

# Word Aflame Jr. High

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## Unit 1: Prayer

**Unit Aim:** We may rely on the prayers of others without realizing the importance of prayer in our own lives. This series explores the power of prayer as one of the most basic building blocks of who we are as Christians and gives students the tools to cultivate a secret place of prayer.

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# Theme Development

## Unit 1: Prayer

- This unit conveys to students the importance of prayer, ways in which students can incorporate prayer into various areas of their lives, and how it will affect their spiritual walk.
- The unit will focus on imagery surrounding communication: radio towers, telephones, electricity, light bulbs; all related elements should be incorporated.
- Consider the use of hanging light bulbs, unshaded lamps, and old rotary telephones as props.
- Consider the use of pallet wood as a backdrop to complement the rustic and antique feel of the other decoration.

## Unit 2: Resurrection

- This unit explores the story of Jesus' death, focusing on the importance of the Resurrection and the victory that act brought to the people of God.
- This unit should feature the familiar imagery of Easter with a cross, a tomb, nails, a crown of thorns, and a purple bolt of cloth.
- Consider changing these items as the unit progresses, starting with the cross, nails, and crown; moving to the tomb; and finally displaying the same cross with the cloth hanging from it, signifying his resurrection.

## Unit 3: I Love My Church

- This unit will explore community, evangelism, and the necessity of the body of Christ as well as finding our own place within this body and how we can better ourselves through discipleship and relationship.
- This unit offers a practical look at the church community and as such, no special decor is required to emphasize the lessons.
- Consider the use of the TRP posters as well as historical images of your church and/or past church leaders and congregations to emphasize church history and understand our past as the church.

**Embark:** This opening section is meant to elicit discussion and promote activity to encourage the learning process of students while creating a fun and engaging atmosphere.

**Explore:** This section is the basis for the lesson with various biblical references, key points, as well as personal examples to effectively convey the big idea in a logical and practical manner.


**Expand:** This section is intended to provide a consolidated yet effective means of closure perpetuated by closing discussions, activities, or prayers.

# LESSON 1


## WHAT PRAYER IS

WEEK OF MARCH 3, 2019

### BIBLICAL PASSAGE

Matthew 6:6–13 

### BIBLE POINT

We must recognize that we exist because of God, and we must discover the new life and purpose He has given to us. 

### SUPPLIES

No supplies needed

#### Legend:



PowerPoint Slide



Student Handbook



Activity

**Unit Aim:** We may rely on the prayers of others without realizing the importance of prayer in our own lives. This series explores the power of prayer as one of the most basic building blocks of who we are as Christians and gives students the tools to cultivate a secret place of prayer.

## EMBARK

### A. Option 1—Discussion

1. *Instruct teens to use their student handbooks for this exercise.*
2. What does prayer mean to you?
3. Why do you pray?
4. Can you live without prayer? Why or why not?
5. Can we be Christians without prayer? Why or why not?



### B. Option 2—Object Lesson

1. *Play the traditional game of Telephone with the class. For a larger group, use seven to ten volunteers.*
2. *Whisper in the ear of the first student, “Red seahorses glow in the dark if you feed them chicken nuggets.”*
3. *When it reaches the final student, have that student say the statement out loud to the class.*
4. *Contrast the final statement with the original.*
  - a. In our world of text messaging, accuracy in communication is changing. However, communication has never been an exact science. Calls drop, signals are bad, and a lot of the time, we misunderstand what the other person is trying to say simply because we miss context and nuance in a world where communication never stops.
  - b. In contrast, we have the assurance that through prayer, God hears and knows our requests. We can pray directly to Him without a convoluted process involving others, and He will answer.



## EXPLORE

### A. The Truth about Prayer

1. Prayer is a universal need for Christians, yet it looks very different among believers.



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- a. Do we understand how we are supposed to pray?
  - b. Why is it hard for us to pray?
  - c. What is the hardest part of praying? Why?
2. Simply put, **prayer is communication with God.** 
3. Matthew 6:6–13 offers teaching on prayer. 
- a. Matthew 6:6 specifically states for us to be alone when we pray, away from all distractions.
  - b. This passage reflects the importance of giving God our full attention.
  - c. Why is it important to remove all distractions from our lives when we approach God in prayer?
  - d. What messages are we sending to God when we allow distractions and interruptions to replace our time with Him?
4. When we come to God in prayer, He wants to share an intimate conversation and quality time with us.
- a. The time we spend in prayer is important to God.
  - b. What thoughts or feelings do you wrestle with when you attempt to pray?
5. Scripture explicitly says for us to pray in secret.
- a. We are not to be public announcement systems notifying everyone of what we are doing and entertaining them with our words.
  - b. Instead, we are to entertain God with our prayers and seek His attention.
  - c. Why do we get hung up on what others think about us when we pray?

## B. Pitfalls of Prayer

1. Do not pray for others' entertainment; pray for God's entertainment.
  - a. Scripture emphasizes, "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:6).
  - b. God does not depend upon what others think to give us blessings and to supply our needs.
2. When your answer comes, God wants you to know that He made it happen, not someone who overheard your prayer.
  - a. What assurance do you have that God hears your prayers?
  - b. Does this bring confidence to you?
3. **Do not speak empty words to God; mean what you say.** 
  - a. We must not pray just for the sake of praying. When we pray, we should pray intentionally, remembering God wants to talk with us.
  - b. *Read Matthew 6:7.* 
  - c. Do not be like everyone else when you pray. Feel free to be you and express yourself to God as only you can.
4. Scripture compares those who speak empty words and for long periods of time as "heathen."
  - a. How would you describe people who act or talk differently when they pray?


- b. Do you feel they are wanting God’s attention or trying to impress others?
  - c. This verse stresses that we should be genuine and sincere when we talk to God.
5. You can rest in the comfort that “your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matthew 6:8).
- a. First, we should prioritize drawing close to God, following His direction, and praying in a way that is meaningful to Him as the most important purpose of prayer. However, it is also comforting and exciting to realize from Scripture that God cares about us, knows our needs, and is open to our petitions (requests) in prayer.
  - b. God does not expect us to plead our case and list every reason to justify our request.
  - c. According to Matthew 6:8, how do you think we should approach God with our needs?
  - d. Should we have to beg or do you feel another approach should be used?

### C. Instructions for Prayer


1. As exemplified in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6, we need to make sure we are focusing on God and others when we pray.
  - a. Obviously we need to be focused on God when we pray, but why should we focus on others?
  - b. What happens when we put the needs of others before our own?
2. **When we are consumed by our pride and our needs in prayer, we diminish God’s intended purpose for prayer.** 
  - a. How does losing focus on the purpose of prayer affect our walk with God?
  - b. How does it affect our daily lives?
3. We cannot expect God’s blessings in our lives and our needs to be met if we continually approach Him in prayer selfishly. *Read Matthew 6:14–15.* 
4. It is impossible to live a double prayer life—one to display before others and another before God. We must lose the facades.
  - a. Why is it important for us to be sincere and honest in our prayer life?
  - b. Who benefits most when we pray the way God has instructed us?

#### Catch Your Breath


1. *Explain how essential breathing is to our bodies and how vital it is for us to function in our daily lives.*
2. *Have a few students (or the whole class) try to jog in place for a minute while holding their breath.*
  - a. *If they stop, keep pushing them to continue until the minute is up.*
  - b. *If students quit, have them sit on the ground or return to their seats.*
3. *Explain how difficult it is to go through life without prayer.*

4. Without taking regular breaths in the form of prayer while we are running the spiritual race of life, it will be difficult to finish.
5. *Encourage students to take a deep breath of prayer every day to get them through each day and each trial of their lives.* 


## D. Identifying What Prayer Is

1. Search the Scripture.
  - a. We need to learn what prayer is for ourselves.
  - b. We need to search in Scripture for its true meaning and purpose.
  - c. We need to know what prayer is.
2. **Learn from others who know how to pray.** 
  - a. We should seek out elders and mentors who know how to pray.
  - b. We should not follow those who use prayer as an announcement to justify their walk with God.
  - c. We should always model our prayer life after those who genuinely love and practice prayer.
3. Learn by doing.
  - a. Do you find yourself questioning how to pray and why you should do it?
  - b. Do you find yourself fumbling through prayer, unsure of what to do?
  - c. Do you know what prayer is and what its purpose is?
  - d. Are you intentionally preparing yourself to have a successful prayer life?

## E. We Need to Pray

1. Be diligent and intentional in developing your prayer life.
  - a. **Choose to pray every day.** 
  - b. Be honest with yourself when evaluating your prayer life.
  - c. Listen to the voice of wisdom and correction to improve.
  - d. Ignore distractions and tactics that are used to “show off.”
2. If you find yourself confused on what prayer is, seek out wise counsel and ask God for help.

## F. Creating Prayer Goals

1. Start by setting a timer for a small amount of time, like ten minutes.
2. Create a list of points or topics to talk about with God.
3. We are not out to set world records on time spent in prayer or the number of people prayed for, but it is good to start a list so you won't find yourself at a loss for words or ideas to discuss with Him.
4. Set a goal of days prayed within a week. Consistency matters!
5. **Do not depend on others to establish your prayer life.**  If your friends are not praying, that does not mean you cannot.
  - a. Do you have a purpose when you pray?
  - b. Is that purpose made up as you go or do you have a plan when you set out to pray?

- c. What influences your prayer life?
- d. Do your peers or schedule determine when you make time for prayer?

## G. Cultivating a Genuine Prayer Life

1. Make sure you are not just “punching a time card” or “checking a box on your to-do list.” Prayer is so much more than that. Do not cheapen it or pass up a blessing in your haste.
2. When you know how to pray, it becomes easier and your desire to pray properly will grow. You will find yourself increasing your investment in prayer and enjoying it.
  - a. How does learning to pray correctly add value to your walk with God?
  - b. Do you think prayer is more fulfilling when you go about it the way God designed?

## EXPAND

### A. Option 1— Group Prayer

1. *Close in prayer with a focus on students making a genuine decision about their prayer life.*
2. *Pray they will love prayer and have the courage to remain true to their prayer life.*
3. *Ask God to help them have enough confidence to pray and build their relationship with Him.*

### B. Option 2—Group Prayer Meeting

1. *Make some time at the end of the session for students to have an opportunity for prayer.*
2. *Allow them to take some time to prepare their hearts and minds to communicate with God.*
3. *You could play worship music in the background, arrange for a few seasoned prayer warriors to lead the group in prayer, or arrange for an elder who can easily enter into the presence of the Lord to lead them in prayer. Encourage students to open their hearts to God.*