

Prayer Packet

Daily Prayer Practices

Each day of camp includes a featured prayer practice. These can be expressed in a variety of ways. The following suggestions are just some of the ways you can engage campers with spiritual practices that have connected God and God's people for generations. Handouts referenced can be found at the end of the section.



Day 1: Longing to Be Invited

Prayer Partners

Prayer Partners is a simple concept—we are joined with another person in prayer. Sometimes people pray for the person praying for them, and other times everyone has someone different to pray for. Either way, we are connected, interpersonally, by prayer.

Shared Prayers

Let campers sit with an assigned prayer partner and share a prayer concern. Give them time to say a prayer for each other, either face-to-face or in their own private prayer time. Adjust this based on the age and familiarity of your campers. Don't be afraid to introduce a new experience that might be a little uncomfortable, but remember that you don't want them to feel unsafe.

Bucket List

Invite campers to each write a prayer concern they are willing for others to know on a piece of paper and drop it in a bucket. Have everyone draw a prayer concern to pray for. After everyone has prayed for their selected concern, you can give them time to find the writer, or leave it anonymous. If you are going to be matching partners face-to-face, let them know in advance so they don't write concerns that they are unwilling to be linked to.

First Step

Match campers as prayer partners and provide them time to sit and get to know each other. Invite them to share something each day that the other can pray about for them. This can be a personal issue, a communal concern, or something at home. It could even be praying for a good day of camp. Provide time each day of camp to repeat this ritual.

Prayer Circle

Make a loop of prayer with every camper praying for another. You can let this be a secret for the day or the week or let them know who is praying for them. You could let the assigning of partners be part of an opening worship experience as each person's name is called out and they are invited to join the circle of prayer. If you keep partners a secret, they could reveal at a closing worship service, with each camper inviting their partner to join a circle of celebration, thanking God for the week of camp. This has some logistic issues if campers come late or leave early but can easily be overcome if well-organized.



Day 2: Longing Together

Keeping Hours

Keeping Hours is sometimes referred to as the Daily Office or Praying the Hours. Its roots come from the Jewish practice of praying at certain times of day. It is commonly associated with monastic communities, but many Christians keep a regular prayer ritual marking specific times of day. Meal prayers, bedtime prayers, and morning devotions all can form a cycle of prayer that marks time and reminds us to keep God at center.

It's Tradition

Following the ancient practice of praying every three hours, provide a signal that calls everyone to prayer every three hours starting at 6 a.m. or 9 a.m. and following through 9 p.m. With older campers, you could even include some special prayer times where you mark 12 a.m. or 3 a.m. in prayer. Remind campers that, somewhere in the world, a monastic community is also in prayer with them, marking the same hours in prayer to God.

Rhythm of Life

Set your schedule to match the traditional prayer cycle, having a morning devotion first thing in the morning and prayers at each meal during the day, preferably including 12 p.m. and 6 p.m. Be sure to close your day with a prayer experience before bed. This way, we mark our waking, eating, and life together in prayer. Continuing this schedule all week is a powerful way to let prayer guide each day.

Set Your Alarm

Some camps collect technology upon arrival, but others allow campers to keep their phones to use for music, cameras, alarm clocks, etc. If campers have their phones, consider asking them all to set alarms for the same prayer times throughout the day. When everyone's alarms go off, everyone stops to pray. Encourage them to keep at least one of these alarms active when they go home as a daily prayer practice.

Prayer Pause

Randomly, throughout the day (or week), have a sound that calls everyone to prayer. Remind campers that keeping God at the center means letting other things go or trusting that we can do those things later. You can have a simple prayer that everyone shares together or let them offer up their own prayers to God. The important part of this practice is the stopping—letting other things go and being clear about our priorities.



Day 3: Longing to Be Heard

Call and Response

Call and Response prayers take a lot of different forms. Some are very structured, with leaders and community each having written parts to read. Some are more organic, with a leader calling out an invitation to share words or thoughts and the people responding. Some Call and Response prayers tell a story or create a conversation between God and the people. The important part of a Call and Response prayer is echoing the thoughts and feelings of either individuals or the community.

When I Say...

Create a prayer “Call” for the day. Something as simple as “God is...” could be the call. When it is called out, everyone should answer with their responses. It can be a common response everyone shares, or campers could each respond with their own answer. For example, “God is...” could be answered by campers shouting, “good,” “love,” and “bigger than the boogie man.” For a more structured experience, you can use a repetitive prayer that stays the same, such as, “God is good all the time” with the response “All the time, God is good!”

Shout It Out

Explain to campers that sharing emotions with God is important and something we can do with confidence and comfort. Invite them to respond to the statement “Hey God, this is how we feel” with their own emotional check-in. This can be simply, “hungry” or “tired” or “angry about bullying” or “tired of racism.” It could even be very specific to camp with a response like, “ready to swim!” Encourage campers to respond quickly and loudly, sharing what first comes to mind without waiting for others to go first.

Communal Composition

Place a large piece of paper on the wall of a common space that campers have easy access to throughout the day. Write the words “Hey God...” at the top and invite campers to write notes to God throughout the day. Encourage them to include things that excite them, frustrate them, or anything they might normally post about on social media. You could use these statements to form a worship litany for an evening service, share them at campfire, or let them collect as a casual conversation with God through the week.

Echo Location

Invite campers to stay together and pray together throughout the day by shouting out, “God we pray for _____. Can we get an Amen?!” Other campers who hear the prayer can shout, “Amen. God hears you!” You could have a secondary echo with those who only hear the “Amen. God hears you!” responding with “Amen to that!” Campers out hiking or participating in activities at the edges of camp could share prayers to see how many people can still hear them.



Day 4: Longing for Guidance

Labyrinth

A Labyrinth is a path that leads to a center space with no tricks or wrong directions. They have been around for more than 4,000 years, used in both sacred and secular communities. Labyrinths are usually round, but a variety of patterns can be found. They are symbolic of a journey, discerning, and reflecting. A person can walk in, seeking to let things go or focusing on one issue they need to work on. Some walk labyrinths as a spiritual practice, and some to increase right-brain function. Some just do it to relax. However a person explores a labyrinth, the hope is that they are also exploring their own heart and mind. You can find labyrinth patterns on the next couple of pages and online.

The Big One

In a field or on a large flat court, create a labyrinth that campers can walk. On solid surfaces you can use tape or yarn to mark the path. On grass, spray paint or field liner works best. There are a variety of patterns you can use depending on the size of your space. Be mindful of your communities' needs. If you have a lot of people who will use it at the same time or people with mobility issues, make wider paths. If campers will be coming just a few at a time and taking turns, you can use your space for more complicated designs. Here is a website where you can find directions for creating your own: www.labyrinthsociety.org

The Small One

Finger labyrinths are an easy way to let a lot of campers experience a labyrinth at the same time or let campers take the experience with them. This can be done by simply printing out small images on cardstock. Make sure the image is large enough for a finger to trace or provide a stick with a point or other tool to trace the path. You will find directions for making a fancy version in the Multi-Day Activities section.

Rock It Out

Campers could help create a permanent labyrinth for the camp by placing stones in a designated space. This works best where grass will not grow quickly or where it can receive regular attention to keep from being overgrown. This could be scaled down to a small finger labyrinth on the ground with small stones, or a larger version that campers could walk along. Creating the labyrinth could be a prayer experience in itself, letting campers say a prayer for those who will experience it as they place stones, or even letting them paint prayer concerns on the hidden side of stones before they are placed.

Leaving Your Mark

Once you have a labyrinth (or draw a simple one with chalk for this activity), invite campers to choose a color of chalk symbolic of something they need guidance with. Give them time to walk the labyrinth, thinking about the issue and reflecting on who might help them and what information they might be lacking as they deal with the issue. As they leave the center and move to the outside, invite them to leave a line or trail of dots with their chalk as they reflect on what their next steps are to face that issue.

Classic Labyrinth Pattern



www.labyrinthsociety.org

Original drawing by Jeff Saward, final graphic by Vicki Keiser.

Chartres Labyrinth Pattern



www.labyrinthociety.org

Original drawing by Robert Ferre, final graphic by Vicki Keiser.



Day 5: Longing for Renewal

Guided Meditation

Guided Meditation can be a very detailed prayer experience or a simple relaxation technique. It all depends on the participants and the goals of the experience. Some can help us get in touch with feelings and ideas that we have pushed away. Others can help us rest our minds and bodies when we are tired.

Fill It Up

This is a simple technique for resting and centering. It is a great introduction to guided meditation. Invite campers to sit in a comfortable position, not lying down, with their eyes closed. Ask them to take a deep breath, and as they do, imagine that they are a large balloon filling with air. As they breathe out, ask them to imagine the balloon deflating. As you repeat this with a series of long, deep breaths, in and out, ask them to imagine what color their balloon is and how big it gets. As they breathe in, ask them to imagine what good things fill them up, and as they breathe out, what good things they might use their energy to achieve. Repeat this a few times to make sure they have time to reflect. Once you are done, invite campers to share their experience and reflections.

Running on Empty

Mind clearing is a simple meditation that starts with guidance and then becomes a personal experience of silence. Make sure campers are in a comfortable place with their eyes open but focused on something boring that will not change, like a wall or the floor or a tree trunk. Slowly and calmly invite campers to focus only on breathing out, and on letting all sounds and distractions slip away. Remind them to focus only on breathing out, putting all thoughts to the back of their mind for later. As campers sink into the experience, stop talking and allow the silence to exist. This is a great activity for physical and mental renewal.

Doodle-tations

Guided meditation does not have to be completely still. Some people enjoy drawing a prayer. Invite campers to think about something they care about or worry about, then write the word or words in large letters. Ask campers to decorate their words with colors or patterns that reflect how it makes them feel. Around the words, invite them to write names, places, events, or other things connected to that word and decorate them as they choose. They could even draw pictures instead of writing other words. Give them time to fill in any empty space on the page with shapes, patterns, or solid colors. The goal is to fill the page with the prayer.

I Wonder

Guided meditation can allow the imagination to express ideas or questions that we have yet to find good words for. Use the script handout on the next page to lead campers through an imaginative reflection. Speak gently and slowly, allowing time for them to wonder along the way. Do not rush them into another activity at the end; rather, allow time for them to reflect or just be peaceful until ready to move on.

I Wonder—Guided Meditation

Before starting, invite campers to sit or lie in a relaxed position where they will not bother anyone else, and encourage them to be still and quiet so they don't interrupt others connecting with God. Lower lights if indoors, and eliminate as many distractions as possible. Read the following script slowly, with pauses along the way to allow campers to wonder and wander in their imagination.

Slowly breathe in and out, taking deep—slow—breaths.

As you breathe out, let sounds and distractions around you slip away.

Slowly breathe in and out, letting your muscles relax,

Let your whole body relax—as you take deep—slow—breaths.

Imagine a place outdoors that feels calm and safe—

a place you have been or one you imagine.

Imagine a place outdoors that feels calm and safe—

I wonder what your space looks like.

What is on the ground beneath your feet?

What is growing around you?

What can you see in the distance?

In your space, find a bottle of bubbles and a bubble wand.

Take a deep breath and slowly blow out some bubbles.

Now, take a deep breath and slowly blow out a giant bubble.

Imagine the bubble getting bigger and bigger.

Imagine the bubble being big enough to step inside with your bubble wand.

From inside your bubble, you can float up, getting a different view of your location.

I wonder, how high you will go?

I wonder, what more you might see?

As you float, think about something you do that makes you stressed or tired.

I wonder what that looks like from inside your bubble.

I wonder, how do you look when you are doing it?

I wonder, what would make you feel better?

As you float on, think about something you do that makes you feel inspired.

I wonder what it looks like from inside your bubble.

I wonder, what do you look like when you are doing it?

I wonder, what else brings you joy?

As you float on and find your original spot, float down to where you started.

Step gently from your bubble onto solid ground.

When you are ready to reengage those in this community,

You can either blow some more bubbles and let them carry you back,

Or you can pop your bubble and let it blow you back.



Day 6: Longing for Change

Cooperative Art

Art has always been a powerful expression of faith, and cooperative projects allow for self-expression and communal connection. Projects can be temporary or permanent additions to the camp space. Pictures of projects can also be shared on social media or used in camp promotions. Such projects also set a good model for congregational projects, inviting campers to participate at camp, then help lead such a project at home.

Prayer Streaming

Bind two large sticks together in a cross shape and stick it in the ground or a solid container. Provide ribbons and markers throughout the week. Invite campers to write prayer concerns on the color of ribbon they think appropriate, then tie it around the cross. Make sure lengths of ribbon are long enough to tie and still have plenty of length left to dangle and blow in the wind.

Chalk It Up

Assign a series of sidewalk sections or divide a basketball court so that every group of campers can fill their own section. Invite them to design and create an image that invites others to pray. You can take pictures of the individual sections and create a photo collage later.

Great Prayer Fence

Invite campers or groups of campers to paint slats for a prayer fence. This could be a week-long project, or expanded over the summer for a larger fence, or with groups from each camp contributing. Provide slips of paper and pens so that campers can write prayer concerns, fold them up, and slide them between the slats of the fence. Encourage campers and staff to lift up prayers for the concerns left there each time they pass by.

Rainbow Connection

Provide pieces of tissue paper in rainbow colors and pencils. Invite campers to cut a shape from a color they choose, then write a prayer on the paper. Use glue to attach everyone's pieces of paper together to form a large rainbow mural. This can be sealed and made into a permanent collage or done on disposable cardboard or poster board.

Connected Canvas

You can simply use squares of white paper or use small canvases. Invite campers to write a word that expresses a prayer concern or issue they want to lift to God. This could be something like "poverty," "anger," "environment," "friends," or something in the news. Encourage some large, creative lettering. Once done, they can trade images or decorate their own, putting colors, shapes, and images around the words. While decorating, encourage them to talk about their issue or pray about their concern as they create. Once they are all done, invite campers to find a pattern to hang them in across a common-space wall of camp.



Day 7: Longing to Celebrate

Movement / Dance

Scripture tells stories of dancing before the Lord and dancing in celebration of life and faith. Over the years, the spoken words of worship have been accompanied by movement. The simple act of kneeling and the intricate storytelling of interpretive dance both invite movement and allow symbolic expression of ideas and feelings without saying a word. Help campers identify ways they can use their bodies to express various forms of prayer.

Prayer List—Play List

Invite campers to come up with some songs that express different emotions, then ask them how someone would dance to that song. Invite campers to decide on a three-song playlist for a worship dance party. They can choose the mood and focus. Then, invite other campers to join or just share the experience together. Campers who are uncomfortable dancing in front of others could help play music, wave banners, or maybe even use flashlights for special effects. Try to include everyone as best you can.

Emoti-Motion

Movements can express emotions. Invite campers to imagine how their body would move to express various emotions. Challenge them not to rely on facial expressions but to allow their entire body to express the emotion. Call out emotions, one at a time, and let them practice. Now, invite campers to physically express emotions of their own choosing to match this **prayer**: Dear God, I know many of my friends feel _____. Be with them. I know a lot of times, I feel _____. Be with me. Sometimes I wish I could help people who feel _____. Guide me. Amen.

Just Moves

Sometimes prayers of justice can find an expression in movement. They don't have to be rhythmic to be powerful. Linking arms and marching was a prayer for unity in the civil rights movement and still holds meaning today. Invite campers to brainstorm other movements that represent justice movements. Make a list, then invite them to create one of their own for an issue they feel passionately about. Let them share their motions and see if you can incorporate them into a worship or prayer experience for the entire camp. You could even hold your own civil rights-inspired march to worship.

Ups and Downs

Liturgy from most traditions includes movement. People stand for some portions and sit for others. Some even have times for kneeling. Invite campers to share their experiences of movement in worship and share what they know about movement in other Christian communities. Be sure to lift up charismatic worship communities that have more freedom of movement and expression and high liturgical churches that have very ancient traditions behind movement. Spend some time reflecting on what the different styles and movements might communicate to God and others. Choose one of the scriptures from the week or a Psalm and invite campers to create movements to go with it, even if it is as simple as sitting and standing at different moments.



Online Links to Other Practices

There are countless ways to pray and connect with God. This section provides some alternatives if the daily suggestions don't fit your camp, or if you want to equip staff and campers with some prayer resources for when camp is over. These activities can help campers, their families, and their faith communities continue to explore the themes of camp long after the ride home.

Building Faith Blog

www.buildfaith.org/home-practices

This website is curated by some amazing faith formation leaders. It is a great resource for church leaders but also for families seeking to deepen their spiritual life. The shared link goes to their page devoted to at-home ideas and resources.

Lifelong Faith

www.lifelongfaith.com/practices.html

This partner does great coaching for local congregation leaders but also provides resources for families to deepen their faith through shared experiences. The shared link is a direct page to their resource menu.

Vibrant Faith at Home

www.VibrantFaithAtHome.org

This website has a lot of faith-forming activities divided by age group and setting, but all are designed to be used beyond the local congregation, with an emphasis on family in all its various shapes and sizes. Below are a few examples we would recommend.

Each title is a hotlink to a direct download page.

Family Prayer Flags ([Young Family](#))

Work together to create prayer flags to tie on an indoor or outdoor plant. The flags will serve as reminders of the importance of prayer and of the truth that “only God is God.”

Prayer Album ([Young Family](#))

Make a fun craft that can help develop a strong prayer life over the summer by putting together a photo album of family members and friends—and as you look through the album, pray for each person.

What's Bothering You? ([Teen Family](#))

Teenagers often don't talk much to their families. They're separating, and they want their privacy. You can remain connected, however, and invite your teenagers to open up slowly through this type of prayer.

Social Media Prayers ([Teen Family](#))

Remember your friend's posting about her break-up? What about your cousin's picture from his basketball game? How about that tweet that sounded like a call for help? Or maybe it's a reminder of someone's birthday! Try this helpful way to remember to pray for others at the end of each day.