



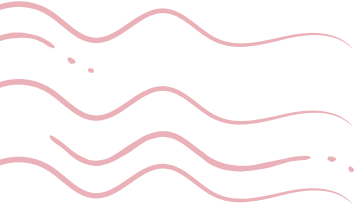

# Summer Game Plan





# Home Run Family Fun Ideas

1. Backyard campout—don't forget the s'mores!
2. Plan a week of themed days (pajama day, superhero day...).
3. Create a family dance video.
4. Team up for a round of backyard baseball—winners pick dinner!
5. Get the kids involved in planning and cooking a fancy dinner party at home.
6. Pretend you're tourists in your own town. Walk the town square, bike ride past historical homes, etc.
7. On a rainy weekend, plan a movie marathon. (Introduce the kids to some family classics!)
8. Water fun day! No pool? No problem—use sprinklers, water balloons, and a good ol' fashioned water hose.
9. Tackle a home project together—paint the playroom, let the kids plant their own small container garden, or spruce up those flower beds.
10. Putt-putt in the yard—use old coffee cans, anything resembling a golf club and ball, and a little ingenuity.
11. Have an international-themed day. Pick a country and plan food, movies, and activities around it. (French fries, anyone?)

- 
12. Lend a hand—elderly neighbor need their yard mowed? Soup kitchen need food sorted?
  13. Start a family book club.
  14. Video-gaming marathon. (Take it old school with some PAC-MAN.)
  15. Go berry picking or check out a farmers' market.
  16. Learn a new game together. (Chess or Snap?)
  17. Take an online painting class together.
  18. Hike a different state park (or national forest) each week.
  19. Have a silly, family photo shoot (crazy costumes not optional) or photo booth.
  20. Family baking challenge—a gingerbread beach house, perhaps?
  21. Tech-free day—turn phones on silent, no TV, no tablets. Brainstorm ideas of how to fill the time.
  22. Kids plan day!
  23. Read "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" by Michael Rosen. Then go on a teddy bear hunt around the house.
  24. Kids cook day! They plan and cook a meal (with minimal help).
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# Spiritual Training 101

BY LAUREN MILLER

There are many ways to make summer fun, and getting to know the Bible is one of them. Becoming friends with the Bible is a good way to invest in your kids' lives in a living, lasting way.

"Yeah..." you're saying. "But my 15-year-old shrinks six inches every time I even hint at a family devotional. My youngest can't focus on anything. And I don't know the last time I opened up my own Bible. This is not going to work."

Let me fill you in on a little secret: No one knows what they're doing, especially at the beginning. We're all just trying our best while trying to get our kids to eat mashed potatoes with a fork.

Baby steps—that's all it takes.

Want to help your kids get comfortable navigating the Bible independently? Want them to start the next school year with a greater love for Jesus?

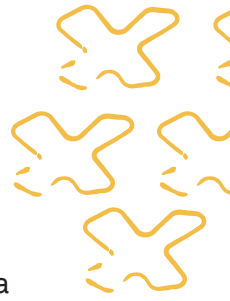
**Here's a game plan of fun, you've-got-this ways to familiarize your kids with God's Word this summer:**

## 1. Help them memorize the books of the Bible.

Songs are a great way to memorize almost anything. I mean, really, how many of us learned 26 letters by heart through the "alphabet song" when we were in preschool? Memorizing the 66 books of the Bible can be fun and simple when paired with a little tune! Just open your Bible, flip to the table of contents, and help your kids creatively come up with their own tunes to match with the book names. If this is too big a challenge, they can look up ready-made "Books of the Bible" songs on YouTube or from ministries like Seeds Family Worship.







Your kids can reference these songs for the rest of their lives!

## 2. Teach them how to look up Bible passages.

When your kids know how to find verses in the Bible, it's like handing them a treasure map. Do your kids know what "John 3:16" is referring to? Describe it as a verse's "address." "John" = book. "3" = chapter. "16" = verse. If you flip anywhere in any Bible, you'll find the same format.

And now's the time to strengthen those verse-finding muscles with an easy competition. You can help your kids get comfortable finding verses by quizzing each other. Who can find Ephesians 2:14, John 15:1, or Genesis 1:1 first?

## 3. Get your kids in a Bible-reading rhythm.

Don't discount this one even if it's been awhile since you picked up your Bible. There's no shame for falling off of—or never getting on—the Bible-reading wagon. We all do it at some point.


And it's not difficult to hop back on or start fresh, for you or your kids! One of the easiest ways to get regular refreshment from the Word of God in your life is picking a YouVersion devotional or an online Bible reading plan—or even an app that reads the Bible to you, like Bible.is. Having a little structure and accountability never hurts, right?

Or if you're not ready to commit to an extensive plan, set doable goals—and keep each other accountable. It's easy if this is at the same time of day. What if you read a Psalm or Proverb a day before bed? Or a chapter of the Gospels after dinner?

For your younger ones, think about buying the Jesus Storybook Bible to read aloud.

If you're ready to pump this up a bit, take your cue from preschool ministries and check Pinterest for super simple, all-you-need-is-a-paper-plate kind of ideas for crafts, snacks, or songs. Maybe you eat bread and fish crackers when you read about Jesus feeding the 5,000. Or let the kids design an ark on cardstock while you read about the flood, complete with puff paint or sequin "rain." You could even find a recipe for foods people might have eaten in Bible times.

And get into it with them! Not only because kids may follow your enthusiasm—but because we want meaningful relational connection around the Bible with our kids.



Devotional time even with your older teens is still a good idea. They need it. This is prime time for them to explore how they best connect with God and His Word: on a hike, through a study with friends, through art or music, or by going on a long, prayerful run with worship music or an audio Bible.

It's a big deal for older kids to have their own Bible—one they can write in, underline in, and break in all on their own. Some might like a creative journal-studying Bible—especially kids who might like drawing and hand-lettering.

As kids grow to study the Bible on their own, keep sitting down with your own Bible, so your kids can see the value you place on your time with God.

#### 4. Surround them with Scripture.


Sometimes it's the parent's job to teach with a little gusto. What if you printed out a number of Bible verses, cut them into strips, and hid them all over the house? Bathroom mirrors, fridge doors, and stuffed within books are ideal locations. Maybe kids get a small reward when they find a new verse!

#### 5. Buy them a journal.

Having a place to express prayers and spiritual lessons can be a life-giving, lifelong spiritual discipline. A journal is a place for creating comic strips of today's Bible story, writing prayers to God, drawing designs next to memory verses, or writing their own worship song lyrics based on Scripture. It's your child's personal space to express themselves to God in a physical way.

Prompt your kid to begin using their new journal by asking them to draw the Bible story as you read it slowly. Then have them “read” it back to you from their drawings.

#### 6. Bring in Scripture-based music.



Christian artists like Christy Nockels, Sherri Youngward, for KING & COUNTRY, and Phil Wickham bring direct quotes from Scripture into their lyrics. And there's always classics like the older VeggieTales ditties and Christian Kids Music playlists. Don't be shy. Sing and dance with them! Worship the Lord by letting those inner dance moves—brought on by your own delight in God—shine.

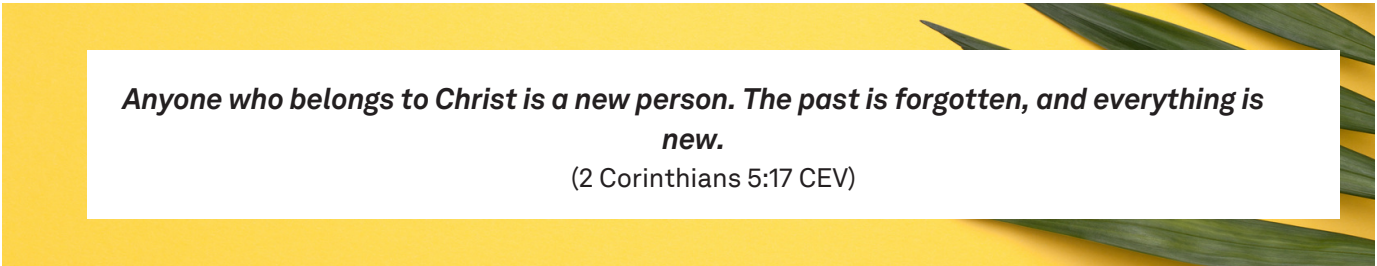
You don't have to only listen to Christian music, but to leave it out entirely is a missed opportunity. Considering how quickly melodies stick in our minds, it's a wonderful way to help your kids love the Lord.





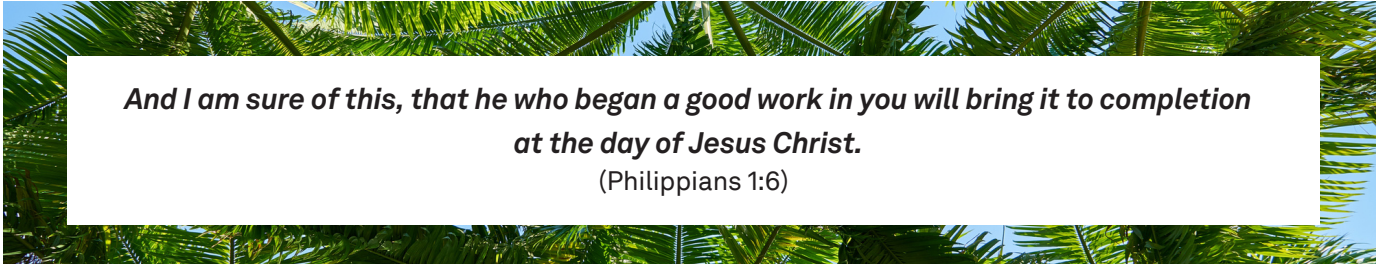
# Scripture Memory Challenge

Have each kid pick one of the printable cards below from a jar. Challenge them to have their verse memorized by a certain day and offer a “prize” when they recite it to you (ice cream sundaes for dessert? Picking the Friday night movie?).



***Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.***

(2 Corinthians 5:17 CEV)



***And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.***

(Philippians 1:6)



***The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.***

(Psalm 145:13)



***Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.***

(Luke 12:32)

***Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.***

(1 Corinthians 13:4 NIV)

***But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love...***

(Nehemiah 9:17)

***Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever; to him who alone does great wonders...***

(Psalm 136:3-4)

***Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?***

(Exodus 15:11)

***Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.***

(Ephesians 4:32)

***I will praise the LORD. Deep down inside me, I will praise him. I will praise him, because his name is holy. I will praise the LORD. I won't forget anything he does for me.***

(Psalm 103:1-2 NIV)





# 10 Ideas for Building Strong Bodies and Homes

BY MARY MAY LARMOYEUX  
AND LISA LAKEY

We're all thankful for the sunshine and warmer temps (but if I mention just going outside to my oldest, I'm quickly met with: "But that's boring." Ah, the joys of teens.)

But our bodies crave movement not just for the physical benefits—like those extra pounds I may or may not have gained recently. Exercise also strengthens (and connects) us emotionally. And we could all use more of that right now.

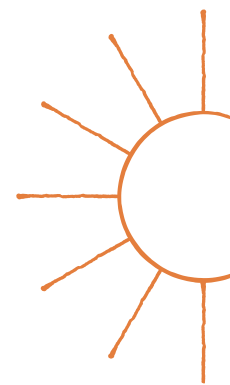
So instead of just sending the kids outside to play, let's join them. **Here are 10 ideas to help your family strengthen their bodies and their bonds this summer.**

## 1. Just add water.

Drop the water hose or sprinkler over the trampoline net or slide, add bubble bath to the kiddie pool, have a water balloon war, or just run through the sprinkler with your kids.

## 2. Make an obstacle course in the backyard.

Include objects to jump over and tires or hula hoops to jump through. End the course with several laps across the perimeter of the yard. You may want to purchase a small trophy to rotate between weekly winners.



### 3. Teach your kids your old playground games.

Red Rover, Mother, May I?, and Sharks and Minnows are just a few.

### 4. Organize a family field day.

It could include sack races (use old pillow cases), three-legged races, running events (four-times-to-the-fence dash), hurdles (jump over plastic buckets), etc. Add inexpensive awards (printed certificates or ribbons) and homemade ice cream to make this a winner for everyone. See if you can anticipate events that would allow each child to succeed.

### 5. Swing a jump rope for the kids.

Yep, this is totally old school. But it could also be a great way to practice those Bible verses. If you have older children, they could swing the jump rope for mom and dad (does anyone still double dutch?).

### 6. Schedule regular family dance parties.

What was your generation's signature dance? (Macarena or Thriller?) Turn up the music and be as silly as you can.

### 7. Go on family walks around the neighborhood.

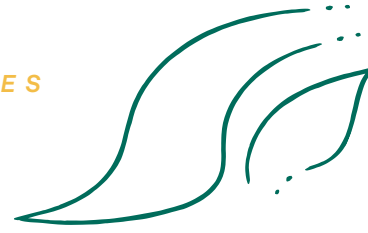
For younger kids, make it a scavenger hunt by jotting down a few things (or you can find free lists online) for them to check off as you walk—animals, kids playing, etc. For older kids, use it as a time for some deeper, undistracted conversation. If you live near a state or national park, you may be able to hike through some woods or up a mountain. As a bonus, double your walk with an act of service: volunteer to walk the dogs of elderly neighbors.

### 8. Plan a backyard treasure hunt.

Include movement in your “clues”—run around the yard twice to ask Dad for the next clue, hide one at the top of the slide, etc. Bury or hide a small prize for the kids to find at the end.







**9. Play a game of night tag.**

After dark, give everyone glow-stick necklaces and bracelets for a trickier game of tag. Give a flashlight to the person who's "it."

**10. Brainstorm fun physical activities with the entire family.**

Riding bicycles, playing hide-and-seek, or training for a 5K or another family fitness goal are a few to get you going. You could even talk through creating your own personal training routines. Write these ideas on slips of paper and put them in a jar. Regularly draw from it, and do the activity you choose.





# You Can Do It!

(ON YOUR OWN)




We see you. We know what it's like to constantly play cruise director for people under four feet tall. You adore your kiddos but sometimes wish about 27 less sentences per day started with: "I'm bored!"

Every parent needs a break. What if you considered sectioning off a daily, two-hour, technology-free "independent time" for the whole family? Whether kids escape to their rooms, their beds, or the backyard, your kids can foster their imagination and even learn to fix boredom on their own.

I promise. It will be good for them. And for you.

**Print off this list and tape it to the fridge for your kids to reference over the summer.**

## Read

- "My Father's Dragon" by Ruth Stiles Gannett
  - "Carry On, Mr. Bowditch" by Jean Lee Latham
  - The *Ramona* books by Beverly Cleary
  - "From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler" by E.L. Konigsburg
  - "Charlotte's Web" by E.B. White
  - *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis
  - "The School Story" by Andrew Clements
  - "The Hobbit" and *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien
  - "A Wrinkle in Time" by Madeleine L'Engle
- 

## Play

- **Write a play or skit for the whole family to perform later.**  
Start with a scenario like “running a bakery on the moon” or “making a movie starring Captain Hook and Elsa” to get your juices flowing.
- **Construct a house of cards with as many playing cards as you can.**
- **Complete free printable Sudoku pages.**
- **Come up with your own commercials for random household items (toilet paper, perhaps?).**
- **Master the Rubik’s cube.**
- **Prepare for a sock-ball war.** Take turns coming up with a different set of rules.
- **Master Solitaire, Spider Solitaire, or make up your own card game.**

## Create

- ***Everyone gets a ball of string and scotch tape. Who will be the most creative?***  
Make a maze or booby trap. Or alter your materials: Could you use toothpicks as pegs to make a picture?
- ***Make friendship bracelets.***
- ***Design paper airplanes for a competition of flight length, height, spin, creativity...***
- ***Sketch items or landscapes visible from your location. Or draw a self-portrait.***
- **Build forts with cardboard or mini ones with toilet paper rolls** (you ought to have a few). Think real-life Minecraft!
- **Paint small rocks from the backyard to give to specific people.**
- **Make homemade ice cream in plastic bags.**  
Pro tip: shake it while jumping on a trampoline.

## Move

- *Listen to music and dance.*
- *Choreograph a new dance video for Tik Tok.*
- *Organize a closet or stash of nostalgic notes and keepsakes.*
- *Work out to a kid exercise video (or an old aerobics video).*
- *Play hopscotch, jump rope, Skip-It, or hula-hoop.*
- *Mow the lawn.*
- *Practice your soccer, basketball, or other sport skills.*
- *Ride a bike.*
- *Walk or play fetch with the dog.*



# Game of Life

(SKILLS, THAT IS)

We get it. School's out. Teaching the kids something else after having to relearn Algebra I this semester isn't high on your list of summer fun. But consider this a lesson in life. And—bonus—you already know how to do most of this stuff!

In between the fun stuff, consider this checklist of life skills you want your kids to have:

## Car Care Basics

- Checking oil, other fluids, and tire pressure
- Pumping gas
- Jump-starting a battery
- Changing oil (for older kids)

## Home Maintenance

- Change the air filter
- Plunge a toilet
- Fix a running toilet
- Tighten screws on drawer knobs
- Change a washer on a faucet

## Other Life Skills

- How to build a campfire
- The art of writing a thank-you letter
- How to sort, wash, & fold laundry
- Cooking: Plan, shop for, and cook a meal
- Job interview skills
- How to read a map

## Finance Basics

- Create a budget
- Open a savings/checking account
- Balance a checkbook
- Write a check
- Save for a purchase

# Depending on God:

## A *Summer* Prayer Journal for Teens

by Alex McMurray and Brooke Wilson

**R**ecently, I (Alex) found myself driving in circles in a parking lot, scanning for an open spot. If I didn't find one, I would miss my movie.

After 20 minutes, I was starting to lose heart. Frustrated, I wondered if I should just go home. Suddenly, a minivan's reverse lights flashed just to my right. I eagerly flipped my turn signal on.

But another car approached with the same idea. *Do I fight for the spot? Do I do the good Christian thing and turn the other cheek? Or do I drive off, making my annoyance obvious?*

Just then, the other driver put his fist in the palm of his other hand and hit it three times, inviting me to a duel I'm all too familiar with. Rock. Paper. Scissors.

Grinning, I swung open my car door. "Best two out of three!" he shouted. One tie and two wins later, he had won fair and square.

I only had one thing left to do: *Lord, I'd really like to see this movie tonight. Would you please provide a spot for me?*

I'm not too sure how the Lord felt about this request, but sure enough, a car across the lot began to pull out.

I think sometimes it's easier to pray in times of desperation, when we feel powerless. But how different would life be if we depended on God's power to get us through every circumstance? As a first line of defense instead of a last resort?



In this eight-week prayer journal plan, we'll cover topics like: how to pray, praying for others, and feeling far from God. Each week, you'll read through two Bible passages (on whatever days work for you!) with journal prompts using the ACTS method of prayer (more on that in the first week). We encourage you to set aside a notebook for journaling (but we've included some printable pages at the end to get you started!).

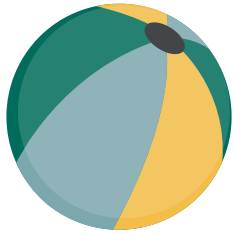
Now, let's get started!

Want to learn more about what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus? Check this video out:



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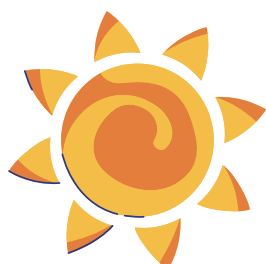
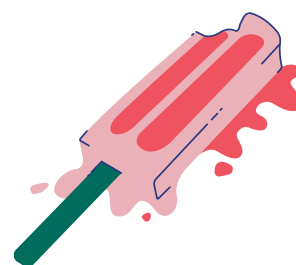


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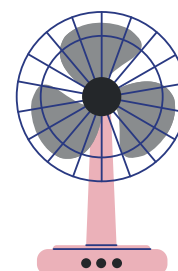


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# Week One: How To Pray



## Day 1: The Lord's Prayer

**Read:** Matthew 6:9-13

In this passage, Jesus gives us an example of how to pray. For each journal prompt over the next eight weeks, we'll use a similar prayer model, known as ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

For today, we'll go over what each one means and how you can apply it to your prayers.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** This simply means expressing our love and respect to God. In your journal, write some reasons God's name is worthy to be honored. It could be because He is mighty, loving, or merciful.

**Confession:** "If I am forgiven, why confess? God already knows." While that is true, following God means going in the same direction He is. The problem is, it is easy to get off track. There is a constant pull for us to go our own way. But asking for forgiveness (repenting) is a way of acknowledging that our way was wrong and His way is right. We don't do it to earn His love—we do it to stay close to Him.

**Thanksgiving:** This one's pretty self-explanatory. Thank God that you can have a personal relationship with Him and pray to Him about anything.

**Supplication:** Here, we present our requests to God—either for ourselves or others. Ask God to provide whatever you need right now. Maybe you need peace, clarity on a big decision, or even financial provision. God may not always provide in the ways you expect, but He hears your prayers and wants to give you good gifts (Matthew 7:11).

## Day 2: Enjoying the Presence of God

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Have you ever wondered how anyone could always be joyful or never stop praying?

If we're just praising God all the time, wouldn't that look a little weird? Not to mention, it's kinda hard to rejoice when you're taking a geometry test or scrubbing dishes from dinner.

If your translation of "rejoice always" is to smile nonstop and have a cringy enthusiasm for all things mundane and miserable, we can see how you might think that. But that's not actually what this command means.

What I believe the Apostle (word for the founders of the church) Paul means is that throughout the day, we are to live with an awareness of God's presence in our lives. This naturally results in thankfulness and joy toward Him.

When we choose to be thankful and joyful at all times, we're not calling a bad situation good. We're acknowledging that God, who is Lord over every situation, is the One who is good. This mindset doesn't come naturally to most of us. But as we bring more of our lives to God through prayer, we can grow in joy and the hope we have knowing all things are under His control.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Praise God for the hope we have in Him.

**Confession:** Talk to God about how difficult it is to be grateful when life isn't going the way you want. Confess any blessings you may have taken for granted recently.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for always being available. Express your gratitude for the ways you've seen Him show up in your life.

**Supplication:** Think about a situation where it's difficult for you to feel grateful. Ask God to meet you in your circumstances and to help you find hope and joy.



# Week Two: Bring Your Burdens to God

## Day 1: Why Worry?

**Read:** Philippians 4:6-8

We'll admit it. We love these verses, but "Don't worry about anything"? That's really difficult for us—anyone else?

Everyone experiences some level of worry. This passage gives instructions for us to tell God everything that worries us. When we tell Him our worries, He offers His peace over our hearts and minds.

Some of us may experience a more persistent anxiety that doesn't seem to go away with prayer. You may be able to find additional relief from anxiety by talking to a Christian counselor.

No matter where you're at with anxiety, God's presence can bring you peace and freedom. He wants you to go to him first with all your needs.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** What good things come to mind when you think of the words true, lovely, and worthy of praise? Spend a few minutes writing about what God has given you.

**Confession:** What do you run to before you seek God's help? Maybe some of these are good things that do bring some peace (like talking to a close friend). Or maybe they're things you know aren't helpful in the long run (like scrolling for hours on social media). Confess anything you've been putting before God.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for how He provided for things you worried about in the past. How can remembering these examples help you trust Him to provide for your current situation?

**Supplication:** Where do you need God to give you peace right now? Journal how you feel about the situation. Note: it's okay to pray for a specific outcome, just remember God's plan may be different from your own.

## Day 2: A God Who Heals

**Read:** Isaiah 38:1-6

In this passage, the prophet Isaiah visits Hezekiah to let him know he needs to get his affairs in order because he's going to die soon. Hezekiah begs God to remember his good deeds, and God extends his life by 15 years and promises to deliver him and his city from their enemies.

God says, "I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears" (NIV). Think about that. When you cry out to God in prayer, He hears you and even sees what you're going through.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Praise God that He listens to you and cares deeply about you.

**Confession:** What's your first response to bad news? If you're like us, you might resonate more with the "bitter weeping" approach (commonly referred to as the "ugly cry") as opposed to praying. But God wants us to offer Him our prayers and our ugly cries. Confess a time you responded to bad news with bitterness rather than turning to God.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for hearing your prayers and seeing both your tears and your moments of joy.

**Supplication:** Is there a situation in your life that needs healing, whether physical or spiritual? Ask God for help. Rest in knowing God's response does not depend on your efforts but on His plan.

# Week Three: Praying for Others

## Day 1: The Beauty in Friendship

Read: Ephesians 1:15-21

Do you remember how you first met your friends? What did you like most about them?

In this passage, Paul is writing to his friends at the church in Ephesus. He tells them he's thankful for their faith and prays they would come to know God even better.

Whether or not your friends know God, you can spend time praying for their relationship with Him—that they would come to know Him or grow deeper in their faith.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Praise God that just as He wants to relate to us, He gave us our friends and family so we could enjoy close relationships with them as well.

**Confession:** Are there ways you wish you were a better friend? Confess any struggles to God and ask Him to help you love your people well.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for putting each of your close friends in your life. Thank Him that He knows and loves them even better than you do!

**Supplication:** Pray for God to use you and others to lead your unbelieving friends to Him. Pray your Christian friends would know God on a deeper level. If you know any friends are going through something specific, you can pray for that too.

## Day 2: Love Your Enemies

Read: Matthew 5:43-45

How does the phrase, "Love your enemies" hit you? Yeah... that's a tough one. It's a whole lot easier to pray for our friends.

We get it. It hurts to be bullied or even betrayed by someone you trusted.

But when Jesus delivered this sermon to the crowds, He knew He would be mistreated by religious people and handed over to die on the cross. Even His friends would abandon Him when He needed them most.

Loving our enemies is a chance to show them Jesus. It doesn't excuse someone's bad behavior. There are natural and eternal consequences for sin. But that's up to God.

Our part is giving others the grace we've been given. In 2 Corinthians 2:10-11, Paul even writes that he'll forgive others so that he isn't outsmarted by the enemy. Rather than being enslaved by grudges, we can walk securely in our identity as God's sons and daughters.

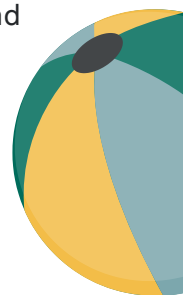
### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Praise God for His unending love, not based on performance, but on His own character.

**Confession:** Confess any anger or unforgiveness you have toward someone.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for giving you the power to love your enemies. Because of His love and grace, you don't have to be bound by bitterness.

**Supplication:** Ask God to help you love your enemies with your attitude, words, and actions.





# Week Four: Let God Guide You



## Day 1: The One Thing We Need

**Read:** Hebrews 13:20-21

Have you ever forgotten to pack something really important? Like forgetting your winter coat in January... Oops.

Wouldn't it be great if everywhere you went, you always had exactly what you needed?

Thankfully, God has given us everything we need to accomplish His will, whether it's showing kindness to a stranger, sharing the gospel with a friend, or something else.

This prayer in Hebrews is a reminder that God is at work within the hearts of His people.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Praise God for guiding His people even better than a shepherd guides his sheep. (To dive into this metaphor, read Psalm 23.)

**Confession:** Confess a time when you felt God leading you, but you turned the other way. As you confess, remember you are already forgiven by God because you have faith in Christ's sacrifice on your behalf.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for supplying you with everything you need to do His will.

**Supplication:** Ask God to continue to show you what it looks like to do His will in this season of life.

## Day 2: The Holy Spirit and Prayer

**Read:** Romans 8:26-27

I think a lot of us feel intimidated by the thought of praying in front of other people. We worry we'll say the wrong thing or forget what to say altogether!

In Paul's letter to the church of Rome, he explains that when we don't know what to pray for, the Holy Spirit communicates with God on our behalf.

So even if you prayed something a little awkward in youth group, or you said "um" about 62 times while praying with a friend, God knows your heart, and the Holy Spirit is praying for you.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Praise God for His greatness. Not only is He big enough to be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but He is loving enough to relate to us and work on our behalf through all three of these roles.

**Confession:** Confess to God that you don't always know what to pray for.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, that He is at work in and through us and is also talking to God the Father for us.

**Supplication:** Ask God to help you know what to pray for as you read the Bible and spend time with other Christians.



# Week Five: What Is Repentance?



## Day 1: A Prayer of Repentance

Read: Psalm 51:1-2, 10-12

In this passage, David expresses deep regret, as he admits that he is not perfect and has sinned against God. When he asks for mercy, he knows God is full of steadfast love. God doesn't change in His character, even in our weaknesses and failures.

As David asks God to "Create in me a clean heart," he is humbly sitting before Him with a desire to change from his wicked ways and give his life fully to God.

This prayer of repentance from David shows us that God hears our honest, real feelings and still remains unwavering in His love for us. And He desires for us to give our hearts fully to Him.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Just like David reminds himself of the steadfast love of God, journal one way you've seen God's love for you this week.

**Confession:** Write down one or two things you did that you know were wrong and want to confess to God. Pray and ask for His forgiveness.

**Thanksgiving:** Write a thank-you note to God for His forgiveness and ability to create in you a clean heart.

**Supplication:** Pray for someone in your life who doesn't know God personally. Someone who is walking in a way that is hurtful toward others.

## Day 2: Walking Humbly With God

Read: Daniel 9:4-5, 18-19

In this passage, Daniel begins by acknowledging the greatness of God. He is also specific with what he has done wrong, that he and those with him have turned aside from God's commandments and rules. Daniel showcases vulnerability and then asks God to turn His ear to listen to Him.

Have you ever hurt a friend before? Maybe through gossiping or lying? We are all human, like Daniel, in need of God to help lead us to repentance (deep remorse for our sins that leads to a change of heart).

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Daniel reminded himself of the greatness and awesomeness of God. Begin your time by journaling the characteristics of God.

**Confession:** Daniel was specific in admitting his sin. Take a few minutes to think of a specific sin you feel you should confess to God. He loves you.

**Thanksgiving:** There is so much to thank God for. Write down two things you are thankful for today.

**Supplication:** Pray that you know and follow God's will over your own.



# Week Six: Making a Joyful Noise to God

## Day 1: Joy Comes in the Morning

Read: Psalm 30:1–5

In this passage, David's heart of thanksgiving to God comes after the temple is finished. Whenever a house or temple was built, there would be praise and dedication to God for all He provided.

A house may seem like a big thing to thank God for, but what would it look like to give thanks to God for everyday things, like a hug from a friend or a good grade on an assignment?

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** We have so much to be thankful for, but journal three things you love about who God is, not just what He's done.

**Confession:** Are there any ways you haven't been grateful this week? Write these down, asking for forgiveness for an ungrateful heart.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for His forgiveness and for the good things (both large and small) He's given you in life.

**Supplication:** Pray for an opportunity from God to share thankfulness with a friend or family member this week.

## Day 2: Taste and See That the Lord Is Good

Read: Psalm 34:1-5, 8-10

Have you ever had a meal and said, "Wow, this is amazing!" Then you raved about it for days or weeks later?

Having an amazing meal is a lot like our relationship with God. (Bear with us here.) Once we've tasted the goodness of God—we've seen Him grow and change us to be more like Jesus, or we've seen Him working in our friends' lives—we want to praise Him aloud, shouting, "Wow, this is amazing!" When we do praise God aloud, He may not only speak to us, but speak to others who are witnessing His goodness through us.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Can you think of a time when you read something in the Bible and said, "Wow, this is amazing"? Go to that passage in the Bible and read it again. Journal a praise to God for something amazing He's done in your life. Another verse for further reading: Psalm 119:103.

**Confession:** Have there been times you've doubted God's goodness? We've all been there, where we don't feel like praising Him. Journal to the Lord about ways you've failed to praise Him and why. Ask for forgiveness.

**Thanksgiving:** As you journal, play a song that reminds you of gratitude and thanksgiving to the Lord. (Suggestion: "Gratitude" by Brandon Lake.)

**Supplication:** Pray about who you could invite to church this week so they can experience God's goodness too.







# Week Seven: When You Feel Far From God

## Day 1: Finding God in the Wilderness

Read: Exodus 16:32-34

Have you ever been hiking? Usually, there is a leader of the pack. Someone who either has done the hike before or paid attention to the map. They know when to turn right and when to turn left.

In this story of the Israelites in the wilderness, God provides them with food (manna). This is an example of the love God has for His people. The Israelites thought they were abandoned, yet God, who knows all things, knew what His people would need. This is true of us too.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, it may be difficult to see where you can give praise to God. But maybe it includes looking back on what God has done in your life, the times you weren't obedient to Him, yet He still listened to you. Express your love for a God who cares so much for you and is worthy of praise. He is working things out for your good even when you can't see it.

**Confession:** Confess the times you've chosen to go your own way, where you didn't let God lead your life. Bring those thoughts and feelings to Him.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for His forgiveness and for the Holy Spirit that empowers us to desire God more and to become more like His Son.

**Supplication:** Pray for the people you know who seem to be going down the wrong path. Invite them into your life, and ask God to provide opportunities to share your faith.

## Day 2: Answer Me When I Call

Read: Psalm 4:1-3

Have you experienced the feeling that God isn't hearing you? It may feel like you're talking to a brick wall. In this passage, David has that same feeling. He is pleading, begging for God to hear him.

In verse 3, David reminds himself that God does hear him when he calls on Him. David is human just like us, experiencing doubt about God's presence in trials and hard situations. But as David reminded himself of God's character, remind yourself today of what you know is true about God.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** God hears us when we call on Him. As David goes on to write in verse 7, God has put more joy in his heart than some of the most sought after things in life—food and drink. Journal to God a prayer of adoration, of who He is as the One who hears us when we pray.

**Confession:** Are you experiencing doubt of who God is and how much He loves you? Get honest with God about your doubt. We all experience it sometimes, you're not alone. God desires to forgive you and restore your belief in Him.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for His forgiveness. Even if you don't feel His forgiveness after confessing, know that He does forgive you. He sees you and hears you.

**Supplication:** Ask God for opportunities to speak about the tension between belief and unbelief as Christians. This could be with friends from church or Christian family members.



# Week Eight: What Does It Mean To Surrender to God?

## Day 1: Completely Surrendered

Read: Psalm 139:1-4, 23-24

In this passage, David's intimate relationship with God is on display. David is sure of God—that He knows him and sees him.

Do you know that God knows you and sees you? Even before a word came out of your mouth, God knew you. When you sit down, or when you get up, you are seen and known by a Father who uniquely created you!

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** Isn't it amazing that God uniquely knows you? Journal about the goodness of God searching your heart and knowing you.

**Confession:** In humility, David prays, "Search me, O God, and know my heart!" David is asking God to reveal ways in which he has disobeyed Him.

Take a few minutes to think about and journal to God about the ways you may have disobeyed Him. An example could be saying something mean to a friend or family member.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for His forgiveness and grace toward us, which we don't deserve.

**Supplication:** Ask God for an opportunity to spend time with a friend who is going through a hard time. Ask Him to help you see them as a child of God, uniquely created, just like you.

## Day 2: The Ultimate Sacrifice

Read: Matthew 26:38-39

This passage describes the moments leading up to Jesus' death on the cross. One of the most powerful prayers in the Bible is found here, with Jesus fully dependent on the Father, wishing for God's will to be done and not His, here on earth.

Have you ever thought of the immense sacrifice Jesus made for you and me? Though He was perfect, Jesus still chose to die on the cross for our sins. He died in our place for the sins, mistakes, and shortcomings we all have. In doing so, He brought glory to God the Father.

Jesus carries our brokenness to the cross. That's where your sins, mistakes, and shortcomings remain. And all of this happened because of how deeply God loves you.

### Journal and pray:

**Adoration:** There is so much to praise God for, but the most important is this: Jesus paid the price for all the sin on earth. That's worthy of praising Him, isn't it? Journal about how Jesus' death on the cross impacts your life.

**Confession:** Are you struggling to believe this passage to be true? That Jesus was truly willing to die for you and your sins? That you can have eternal life with Him? Journal to God the ways you are fighting your unbelief in Him.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank God for His gentleness and heart of compassion toward His children. Thank Him that we can bring our doubts and worries to Him always.

**Supplication:** Do you have something you need to surrender to God? Bring that to Him today.

# Closing Out Our Time Together

**Y**ou made it! Our hope is that you've had some of your questions answered about what prayer is, who God is, and how you can incorporate prayer into your daily life.

Ephesians 6:18 (NIV) talks about the importance of praying "in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."

This doesn't mean to be praying 24/7, but it does mean that as you ask the Holy Spirit to fill you, refresh your mind, and guide your day, you will see God work in you and in the relationships around you.

As we wrap up, let's look at our takeaways:

1. When we choose to be joyful and thankful at all times, we're not calling a bad situation good. We're acknowledging that God, who is Lord over every situation, is the One who is good (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
2. God isn't anxious like we are sometimes, but He gives us peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:6-8).
3. Loving our enemies is a chance to show them Jesus (Matthew 5:43-45).
4. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us while we are praying, even if we don't know what to say (Romans 8:26-27).
5. God is abounding in steadfast love for us (Psalm 51:1-2).
6. God is a God who sees and hears our prayers (Psalm 4:1-3; 34:1-5, 8-10).
7. God doesn't forget us when we feel we are in the "wilderness" like the Israelites (Exodus 16:32-34).
8. You are seen and known by God (Psalm 139:1-4, 23-24).

We encourage you to continue investing in your relationship with God. As you receive God's love and grow to be more like Jesus, we believe you'll experience a more fulfilling life.

Are you interested in learning more about how to share your faith with others?

Download the GodTools App to share with others about Jesus: [GodTools](#)

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