



## **A collection of physical ways to pray for people to come to know Jesus as a group.**

You might organise these ideas as a session of active prayer fun for families at your church or in the park, maybe bringing in a bouncy castle to collapse on at the end and with lots of healthy snacks to keep everyone going.

Alternatively, you might pick out one or two activities to use in groups or services during the week.

## Rope prayers

**Prayer ropes are not uncommon as an aid to intercession in Orthodox Christianity, and of course prayer beads (a rosary) are well known in the Catholic tradition. A prayer rope is basically a way to focus our prayers for others, or to become still before God. Here the tying and untying of the prayer knots makes concrete an opportunity to pray for different people and situations.**

**You will need:** a long, fairly thick three-stranded piece of rope – enough to create a circle on to which each person in the group can hold. You will also need a number of shorter pieces of rope of different colours, at least one for everyone in the group.

- Sit in a circle and then pass around the large, thick rope. The leader should then tie the two ends together firmly.
- Explain that many Christians around the world use a rope with knots to help them pray. The central knot is often in the shape of a cross.
- The circle is a symbol of God's love that goes on for ever and ever and which holds all things together.
- The cross is the guarantee of that love and the way we know that God's love is for each one of us. The rope is made of three cords intertwined and this is symbolic of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the three ways in which we experience God who is nevertheless One.
- Now hand out the smaller, coloured pieces of rope. Invite everyone to knot these on to the larger rope. These represent prayers for someone they know to come to know Jesus for themselves.
- Once all the coloured robes have been tied on, invite everyone to talk about why they've chosen to pray for this person. Explain that you are all now going to pass the rope around so that everyone holds on to a different knot for a very short time. The time spent with each knot will depend on the size of the group, but this should be no more than half a minute. As people

hold on to the different knots, invite them to pray for the people who have been mentioned, either silently or out loud. Assure them it doesn't mean they have to remember exactly who said what about each knot.

- It will help to have some simple words to say as a signal for the knots to be passed on for the next pause for prayer, for example: Thank you God that you love us all.
- Once all the knots been passed around, or when you think the time has been long enough, invite everyone to untie the knot in front of them – apart from the knot in the larger rope – as a way of showing that you trust that God has heard your prayer.
- You could make the prayer rope available in subsequent sessions at church and encourage people to go up and tie on a piece of rope whenever they want to, as an expression of committing a particular person to God's love.

## Cross prayers

**The cross is central to our Christian faith and it is the way we can come close to God in prayer. In this active prayer exercise, a group can explore a range of ways that a cross can be made and expressed with the body.**

Practise them together, then, for the actual prayer. The leader can invite everyone to make the cross shape and pray for a different person to know Jesus until the next shape is called. Keep it fast-moving.

- Cross arms out in front of the body in an X shape.
- Cross fingers in front of the face in an X shape.
- Cross over the right hand to touch the left elbow and then the left hand to touch the right elbow.
- Cross over the right hand to the left hip and then the left hand to the right hip.
- Cross over the left hand to the right knee and then the right hand to the left knee.
- Touch the left earlobe with the right hand and then cross the left hand to the right ear lobe.
- Repeat these movements fairly briskly.
- Repeat them in a sitting position, including a new one of crossing over the right elbow to touch the left knee and then the left elbow to touch the right knee.
- Repeat some of these movements sitting cross-legged on the floor.
- Repeat some of these movements lying on your back with your hands crossed behind your head and from this position touch different parts of the body with your elbows, making sure it is always opposite-to-opposite.
- Repeat with your eyes closed!



## God's eternal love

Another recommended crossover movement is to make use of the mathematical symbol for eternity which is an eight on its side... sometimes called a 'lazy eight'. You could accompany the making of this sign in the ways described below, saying the words, "God's love lasts forever". This is the amazing love that we want to share with our friends and neighbours.

- Extend your right hand and with your index finger trace the eternity symbol in a large circuit out in front of your body. Follow it with your eyes, but do not move your head.
- Repeat this but using the left hand.
- Repeat this shape making it larger or smaller.
- Follow an imaginary eternity symbol that you 'see', first close, then far away, but without moving your head. Do this again with your eyes shut.
- Swing both arms together in this eternity shape in front of the body, making it as big as possible.
- Trace the shape with your fingers in the air in various places within your field of vision.
- Lean your head on to your left shoulder, extend your right arm out and make the shape.
- Repeat this, leaning your head on your right shoulder.
- As you repeat the action, hold a friend or neighbour before God in prayer.

## Breathing prayer

Good breathing can help you to focus and centre on God.

Ideally you should always breathe from your belly; this allows your lungs to inflate to their maximum.

Practise doing this:

- Breathe in through the nose, counting 1, 2, 3, hold the breath in, counting 1, 2, 3, and then let the air out through your mouth, counting 1, 2, 3.
- Many Christians use such breathing techniques in conjunction with a simple prayer in order to still and centre themselves. Add these words for a repeated simple prayer for someone to know Jesus:
  - God... of... love
  - Help... [X]... know
  - Your... great... love

## The Lord's Prayer

Finally, why not bring some of these actions and a few new ones together by linking them up to the words of the Lord's Prayer? By doing this, you also slow the prayer down and make each line more meaningful.

### Our Father... in heaven

Belly breathe in, counting 1, 2, 3 for the first two words; then pause and count silently 1, 2, 3; before saying the next two words, as you breathe out 1, 2, 3.

### Hallowed be your name

As you say these words, sit or kneel crossing your ankles in front or behind you. In addition, stretch out each arm in front of you, crossing hands at the wrist. Now link up the fingers and then bring the clasped hands back underneath towards your chin. Hold this for a while.

### Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Reach out both arms in front of you and, with your index fingers, simultaneously trace the shape of a circle in the air either side of the centre of your body ("Your will be done on earth") and then trace the shape of a triangle ("as it is in heaven").

### Give us this day our daily bread

Imitate the slow and deliberate eating bread.

### Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

Stand with feet apart and swing both arms linked together to touch first your left and then your right knees, several times.

### Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

Stand upright and still again. Hold your left shoulder with your right hand, while you then slowly move your head from one side to the other. Repeat this action, but this time holding your right shoulder with your left hand.

### For yours is the kingdom

Lift your right arm upwards above your head and hold on to it with your left arm folded around the back of your head.

### The power and the glory

Repeat this action but with your left arm held high and your right arm holding on to it around the back of your head.

### For ever and ever

With one arm extended out in front, trace with your index finger the mathematical shape for eternity (a lazy eight) across the front of your body, following it with your eyes but not moving your head.

### Amen

Bring both hands together in front of your face with all fingertips and thumbs touching those on the opposite hand, to create a structure like an open, upturned basket. Hold this for a few moments.