

Nongathered Prayer and Worship Strategies

Prayer Cards for Youth

This strategy provides prayer resources for young people in both the critical and the ordinary times of their lives. Although the prayer cards can be distributed at gathered youth programs, placed in receptacles in the church, printed in newsletters, or sent directly to young people through the mail, reading and praying the cards also provide a non-gathered prayer opportunity for the youth. These prayers can also be included in prayer services done at gathered youth programs. Use one or more of the prayers below in a suitable format.

Prayer in Times of Uncertainty

Dear Jesus,

Sometimes it's hard to be a teenager. I feel a lot of pressure from my parent(s), teachers, and friends. Everyone has an opinion about what I should be doing. I often wonder who comes first? Whom am I trying to please?

Every day I face many choices. Deep down, I want to do what is right and pleasing to you. I just don't know what that is sometimes. I know you love me and want me to make good choices too. So I am asking you for help. Help me to listen well and to trust those who care about and love me. I know they have my best interest at heart.

Give me the courage and strength to follow your example in all that I do. For I know that if I follow your example of love, I will always make the right choice. Amen.

Prayer When Faced with a Challenge

Dear Jesus,

Sometimes I am afraid of the challenges that face me. I am afraid I might fail or look foolish in the eyes of my family and friends. I wonder if I am good enough, if I "measure up." Most of the time, I just want to blend in, to be part of the background of my school and family. It feels safer to be anonymous than to risk receiving the attention of others, even when that attention is "good" attention.

It takes courage and strength to be my real self and to let my talents and gifts shine through. It takes hard work to receive good grades, to be a musician, to compete as an athlete, or to be a productive family member.

Jesus, please help me discover what talents you gave me. Help me apply myself and use these gifts. Give me the confidence to face the test(s) put before me, especially for [name the test or challenge before you]. Assist me in persevering and working hard to refine my gifts so I may be a reflection of you. Amen.

Prayer at Graduation Time

Dear Jesus,

As I look back on these last years of high school, it's hard to believe that graduation is finally here. When I was in my first year of high school, I thought this time would never come. It seemed so far away. Now I wish time would slow down a little and let me catch up.

It seems that I have so much to do in so little time. There are friends and family members I want to spend more time with. I am trying to prepare myself for moving on, making new friends, and being in a new environment. While part of this is exciting, it is also scary. Letting go of what I know, what is familiar to me, my school, friends, and family, is hard.

Jesus, give me the courage I need to move on and to begin a new adventure. Give me the confidence I need to reach out to new people and to try new things. Help me to remember that even when I feel alone, you are with me. Remind me that my family is also there for me, supporting me as I continue the process of becoming an adult. Help me to reach out to them when I have questions or am unsure of what to do. Amen.

Prayer When First Driving a Car

Dear Jesus,

I have waited for this moment for a long time. I can't wait to get behind that wheel and be on my own. I have been practicing and learning the rules of the road, and I feel ready for this responsibility.

Jesus, help me to be a good driver. Keep me alert, calm, and cautious as I drive. Never let my actions cause injury to anyone. Keep me safe from harm. Protect me from those who drive without caution or concern for others.

I especially pray for my parent(s) at this time. They are anxious about my driving. Quiet their fears, and give them peace of mind when I am driving. Help them to know that I love them and that I would never knowingly cause injury to another or myself. Amen.

Prayer Cards for Adults

This strategy provides prayer resources for parents and other adult members of the community during both critical and ordinary times of their lives. Although the prayer cards can be distributed at gathered parent or other adult programs, placed in receptacles in the church, printed in newsletters, or sent directly to parents and parishioners through the mail, reading and praying the cards also provide a non-gathered prayer opportunity on behalf of the youth of the community. Additionally, such experiences remind the community about the presence and importance of the young in their midst. These prayers can also be included in prayer services done at gathered parent or adult programs.

Prayer for Teenagers

We pray for teenagers who pass notes in class,
 who poke holes in their textbooks, who doodle during lectures.
 And we pray for those whose picture is not in the yearbook but in a
 lineup,
 who can't come to school in the "right" kind of shoes,
 who have to live in places we wouldn't be caught dead in,
 who never get to go to a rock concert, who are invisible to the world.
 We pray for teenagers who forget their lunch money and miss the bus
 regularly,
 who spend all their allowance before Monday morning,
 who worry about making it onto the football team.
 And we pray for those who have no room to clean up,
 who take care of little brothers and sisters while parents work,
 who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep.

We pray for all teenagers, regardless of where they live, how much money they have, and what color their skin is, because in each one of us God has poured forth all his love.

Prayer for a Parent of a Teenager

Dear God,

It seems like such a long time ago when I was young. Sometimes it's hard to remember those challenging—exhilarating—difficult—wonderful—changing times of adolescence. Sometimes it seems like yesterday.

But now my own child is the teenager and I'm the parent. While some of the experiences look familiar, so much has changed. What a surprise: [insert name of child] is going through such changes in life, but I'm the one who often feels unsure and confused. What's the right thing to do? How do I show my love without smothering? Is there a way to hold on and to let go at the same time? These are the questions of my life now, Lord. If you can't give me all the answers, at least help me live the questions better.

Give me the strength to remember that a parent's love is the only love that moves toward separation. This is the time in life when we're really going to begin that journey. Help me maintain connection, while slowly letting go. Enable me to be caring and concerned while allowing my son [daughter] to begin taking on the responsibilities that are his [hers]. Don't let me give up my responsibilities either—but remind me that we are in a relationship marked by change and that change is good, for it leads my child to adulthood.

You know that love often means sacrifice and that embracing life often means offering it up. Let your love be the character of my parenting so that your life may be mirrored in me. Amen.

Prayer for an Adult Community Concerned About Its Young

God of us all,

Perhaps we should put signs above our churches and homes that read, "You are being watched!" For this is the truth of our lives. In the wonder of your creation, you have given us the young to renew us, to challenge us, to be our promise and our legacy. But most of all, you have given the young the task of watching us.

Sometimes that thought makes us uncomfortable. It's much easier to preach and lecture than to realize that they will learn more about life from the way *we* live, that the character of their love will reflect more on the depth of *our* love, and that the choices they make will often say more about the priorities *we* hold. Although they grow toward independence, they are never divorced from their community. Our life, our love, our priorities, and our choices will all be reflected in their emerging selves.

You are the source of life and love and community. Through the death and Resurrection of your Son, you enabled one life to form an entire community. Now help us to be a community capable of forming a single life, and we will be enabled to be the role models our young people need.

We won't be perfect, but we will be capable. We can't give them everything, but we can give them ourselves, and by your grace that will be enough. Then we can acknowledge that "we are being watched" and to that respond Amen!

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