



INTERCESSORY PRAYER (KENOSIS LESSON 2)

This lesson will help youth to gain an understanding of intercessory prayer.

Enhancer of Joy

Intercessory Prayer

Duration

60 minutes

Lesson Developed by

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Goal

Bearing One Another's Burdens: Carrying One Another

Tips to Prepare

This session is all about teaching young people how to lean on one another and how to have others lean on them for spiritual support. It is important to begin to “prime the pump” at the outset of the session by asking youth to pray aloud for those in their lives. This will help break down some of the anxiety that frequently exists surrounding public prayer.

Materials Checklist

- A large ball of thick yarn
- Several heavy objects
- Bibles
- Journals
- Pens

Setting the Atmosphere

Be sure to provide enough open space to ensure that youth do not get hurt when attempting the Stand Up! exercise below.

Scripture Focus

Mark 2:1-12

Purpose

The aim of this session is to help young people acquire an understanding and a practice of intercessory prayer as a unique relational reality of Christian life and as a means by which we live for others.

Objectives

In this session, youth will learn that the Christian life is not an individual pursuit, but rather that it takes place in the context of the relational body of the Church. Youth will learn that praying for another in intercession is a concrete means by which we participate in the life and burdens of one another.

Gather

Gather (5 minutes)

- **Opening Prayer:** Have the youth gather in a circle. Begin with a brief introduction to “The Jesus Prayer.” Inform youth that this is an ancient Christian prayer that is intended to open the heart to God and to contemplate God’s presence and mercy. Tell them that the words are very simple so as to focus the heart and mind on the subject of prayer: Christ. Teach them that the prayer is usually said as follows: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me. For this session, however, it will be done a little differently. Instruct that youth that you will be praying the Jesus Prayer for *other* people. Tell them that you will go around the circle three times, and each time it is their turn to pray, they will pray for someone as follows: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on _____.
- **Greeting One Another:** Go around the circle and say their best and worst parts of the week. If the youth are not familiar with one another, use this time to repeat names and/or ages.
- **Introduction of Session:** Sometimes in life we find that there are things that we simply cannot handle by ourselves. We frequently are so used to having to rely on our own strength, however, that we don’t really know what to do when we are faced with those overwhelming burdens. The same is true frequently in our spiritual lives as well. We are faced with various circumstances that can easily take the wind out of our sails, and keep us feeling disconnected from God and from others. The flipside of this reality, however, is that others frequently find themselves in the same boat, spiritually stuck on a windless sea. As Christians, however, we are united in Christ, and we are one in Him, so we are actually able to bear one another’s burdens in love through the relationally distinct mode of intercessory prayer. In this session, we will be exploring just how united we are and how much our spiritual lives actually depend on others as well as how much they depend on us.

Engage

Engage (30 minutes)

Activity 1: Stand Up!

This activity has a couple parts, each with the purpose of getting youth to stand up from the floor without using their hands.

- First, invite youth to sit on the floor by themselves. Instruct them that they cannot use their hands, and that they cannot sit “criss-cross apple sauce.” They must sit with their legs parallel, with their knees folded to the height of their chests.

- From this position they must try to stand on their own. Remind them: no hands. Some of them may be able to do it, but others will likely struggle. Let them struggle for a little bit before moving into the second part of the activity.
- Next, instruct the youth to find a partner. Have the youth sit in the same position, but this time, instruct them to sit with their back touching their partner's back.
- Now have them attempt to stand up together, using nothing but the pressure from pushing against their partner's back. They should have a much easier time doing this than standing on their own.

Tip: if a pair is having a difficult time standing, help them figure out how to do this. It often, when one partner tries pushing against their partner's back until the partner feels that he or she is receiving enough pressure to push back. This is especially true when one partner is bigger than the other. This may involve more pushing on the part of the smaller partner until the bigger partner feels he or she has enough support to push back.

Activity 2: Yarn Web:

- Have the youth gather around in a circle. Have them stand as close to one another as they can.
- Give them a big ball of thick yarn.
- Have the person who begins with the ball of yarn hold on to the end of the yarn, and instruct them to pass it to someone across the circle.
- When that person catches the yarn, instruct them to make the yarn as taut as possible, to hold on to that next portion of yarn, and to pass the yarn to someone else.
- Continue this process as many times as possible, each time instructing the youth to make the line as taut as possible. Make sure that each person in the circle is holding part of the yarn as it continues to get passed around.
- Use the entire ball of yarn until the youth have formed a thick, strong web of yarn.
- Invite them to notice how this yarn has them all connected to one another, that if anything were to push the yarn down, they would all feel the weight of that.
- Have one of the youth begin to pull their part of the yarn down toward the ground. Have them note what is happening, that when one pulls it down, they all feel the pull of it, but that they are still managing to keep the yarn up. The web they have constructed is strong!
- Now begin adding heavy objects to this tightly constructed web. See how much you can add to the web and how much they are able to bear together.

Reflect

Reflect (20 minutes)

Activity 3: Reflection and Bible Study:

- Bring the group to a circle and reflect on the two activities they just did.
- Ask them what it was like trying to stand up on their own in a situation that was extremely difficult.
- Now invite them to describe their experience of having to literally lean on someone else to find their way to their feet.
- Now reflect on the yarn web, noting that they were connected by this yarn and that when one of them tried to pull their part of the web down, that the others felt that pull, but that they also were able to keep the web up.
- Have them recall all the heavy objects added to the yarn, and how their united strength kept up all those objects, even when anyone one of them might have really struggled to hold on to all those things by themselves.
- At this point, pass out the bibles, journals, and pens. Read Mark 2:1-12 aloud twice. This gives an opportunity for the reading to sink in.
- Point out to them that there are 4 friends involved in carrying a paralyzed man to see Jesus. Even when they can't find their way into the house where Jesus is teaching, they find a creative solution and are able to bring their friend before Jesus.
- Note that when Jesus sees the faith of *the friends*, He acts in a way to heal the paralyzed man both spiritually and physically. It is not the paralyzed man's faith that heals him, but rather the faith of the friends.
- Now invite the youth to journal reflections on this passage bearing in mind the following questions:
 - When was a time that you felt paralyzed by something in your life?
 - Who was there to help lift you up? If no one was there for you, what would it have been like to have the support of people you could trust?
 - What is something now that is weighing heavily on you that you wish someone else could help you bear?

Activity 4: Intercession:

- Have the group come back together after their journaling time.
- Invite them to remember the web of strength and support that they had formed with the yarn. Now is the time to remember that in Christ, we are all united, tied together through Him.
- Ask if anyone would be courageous enough to share their answer to the final question in from their Bible Study reflection.
- When someone shares what is burdening them, ask the group who would like to pray for this person. Do not ask *if* someone would like to pray, but rather ask *who* would like to pray. Let them take for granted that you are expecting them to pray for one another in this time.

Send Forth

Send Forth (5 minutes)

- **Sum-It-Up:** We are truly united in Christ. We can bear the burdens that one another has, and in so doing we actually begin to share in their lives in a new way. We can take a step out of our own concerns, stop relying on our own strength and find a new way to come to the Lord together.
- **Closing Prayer:** Ask for one of the young people to close in prayer. Encourage them to pray that this group would find new ways of standing next to one another and bringing one another to God through prayer and other ways of support.