

SESSION 4:
LIFE IN A HOPEFUL WORLD

LOOK INSIDE: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

BIG IDEA

In this session, students will learn that God gives us power to be transformed, and invites us to be part of his ministry in transforming others. Jesus doesn't ask for perfection from his disciples, he simply asks for us to listen and trust. When we start to feel unsteady, we can reflect on the knowledge that we are made in God's image, we can re-center ourselves by spending time with God, and we can reconnect with our circle and our faith community.

FOR THIS SESSION, YOU'LL NEED:

- A Bible
- A copy of the **Session 4 Look around** student take-home sheet for each student
- **Session 4 Video: *Life in a hopeful world*** and a means to play it, if you are using the videos included with this curriculum during your small group time

LEADER TIP

If your small groups meet on different days throughout the week, consider re-reading the story in Mark 6:30–44 together (see **Session 4 Look up** material), and ask students to review what they observed about the story.

If you are using the videos included with this curriculum in your **Look inside** small group time, show **Session 4 Video: Life in a hopeful world** here to open your session. Then, use the questions below to help students process and respond to the experiences of other young people shared in the video.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Recap what your group talked about the last time you met. Remind them that sometimes anxiety can be too much for one person to handle on their own. God designed us to be part of groups and families who care, and at times to expand our circle to professional helpers. Reaching out to God and sharing honestly with others can keep us from facing anxiety alone.

LEADER TIP

Ideas to try: Connectedness is an important part of both faith and well-being. This week, encourage students in your group to share out loud and strengthen their connection with one another. Here are some ideas to try:

- Invite students to pair up and talk through their answers with a friend.
- Post each question on a whiteboard or large piece of paper, and ask students to write their answers anonymously.
- Use the discussion questions to create your own group video, similar to those you've been using throughout this curriculum, as a place for students to share tips they've learned and encouragement to other young people who are dealing with anxiety. Share it on your ministry's social media page, or an appropriate place.
- Make sure to connect a student with a leader or pastor for later follow-up if it seems like they need to talk in a less public environment.

Say: **Last week you were challenged to meet with a parent, talk about how you're feeling, and discuss who should be in your circle so that you don't have to face your inner struggles alone. And most important, you were challenged to talk together about how you both will work together if you ever feel like you're dealing with more than you can handle.**

1. **Does anyone want to share how their conversation went? Which conversation topics did you find easy to talk about, and which were more challenging?**
2. **When you play a sport or a musical instrument, exercises such as drills or scales are an important part of your training. What practices do you do to keep your skills sharp in less busy seasons, so that you're prepared when there's a big game, or performance, or activity that you do?**
3. **Just as it is in sports, music, or other activities, we have to maintain practices and habits that**

help us keep growing, even in times when we don't feel very anxious. How do you think the Daily Replay can help you remain steady as you go through your days and weeks ahead?

4. How have you seen God at work in you over the past few weeks? How are you growing in connection with God, and with your faith community?
5. What have you learned in our group over the past few weeks that a friend might need to hear?

A CONNECTING WAY TO PRAY

Say: Whenever we start to feel a little unsteady, we can reflect on the fact that we are made in God's image, re-center ourselves by spending time with God, and reconnect with our circle.

Today we're going to close by reflecting on what's often called the "Lord's Prayer" or "Our Father." You may have heard it before—perhaps you've read it in the Bible or prayed the words in church services.

If your church prays this prayer together regularly, remind students about how it is a part of your worship practice.

This prayer that Jesus taught us is one that is prayed by people every day, all over the world. It's been handed down for generations because when Jesus' first followers asked him to teach them how to pray, this prayer was his response. Its words have connected God's people for centuries. When we pray this prayer we talk with God, and at the same time know that we're rooted in a big, caring, global community of faith.

LEADER TIP

Idea to try: Every young person is going to have their own comfort level when it comes to prayer. Consider the particularities of your group of students, and plan your prayer time according to what is going to be the most helpful for them. As you lead your students through the Lord's Prayer, try one of these ideas:

- Begin by leading the group through a simple breathing exercise. You can use one of your own, or try the following:
"When we breathe slow and deep, we let our bodies and souls know that it is okay to relax and rest in God's presence. Slowly take three seconds to breathe in through your nose, making sure to fill your belly with air . . . and then take three seconds to slowly breathe out through your mouth. Now, as you continue to breathe deep and slow, take a moment to simply notice God's presence with each breath that you take."
- Invite one student to read the prayer aloud, while the rest pray silently.
- Form a circle, and take turns reading a line from the prayer.
- Help each student find a quiet space to reflect on and pray the words on their own.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever.
Amen.

LEADER TIP

Many traditions use the Lord's Prayer at a variety of times in worship, and there are a number of different versions. The aim of this exercise is for students to understand that the prayer can be a reflecting, re-centering, and reconnecting point between themselves, God, and their community of faith. If your church or community has a preferred version, replace the words above with the form you use most frequently.

GROW YOUR CIRCLE

Invite students to turn their take-home sheet over, and notice the section titled “Grow your circle.”

Say: **Just as Jesus traveled with his group of disciples, you’ve been building yourself a “circle” of trusted adults you can call on whenever you need to talk about how you feel.**

This week your challenge is to sit down and have a conversation with someone in our church [or faith community]. As God’s followers, we are welcomed into a large circle of people just like us who want to follow Christ, let God transform their lives, worship together, and serve others. Getting to know people in this congregation [or community] will help you to know that you never have to handle struggles on your own.

If your students are nervous about this challenge, talk together about which adults in the congregation (or community) might be willing to meet with them. If they’re not sure what to talk about, their **Session 4 Look around** student take-home sheet will give them some prompts to help get the conversation started.

Say: **Remember, this person should be a trusted adult. And be sure to talk with your parents about who you will be meeting with beforehand.**

Pray as you conclude your time together.

ENDNOTES

¹“The Lord’s Prayer,” from the *Book of Common Prayer*, <https://www.bcponline.org/General/paternoster.html>.