A word cloud background featuring various terms related to youth activities and interests, such as 'baseball', 'soccer', 'gymnastics', 'debate team', 'choreography', 'shopping', 'reading', 'internet', 'phone', 'lunch', 'dinner', 'family', 'friend', 'girlfriend', 'boyfriend', 'college', 'university', 'job', 'career', 'hobby', 'sport', 'team', 'club', 'group', 'organization', 'event', 'activity', 'pastime', 'interest', 'hobby', 'sport', 'team', 'club', 'group', 'organization', 'event', 'activity', 'pastime', 'interest'. The words are in various sizes and orientations, creating a dense, textured background.

the pause.

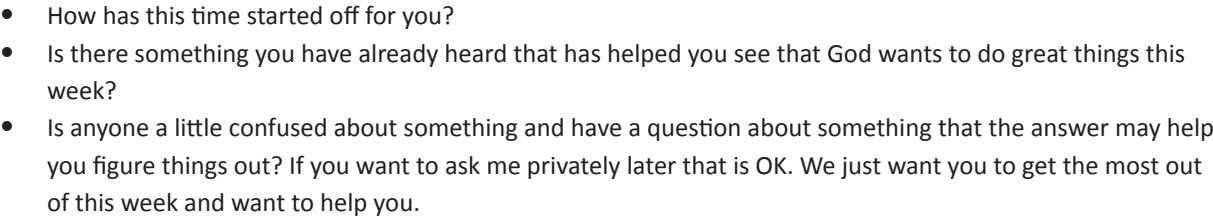
learning to seek God



CHURCH GROUP DEVOTIONS

2020 SUMMER YOUTH WEEKS

DAY ONE DEVOTION



Has anyone already experienced a “God moment” that you would like to share quickly? (*A God moment is where you have witnessed God working in a situation or a person.*) We are expecting many God moments this week and want to share those moments as a time of encouragement for all of us.

Say: Each night as we begin our devotion time, I am going to review our Scripture and remind us of the reason for this devotion time.

Read: Theme verse: “I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” — Psalm 119:10-11 (NIV)

Say: Do we seek Him with all our heart? Do we hide His word in our heart?

How do we hide His word in our heart anyway? I mean, think about it. How do we apply something like this? Actually, we hide His Word in our heart by memorizing it. That's right. Memorizing it. But that's too hard right? I mean, that is a lot to memorize. But is it?

Activity: What do you memorize?

Directions for game: Tell your students that when you say go they have to list everything they can remember that takes memorizing. Give them one minute to write down a list. Examples: addresses, school work for tests, phone numbers, websites or blogs you enjoy, how to find your way around camp, schedules, songs, movie lines, etc. At the end of the minute, go around in a circle and ask each student to share. They cannot repeat anything they have already heard. Be prepared to give out candy or something as a prize to the one who had the longest list.

Say: How many songs do you have memorized? Think about it. You can hear a song from years ago and without even trying, the next thing you know, you are singing it word for word.

There are a lot of things, useless things, we have memorized. If we spend countless hours remembering useless things, what should we be doing with the important things?



Say: Sometimes it seems that we may think that we do not need to learn this lesson (prayer, Scripture memory, Bible reading) again because they are the basics, right? Maybe we need to take to heart the reason why the Bible gives so many reminders about it. Think about it. How many times have you fallen to the same sin over and over? You knew it was sin and you still fell to it, again.

So, is it bad to be reminded that we should do these things to stay connected to God — to also help us stay away from sin or other distractions from this world? Should we really approach that as something basic or even elementary? Or should we approach our time to pause each day to spend time with the Lord?

*Share about your testimony or another chaperones testimony of how you came to know and place your faith in Jesus. Share how you have learned the basics of spiritual disciplines and how spending time with God and His word has changed your life.

Say: During this time, God is going to be seeking to speak to each of us — grown-ups included. We can all listen, or we can miss the message because of distractions. What are some of the distractions we can have? (Ask for responses.) I hope we will all seek to try our best to listen in small-groups, worship, quiet times and church devotions.

Close with a time of prayer with your group.

the pause.

learning to seek God

DAY TWO DEVOTION



God hears our prayers on all occasions, whether we are praying aloud or praying silently in our hearts and minds. After all, He knows all about us and knows what is going on inside us — both good and bad. The Bible says that God “judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12, NIV). The Bible also says, “The Lord detests the thoughts of the wicked, but those of the pure are pleasing to him” (Proverbs 15:26, NIV).

God even hears our prayers when we cannot even put them into words. For example, these may be times when our hearts are too burdened or confused to even speak. Romans 8:26 says, “And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.” (NLT).

Does God really answer prayers?

Prayer is one of our greatest privileges as God's children, and even if God does not seem to answer your prayers at first, do not stop praying. God loves you, and no prayer goes unanswered.

Ask: Will someone read Luke 18:1-8 to the group?

Jesus once told a story about a poor widow who repeatedly asked a corrupt judge to do what was right. Repeatedly the judge refused — not because her request was wrong, but because he just did not care. Because of her persistence, he eventually gave in and granted her what she deserved. In a far greater way, Jesus said, God who is righteous and does care for us hears the prayers of His people, and we must never give up.

Remember two things. First, realize that sometimes God is actually answering our prayers when we do not realize it and the reason is that His answer may be “no” or “wait.” Yes, we think we know what is best for us, but God sees the whole picture. Sometimes He lovingly refuses to give us what we request because He knows it is not according to His perfect plan.

Second, remember that we have the privilege of coming to God only because Jesus Christ died for our sins. Have you given your life to Him? If not, let your first prayer be one of confession and faith, asking Him to come into your life as your Lord and Savior.

Leaders Note: Have students answer the following questions silently to themselves. Give them time to think about each question.

1. Have you given your life to Jesus?
2. Can you remember when you placed your trust in Jesus to be your Lord and Savior?
3. Who helped you by sharing their testimony or maybe how they lived their life that pointed you to needing a relationship with Jesus?



Ask: Would anyone be willing to share their experience with the group?

Have one of the chaperones share how prayer changed something specific in their life and how prayer allows them to stay connected to God even when they were stressed about a situation in their life. Give time for testimonies.

Ask: What would be different in our lives if we made prayer a priority?

Say: Your generation is the most anxious generation of all time. As followers of Jesus, our first response should be to pray when we feel anxious. One of God’s greatest gifts to us is the privilege of prayer — a privilege that is possible because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Thank God for the privilege of prayer and learn daily to “cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7, NIV).

Close in a time of prayer. Ask students to pray for whatever God brought to their mind today about prayer. Maybe they realized they aren't consistent in praying, maybe they need to pray to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives or maybe they need to cast their anxieties on Jesus and realize only He has the power to help them face each day's problems — real or imagined fears. Offer these possibilities and pray.

DAY THREE DEVOTION



Materials Needed:

Announcements and Reminders:



DEVOTION

Say: Today, we looked at Scripture memory and tomorrow we will look at how to study God's Word.

God has given you all you need to know about Him, His ways and His work throughout history, as well as the guidance you need to live like one of His children. At camp, we have been looking at ways to connect daily with God.

Ask: What have you learned about prayer over the last few days? (Give time for people to share.)

What did you learn today about Scripture memory? (Give time for people to share.)

Why do you think we stop memorizing Scripture as we get older? In elementary school, there was much more emphasis on memorizing Scripture at church. What excuses do we give? (Allow time for people to share.)

Say: One of the biggest excuses is, “It’s so hard.” Let’s see how easy or difficult it is to memorize by playing a game.

Activity: Song Categories

If you can, divide your group in sections — I know this is difficult with social distancing, but see if you can have four teams. Call out a category and have each group jot down as many songs that fit into the given categories. Give them 90 seconds to make their list. Here are some categories: love songs, Christmas songs, songs about breaking up, Disney songs, etc.

At the allotted time, each team will have to sing at least a line or two as an entire group. This way they cannot just jot down songs and not all know how to sing it. As soon as one group sings their song, go straight to the next group. Songs cannot be repeated. Continue each round until they have no more songs. Keep score of who was the last group still singing under each category. Award a prize to the winning group.

Say: Isn't it funny that we say, "It's too hard?" Look how many songs you have memorized. What can we learn from this game that would help us memorize Scripture? (Allow for answers.)

Say: There is no other single practice in the Christian life that is more rewarding than memorizing Scripture. No other discipline is more useful and rewarding than this. No other exercise pays greater spiritual dividends. Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified.

Say: God’s Word is filled with verses that tell us to meditate and put His truth in our hearts. David says that a young man can keep his life pure by treasuring God’s Word in his heart (Psalm 37:31; 119:9–11). Solomon refers to this in Proverbs 4:4: “Let your heart hold fast my words; Keep my commandments and live.” The words hold fast come from a single Hebrew term meaning, “to grasp, seize, lay hold of.”



Scripture memory gives you a firm grasp of the Word and allows the Word to get a firm grasp of you! Solomon also mentions writing the Word “on the tablet of your heart” (Proverbs 7:3) and having Scriptures kept within you so “they may be ready on your lips” (Proverbs 22:18). God created our brains with the capacity to memorize His Word.

(FYI — Did you know that listening to music as you study might help improve your study habits and recall on tests? Not just any music though; classical music can especially help.)

Say: We speak in rhythms. Our brains operate by rhythms. Creating a steady beat helps to achieve and maintain focus, clarity and creativity. Music can help us memorize. By repeating something often, we strengthen the bond between neurons and memory creation. Music brings in a state of mind that relaxes the brain. The effect of music on memory is that it allows our brains to become more disengaged from distractions. Keeping a steady beat helps to achieve and maintain focus to memorize.

Ask: Have you ever watched the National Spelling Bee? Many of the top winners tap along as they spell. That is how they memorize words. The more you can keep a beat by tapping along, the more you can memorize. There are even apps similar to a metronome that help with memory. Children do this by putting a cadence to things they memorize —like a sing-along.

Say: Let’s try it. Who can come up with a simple rhythm? We want to use it to memorize our theme verse. *(Let them decide what beat they want to use and then have all say the theme verse together. It may take some time, but have fun showing them how a beat helps us memorize.)*

Psalms 119:10-11, “I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you,” (NIV).

Have the students practice saying these verses repeatedly to a beat and see how much easier it is to memorize.

Say: Here are some more tips to help memorize Scripture:

1. Choose a time when your mind is free from outside distractions (perhaps soon after getting up in the morning).
2. Learn the reference by repeating it every time you say the verse(s). Numbers are more difficult to remember than words.
3. Read each verse through several times — both in a whisper and aloud. Hearing yourself say the words, helps cement them into your mind.
4. Break the passage into its natural phrases. Learn the reference and then the first phrase. Then repeat the reference and first phrase as you go to the second phrase. Continue adding phrases one by one.
5. Learn a little bit perfectly rather than a great deal poorly. Do not go on to the next verse until you can say the previous one(s) perfectly, without a glance at your Bible.



6. Review the verse(s) immediately after you have gone through this process. About 20 to 30 minutes later, repeat what you have memorized. Before the day has ended, firmly fix the verse(s) in your mind by going over it 15 to 20 times.
7. Share these verse(s) aloud as soon as possible. Use the verses in conversation, in teaching, in counseling and in everyday opportunities. Relate what you have learned to your daily situation.

Ask: Does anyone have a favorite verse? Ask them to share and have others write down the verse. This may give others ideas of verses to memorize.

Close by asking the students to commit to memorizing at least one verse after they get home and then to do so weekly or monthly. Suggest they write them down in a notebook where they can continually go over their list. This will help them retain them to memory.

Ask everyone to close in prayer by praying short prayers of what they are thankful for that they have seen God do as you focused on pausing to learn more about prayer, scripture memory, and studying God's Word.

You may want to take time and plan for a sharing time with the entire church on what the students have learned from this experience. Maybe plan a prayer meeting the really concentrate on praying for God to work in your church and youth group. Or set up a continuing schedule for memorizing scripture as a group. Pick a verse you want to post somewhere in your youth area for this year. Have places where you all can record how that verse was used or how you saw God use that verse all year.