

How to Pray for the Believers in Your Group

Praying Paul's prayers for every student, by name, every day

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

EPHESIANS 3:16-17

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	The most powerful thing you can do for your students is pray for them. Paul's prayers in Ephesians 3 and Philippians 1 give us four specific requests to pray for every believer in the group, by name.
SCRIPTURE	Ephesians 3:14-21 · Philippians 1:9-11 · Colossians 1:9-12 · 1 Samuel 12:23
BEST FOR	Youth leaders, volunteers, parents, and student leaders
YOU WILL NEED	A list of your students' names and a few 3x5 cards

Start here: what are we asking for?

Most of our prayers for students sound like this: "Lord, help Jake do well on his test. Keep Maria safe this weekend. Help the retreat go smoothly." Those are good prayers. But when Paul prayed for young believers, he asked for something deeper. He prayed for their hearts.

Make a list of every student in your group and pray for each of them every day. Build your requests on Paul's prayers in Ephesians 3:16-19 and Philippians 1:9-11, and pray specifically for each young person. The prophet Samuel said, "Far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23). Praying for the people in our care isn't extra; it's the job.

Four requests for every student

A. Strength inside, so Jesus is at home in them

Pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen their inner person, so Jesus will settle down and be completely at home at the center of their life.

Paul asks that they would "be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:16-17). The word for "dwell" (*katoikeō*) means to settle down and make yourself at home, not just to visit. Pray that Jesus won't be a guest in your students' lives, but the owner who lives in every room.

B. Rooted and grounded in God's love

Pray that they will become rooted and established in God's love, so they can understand it completely.

Paul uses two pictures: a tree with deep roots and a building with a solid foundation ("rooted and grounded in love," 3:17). Then he prays that they "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge" (3:18-19). Many students know *about* God's love. Pray that they would truly experience it, especially the ones who feel unloved at home or at school.

C. Filled with all the fullness of God

Pray "that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (3:19). That's a bold prayer! It asks that every empty place in a student's life (loneliness, insecurity, longing for approval) would be filled by God Himself. And Paul reminds us that God "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (3:20). Pray big.

D. Love that shows up in wise, pure living

Pray that this will affect their behavior and friendships, so they can discern what is best and live pure and blameless lives.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ." **PHILIPPIANS 1:9-10**

Students face hundreds of decisions every week: friendships, dating, media, how to spend their time. Pray that their love for God would grow into wisdom, so they can tell not just good from bad, but good from best. And pray that their lives would be "filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (1:11).

MAKE A PRAYER CARD

Write Ephesians 3:16-19 and Philippians 1:9-11 on a 3x5 card. On the back, write the names of the students in your group (or your small group). Read the verses out loud once at the start of each prayer time, then go down the list and pray the four requests for each student by name. Better yet, memorize both passages.

Tips for praying faithfully

- **Pick a time and place.** Tie it to something you already do every day: your morning coffee, your commute, or your lunch break.
- **Split a big list.** If your group is large, pray for a different section each day so everyone is covered every week.
- **Add what you know.** After the four requests, add anything specific you've learned about that student's week.
- **Keep a simple journal.** Note requests and answers. You'll be amazed at what God does, and your notes will encourage you on hard days.
- **Tell them.** Every so often, send a student a short note: "I prayed for you today, that Jesus would feel at home in your heart." It may be the most encouraging thing they hear all week.

A WORD ON PRIVACY

Keep your prayer list and any notes private and secure. Don't share students' personal struggles with others, even as "prayer requests," without their permission, unless safety requires involving a parent or pastor.

FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

1. How are Paul's prayers different from the way we usually pray for students?
2. Which of the four requests do you think your students need most right now?
3. What is the difference between Jesus visiting someone's life and being at home there?
4. What has helped you pray consistently in the past? What usually gets in the way?
5. How could our team encourage each other to keep praying for students by name?

TAKE IT HOME

Make your prayer card today. For the next 30 days, pray the four requests for every student by name. At the end of the month, share with your team one way you have seen God answer.

Far be it from us that we should cease to pray for them.

From fifty years of youth ministry by **Ron Whittam**. Share freely with your students and leaders. · The Youth Ministry Living Room · qrprogramming.com/livingroom

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