prayer? Did you learn a formula prayer? Who taught it to you?
3. Before tonight, what would you say if someone were to ask you, "Why do you pray?"
4. What frustrates you about prayer?
5. Would you say you pray (1) Too much; (2) Just about the right amount; or (3) Not as much as you "should"? (It's important to remember there is no "should" here. God doesn't give us a number of times to pray each day.)
6. When you don't pray, what keeps you from praying? (Maybe things never seem to work out the way you want, maybe it feels like no one is listening, maybe you don't know what to say, maybe you run out of time, etc.)
7. Where do you most typically pray? (In your car, on the bus, in the hallway, on the field)*
* If you have a student who already has a special place to pray where they are alone with God, you might ask him or her to share about that experience. Why did they choose their special place, and what difference do they think it makes?
8. Read Matthew 6:6. Why do you think Jesus taught his disciples to go to a special place to pray? How do you think the places you pray affect the way you pray?
9. God wants a relationship with you more than anything. If we keep this big picture in mind, how would this affect the way you approach prayer?
10. What is the tragedy of not ever getting the right perspective on prayer?
11. Where is a place that you can be intentional about spending time with God this coming week?

NEXT STEP

Decide as a group that you will each go home and find a place where you can get alone with God. Test it out. You may find your special place has problems (i.e. you fall asleep, your parents interrupt you or you are distracted by things around you). Come next week ready to share your special prayer place with the group.

Note for small group leader: Part of the XP for this series involves you following up with your students this week and encouraging them to find a place they can use to pray.

SMALL GROUP DIALOG: MIDDLE SCHOOL

CAN YOU HEAR ME?
CUL8R

WEEK 1

XP3

**BOTTOM LINE: INTENTIONAL PRAYER PAVES THE WAY FOR INTIMACY AND RELATIONSHIP.
SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: MATTHEW 6:5-6**

Like having a secret clubhouse or a favorite corner of the playground, God wants to have a special place—a hideout—with each one of us. The big surprise when it comes to prayer is that where we pray matters to God. As revelatory as this may be, your goal this week is to take whatever time is needed to understand where your students are when it comes to the topic of prayer. Have they ever prayed before? What do they think about prayer? Do they have misconceptions or frustrations holding them back from praying? Let this week's conversation open up some of your group's struggles and frustrations. Don't feel the need to give a solution right away. Prayer is complicated and difficult to talk about. It's important to create a space for your students to feel comfortable being honest about a difficult topic.

CREATE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION. ADJUST QUESTIONS AS NEEDED, AND DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO ANSWER ALL OF THEM.

1. How would you rate your prayer life on a scale from 1-10? (One = I have never prayed; Ten = God would say I've got this prayer thing down)
2. Does praying come naturally to you? What keeps you from praying more often? (Maybe things never seem to work out the way you want, maybe it feels like no one is listening, maybe you don't know what to say, maybe you run out of time, etc.)
3. Have you ever been frustrated with prayer? Why?
4. Describe your typical prayers: Where do you pray? When do you pray? How long do you pray? What do you usually pray about?
5. Thinking about your answer to the last question, what do your prayers tell you about why you pray? Are your prayers only give me, bless me or protect me prayers?
6. If the point of prayer is a better relationship with God—and not just give me, bless me, protect me—how does that change the way you think about prayer?
7. How does spending time alone with someone strengthen your relationship? Is it the same if there are always a lot of people around?
8. Why do you think Jesus said finding a special place to pray—away from distractions—is important? Do you have a place like that? If not, where could you find a place like that?
9. What is something you learned from the lesson this week?

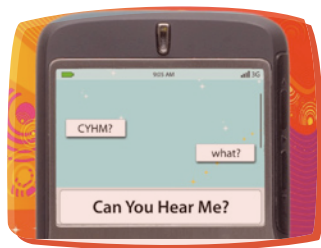
NEXT STEP

Decide as a group that you will each go home and find a place where you can get alone with God. Test it out. You may find your special place has problems (i.e. you fall asleep, your parents interrupt you or you are distracted by things around you). Come next week ready to share your special prayer place with the group.

Note for small group leader: Part of the XP for this series involves you following up with your students this week and encouraging them to find a place they can use to pray.

THE XP: CAN YOU HEAR ME? TEACH US TO PRAY

XP3



While it would be great to have some kind of group experience to guarantee students get what prayer can be, it would go against everything we're talking about in this series. Prayer is about relationship—my relationship with God, your relationship with God. While there is a time and a place for public prayer, the kind of prayer we've talked about in this series is meant to build that one-on-one relationship between an individual and God.

That's why this XP is created as an individual experience, encouraged by the small group leaders.

TEACH US TO PRAY

This XP is designed to be done in two stages, after Sessions 1 and 2, with a follow-up during Session 3. The small group leaders will introduce and follow-up with students as they see how this experience works in their lives, in their daily routines and environments.

WEEK 1: The Place

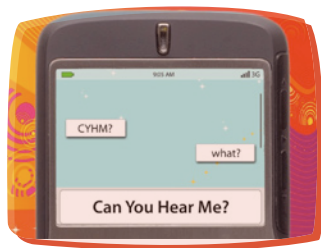
The challenge for this part of the XP is to encourage students to find a place where they can get alone with God and pray. For some students this will be easy. For others, it may require some creativity. As a small group leader, dialog with students this week as they, through trial and error, try to find that "place" where they can intentionally carve out time with God to build a relationship with Him. Here are some suggestions you can provide to help them achieve that goal:

- Your room. Okay, this one is obvious. But for many of us, our rooms are very distracting. It's where we get online to talk with our friends, or sit and watch TV for hours, or play video games or talk on the phone. So it may take some work to minimize the distractions. Shut down all the electronics. You may even want to consider taking some old sheets and covering up those things that seem to beckon you when things get too silent. If the room is too quiet, find some quiet music to play in the background—maybe some worship songs you enjoy. If you share a room, ask your brother or sister for some scheduled time alone, or take advantage of the extra hour or so he or she may not be home due to a difference in schedule.
- Find another room. Sometimes your room just isn't an option. If that's the case for you, consider finding another place in your house where you and God can hang out and talk. Is it the basement? A guest bedroom? A bathroom? Your mom or dad's home office? Talk with your parent, tell him/her why you need this time alone, and ask him/her for assistance in finding that place where you and God can meet on a regular basis.

THE XP: CAN YOU HEAR ME?

TEACH US TO PRAY

XP3



- Get outside. Is there a place in your yard where you can get alone and talk with God? If it's winter, you may not want to do this. But if the weather is warmer, you can find a chair on a back porch, or a bench in the yard. Or even your old tree house.

(Note for small group leaders: These are just a few suggestions. Your students may come up with some that work great for their unique situations. Spend some time brainstorming ideas in small group time, then follow-up with students via e-mail, Facebook/MySpace, or phone call this week to find out how it's going.)

WEEK 2: The Conversation

So what do you do when you get to that designated place? What do you say? What happens in that room, that place between you and God? Here are some questions to move beyond just "help me, bless me, protect me, give to me" prayers. Small group leaders, e-mail these questions to your students this week.

Read through the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13).

Acknowledge God's greatness.

Below are some ideas and thoughts that may help you do this.

- Start with asking yourself, what amazes you about God? What makes you in awe of Him?
- What has He done in the past that has shown you how much bigger He is than what is going on around you? Was it a Bible verse or song? A sunset? A waterfall? An encouraging note? A phone call from a friend? A word from a stranger?
- Read Psalm 103 and Job 38-41 and take the time to praise God for being as big as He is.

Surrender your will.

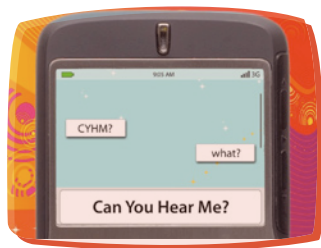
- What are some areas of your life you are really wanting your way in right now?
- Why do you want your way more than God's way? What do you think God's way is in this particular circumstance?
- What would it take for you surrender to God's way of doing things?
- Do you think you are ready to do that, or do you need to wait? If you aren't there yet, tell God that you're willing to work on it, and then make a time to come back and talk about it with Him some more.

Declare your dependency on God.

- What are some things He has provided for you this year? This month? This week? (a home, food, clothes, an education, family)
- What do you have that you are dependent on God for? Take the time to thank Him for it. If God hadn't provided these things for you, where would you be?

THE XP: CAN YOU HEAR ME? TEACH US TO PRAY

XP3



- What are some areas in your life where you realize your intelligence, your experience, your resources are just not enough to help you? In other words, what are some areas where you really need God?
- How can you declare your dependency on God in those areas?

Week 3: Follow-up

At the beginning of the small group dialog for Session 3, spend some time letting students share about their personal experience with praying this way. The last session of the series focused on persistence in prayer. At the end of the small group time, encourage students to continue going to the special prayer place even after this series has ended. Ask them to consider the following questions the next time they get alone with God to pray. You may even want to allow students to share some of those requests so that as a group, you can join with them and keep praying as well.

- What is that one prayer that you won't let go of?
- What is the one request that seems so big, and so unlikely, but means so much to you, that you can't quit asking for it? Do you ever want to give up? Why or why not?
- What will keep you asking?
- If God still says "no", is your will surrendered to His—can you be okay with that answer?
- Encourage your students to keep asking for those things that just seem too big, too important to let go.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions about this XP, you can contact the XP3 team at xp3@rethinkgroup.org. Also, we would love to see pictures and hear stories about how this XP impacted your group. E-mail us and let us know, or post a message on the XP3 Facebook fan page.

HOME XP: CAN YOU HEAR ME?

XP3

[FOR STUDENT PASTOR]

The week before you begin *Can You Hear Me?*, e-mail the parents of your students to inform them about the new series. This will help keep your parents in the know, and it will give them an opportunity for discussion points with their child. You may also want to include updates or reminders about important upcoming events, registration deadlines, retreats or church projects. Attach pictures or links to your web site so that parents can see what is happening in your ministry. Use the e-mail to encourage your parents and celebrate each other's successes.

Copy and paste the following description into your e-mail to help convey the main goal of this series.

E-mail for parents:

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

Doesn't it seem like there should be more to prayer than just our typical "Help me, bless me, protect me, give to me" prayers? Prayer has to be more than just talking to God—because He knows our thoughts, right? It has to be more than just us making our requests known to God—because doesn't He already know everything that's going on in our lives? It's like there's some secret, some mystery we hope to unlock so we can "get through" to God. If we could just say the right words, maybe we can break the code and get a "yes" to all our requests. But what if prayer was something much bigger than that? What if prayer went beyond us getting what we wanted, and became about how to grow closer to God's heart instead? What if prayer wasn't just about changing our present situation, what if it was about changing us?

Week One (include date)

Have you ever noticed how relationships seem to drift apart when we don't get to spend time together? There's just something significant that happens when we intentionally carve out time to connect with a friend or a family member. We get to hear what's on their minds and hearts. We get to see the person beyond just what he or she can do for us, and see who he or she really is. That's the heart of prayer—it's our chance to connect with God in a way that goes beyond "Help me, bless me, protect, give to me."

Week Two (include date)

If we spend time with God intentionally, if we make time for Him, then what do we say to Him when we get alone with Him? What are the things we talk about? After all, He knows everything about us, our lives and our world. It's not like we have any "news." It's not like we have to give Him an update on how things are going. So what do we talk about? In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus focuses on three things, and leads us through a process that will not only change our perspective about what is going on around us, but also our perception of God.

Week Three (include date)

We can't talk about prayer without addressing the obvious question—what happens when God doesn't answer? Jesus has a surprising response to that—you keep asking. Because if something is that important to you, if something has captured your heart that strongly, then it's something that you can't let go. It's something you can't simply walk away from. So keep asking. And Jesus says that maybe, just maybe, God will honor your persistence.

HOME XP: CAN YOU HEAR ME?

XP3

PARENT CUE:

WHY I TAKE MY SON TO YOUTH GROUP

By Tim Walker

It's funny how much I knew about parenting before I became one. I had all these absolute statements and strong ideas about what I would and wouldn't do—usually based on how I felt my parents handled something or based on something I observed around me. "I'll never let my kids pitch a fit in the store." "I'll never tell my kids, 'Because I said so.'"

I knew so much—until I brought my son home from the hospital. Then I realized how little I knew. And it doesn't get any better. Each new stage, each year, brings new challenges. Just when I think I have things figured out, some new surprise comes along. Now I look at new dads and have empathy instead of criticism.

I also have a new perspective on how my parents handled things, and realize that while they didn't handle every situation perfectly, I'm certainly not capable of perfection either. There are too many factors that go into seeing a situation so clearly—my own history, my fears, my mood, plus my wife's history, mood, and fears.

So at this point in the journey, with a middle school student in my house, I can honestly say I don't know everything about being a dad. But I do know one thing—I can't do this alone.

I can sense it every day. I can see my son looking for some other figure in his life, in addition to his dad and mom. I can feel him wanting to be a part of the grown-up world, and have other adults in his life who can connect with him. Cooler adults. Adults who can throw the football better than me. Adults who like the same teams he does.

And as much as I think I can be all that for my son, the reality is I can't. I need other people. I'm not stepping down from my job. I'm still here as a dad, but I need other people who will pour good things into him. I need other people who will reinforce some of the things I've tried to teach him about God, about character, about being a man.

That's what youth group is for me. It's that place where my son can connect with other teens, but also other adults. I don't expect my 20-something student pastor to give me parenting advice. In fact, honestly, I would be a little insulted if he did. When he becomes a parent and has teenagers, then we'll talk. But the thing the people in that room get that I struggle with is how to connect with my changing son. That's what they are passionate about. And quite honestly, that's what they are good at. Whether it's through playing a silly game or having a time of worship, they are passionately pursuing ways to connect with kids like my son.

That's why I drop him off at youth group. That's why I pay the \$10 for an outing, or sign the permission form, or become the carpool for his friends. Because I know I can't do it alone. I also know that I have a role to play here. I'm still dad, but to help my son move to adulthood, I need other adults pouring into him as well.

HOME XP: CAN YOU HEAR ME?

XP3

I don't have this parenting thing figured out. And I have a feeling it's a constant learning process. But one thing I do know is that my son needs me, but he also needs more than me. And that's a good and natural thing. I just need to find a good place where he can find that.

So when he comes home covered in oatmeal after eating it out of a trough as part of some kind of crazy middle school game, I know that oatmeal is more than just something I have to clean up, it's part of him finding connection to some very good things.

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