

MSG PRAYER LAB

Below are the four prayer “laboratories” we experienced at MSG. We send these with you in hopes that one of them might become part of your regular activity in youth ministry. Perhaps a group of your youth could be in ministry leading one of these activities for the church council, WELCA, children’s Sunday School, or a men’s ministry group. Please use or adapt these to make them work for you. Pray on!!

Doodle Prayer: God is moving us to know those close to us.

Intercessory prayer is such a clunky word but at the same time is a beautiful way for us to “be Christ” for each other. It simply means that we are going to enter another person’s “stuff” and pray for it. We do it all the time in worship. Ya know, we pray for the church, the world, the environment, for leaders, for the sick or grieving, and for our ministries. THIS PRAYER focuses in on ONE PERSON. All you need is a simple sheet of paper. In the bottom corner draw a box, or as we call it, “A garage.” To start all you do is draw your person (remember stick people are just fine), then you start to draw all things that are in that person’s life. Draw their family, where they work, where they learn, where they play, what they like to do, and maybe their joys or struggles. If your mind wanders to something you need to do, or something you are worried about, draw it in the garage, then go back to drawing or doodling about the person. Just the doodling is a form of prayer. You can also put down your pencil and offer prayers of thanks for all the things God has put in your person’s life, and you can offer prayers that God might be moving in the trouble spots in that person’s life. Don’t forget to offer prayers for the things in your garage because those are important too. Doodle away!

Prayer in images: God is moving us to know those far away from us.

Collect magazine pictures, newspaper photos, photos from the internet, or photos you or another person have taken, really of anything. They can be photos of disaster, beauty, of pain, of unity, of love, you get the picture ☺. Pin or tape them to the wall at the approximate height of people’s eyes so they can easily focus on them. You are creating an art gallery for people to pray their way through. The participants will stroll through the gallery in pairs and stop to think what the images might be telling them about people’s needs and joys, and then to pray for them. You can do this as individuals, pairs or group. If you are doing it as more than one person, talk about what you see. Do you see joy? Do you see anger? Do you see hopelessness? Your partner(s) might see something you had not thought of. Then one of you offer a prayer that God would be active in whatever you saw. So if I saw an image of disaster. I would pray that God would be working to provide shelter, or send aid, or send emergency workers. If I saw a picture of kid’s playing I would give thanks to God for joy in the world and I might ask God to help me be that joyful. Now you get the picture!

Prayer Labyrinth: God is moving us to know ourselves.

Many Christians and churches are rediscovering an ancient prayer practice: a labyrinth. A labyrinth is a geometrically designed walking path leading to and from a central point. A labyrinth is simply a place to walk and pray. There is nothing mystical about it. It gives you the freedom to walk around while talking to God. You can make a simple labyrinth using rope, stones, or really anything that marks the path. You can also print paper labyrinths to trace with a finger or a pencil if space or mobility is an issue. A simple Google Image search will show the basic pattern for setting this up. Here are just a few ways to use a labyrinth:

- 1) Ask God a question as you enter the path. Then, as you walk slowly through the twists and turns, listen for an answer. Let your steps and your silence invite the presence and guidance of God.

2) Start your journey to the center with confession. When you reach the center, journey out with naming all the ways you have let God work through you: your thoughts, your words, and your actions. Pause at the exit and give thanks for your cleansing journey.

3) Lay down your burdens as you walk to the center of the labyrinth (perhaps imagine yourself laying down pebbles along the way as symbols of your worries or cares). In the center, pause to thank God for taking your burdens on himself (1 Peter 5:7). Then count your blessings and give thanks on the journey to the exit.

Stretch Prayer: God is moving us closer to knowing our possibilities and limitations.

When we stretch before a sport activity, we are increasing our flexibility. We are increasing our body's capacity to do more. Sometimes the workouts even cause pain as the muscles stretch and tear making even more muscle fiber grow so that we can do more. This stretch prayer reminds us that as we lift, carry, or walk doing things in faith, God is active in strengthening us. This prayer also reminds us that we all have limits too. When we stretch we find the end of our range, the limit of what we can do. We can only do so many "reps" in faith activity before we need to rest, or, that we need more bodies so that we can share the load.

Find someone who can safely lead a basic series of stretches. Have another person offer petitions of prayer related to each of the areas the leader is stretching. This could include:

Neck Stretch side to side-

God, we know that you want us to turn our head to see people that are hurting, or to see when people have joy. Increase our ability to turn our head to look for other's joy and pain.

Neck Stretch up and down-

God, we spend so much time looking straight at a goal. Increase in us the ability us to look up at the wonder of your creation. The stars at night, the deep blue of a winter sky, the wonder of puffy clouds or even the power of thunderstorm. Increase in us the ability us to look down at the earth under our feet, to stretch ourselves to see that you created the flowers and grass, the snow and the ice, or even to look down see the beauty and joy of little children.

Arm stretch-

God, you gave us arms that were made to hug a friend, to wave at a stranger, to carry boxes for the food shelves, or to rescue from danger. We forget to use them and they get weak. Or we use them to destroy what you have made. Help us to feel you strengthening our arms for service.

Sitting stretch-

God, we get restless and think our bodies need to move all the time. Help us in this sitting stretch to remember that you give us the flexibility to sit with someone who is sad, or who is angry, or who feels forgotten, that sitting with these people takes endurance and it takes strength. Increase our ability to remain with those who are hurting as long they need us.

Leg stretch-

God, you made these legs to move us around. We get all stiff and forget to jump for joy. Or we get too weak or lazy and can't get across the street to help a neighbor or visit a friend or stranger. In this stretch help us to feel you working to make us able to run laps of doing your work. In our homes, in our schools, in our towns.

Calf Stretch-

These calves were made for climbing God. We climb to play in tree forts with our brothers, sisters and cousins, we climb the stairs at school to learn, and we climb into the bleachers to cheer for our teams. We climb up trails to see wonderful sights. Thanks for all the places our calves take us. God increase our ability to go uphill. Even though we have faith, we will have hills to climb and we know that you will give us the strength we need and let us know when it is time to rest.

Interested in more interactive prayer experiences?

Check out the "Candle Time Prayer Kit" and "Heart Ignite" resources at www.peerministry.org/shop!