

MENU

BIBLE REFERENCES

1

God invites people to pray to him in Jesus' name

The God to whom Christians pray

Genesis 2:4 – 3:24 Exodus 3:1–12
Isaiah 1:18–20 Ezekiel 37:1–6
Micah 6:6–8 Matthew 27:32–50
John 14:1–14 Revelation 5:11–14
Acts 2:1–8, 22–24, 32–39

Psalms express a range of strong emotions and thoughts, reflecting people's life experience

Psalms 35, 40, 72, 92, 103, 111, 130, 131

Invitations and exhortations to pray

Psalms 50:15 Matthew 7:7–11
Ephesians 6:18,19 1 Timothy 2:1–6, 8
Philippians 4:6 Colossians 4:2–4
1 Thessalonians 5:17,18
2 Thessalonians 3:1–3 Hebrews 13:18,19
James 5:13–18

Jesus gives believers access to God

Matthew 7:7–11 Mark 15:38
John 6:37 John 10:7,9
John 14:6 Acts 17:28
Romans 5:2 Romans 8:34
1 Corinthians 12:13 Ephesians 2:18
Ephesians 3:12 Hebrews 4:14–16
Hebrews 10:19–22 1 John 5:14

The risen Jesus' relationship with those who have faith in him

Romans 8:31–34 Ephesians 2:19–22
Hebrews 7:23–25 Hebrews 9:24
Hebrews 12:2,3 Hebrews 13:8

The Holy Spirit helps people to know God and to pray to him

John 3:3,5,6 John 14:16–18, 26
John 15:26 John 16:8–15
Romans 8:16,17,26,27

Christians speak to a God who is close to them

Psalms 139:1–18

God as Father

Matthew 6:25–34 Luke 11:5–13
Luke 18:16,17

Jesus promises that prayers pleasing to God will be answered

Matthew 6:25 Matthew 6:31–33
Matthew 7:7,8,11 Luke 11:13
John 14:13,14 Romans 8:31,32
1 John 5:14

Prayer requires a humble, listening and hopeful heart

Psalms 62:5–8 Psalm 130:5–8
Isaiah 40:27–31 Matthew 6:5–8
Matthew 7:9–12 Romans 12:1,2
2 Corinthians 12:8,9 Philippians 4:4–7
1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 1 Peter 5:6,7
James 4:7–10

Peter's prayer life grew out of his relationship with Jesus

First impressions Luke 4:38–41
Luke 5:1–11
Along the way Luke 6:6–11
Luke 8:22–25; Luke 9:1–6
Luke 9:10–17; Luke 11:1–13
A leap of faith Matthew 14:22–33
A mountain-top experience
Matthew 16:13–28; Mark 9:2–10
Jesus' last days Mark 14:32–42
Luke 22:54–62; John 13:1–20
John 18:1–11
Post-resurrection John 21:3–14
John 21:15–19
Peter's new ministry Acts 1:15–26
Acts 2:1–47; Acts 3; Acts 4
Acts 5:12–42; Acts 9:36–43; Acts 10
Acts 11:1–18; Acts 12:1–17

Examples of prayers of faith

Matthew 8:5–13 Matthew 9:18–26
Matthew 15:21–28 Luke 23:39–43

Examples of lack of faith

Matthew 8:23–27 Matthew 14:22–33
Matthew 17:14–21 Matthew 19:16–26
Matthew 21:23–27 Mark 6:1–6
Luke 12:22–31

Different prayer settings

1 Kings 8:22 Jonah 2:1
Matthew 14:22,23 Luke 24:30
Acts 7:59 Acts 10:9

God inspires confidence in the pray-er

Deuteronomy 30:19,20 Joshua 1:8,9
 Psalm 121 Isaiah 40:28–31
 Isaiah 65:24 Daniel 2:20–23
 Daniel 3:17,18 Matthew 18:20
 Matthew 28:19,20 Luke 12:22–31
 Luke 24:36–39 John 14:16–18
 Romans 8:38,39 Hebrews 9:24

2**God promises to hear and answer prayer****God answers people's prayers**

Isaac's servant prays for guidance Genesis 24
 Jacob prays for deliverance Genesis 32, 33
 The Israelites cry to God Exodus 2:23 – 3:10
 Moses prays during the plagues Exodus 5 – 10
 Moses prays for the people in the desert
 Exodus 15:22–26; 17:1–7; Numbers 11
 Numbers 14

God meets Moses' need before he prays
 Exodus 18

Hannah's prayer 1 Samuel 1 – 2:10

Solomon asks for wisdom 1 Kings 3

Elijah prays for a woman's son 1 Kings 17

Elijah prays for God to reveal himself
 1 Kings 18:20–46

Nehemiah prays Nehemiah 1,2

God rejects Zedekiah's request Jeremiah 21

Jonah prays Jonah 2 – 4

A man asks for healing Matthew 8:1–4

A woman asks for help Matthew 15:21–28

James and John request to sit at Jesus' right hand
 Mark 10:35–45

Jesus prays to be delivered Mark 14:35–39

Mary's song of praise Luke 1:46–55

Zechariah's song Luke 1:67–79

Simeon's prayer Luke 2:28–32

A father seeks healing for his son
 Luke 9:37–43

Ten men are healed Luke 17:11–19

A blind beggar receives sight Luke 18:35–43

God meets Cornelius' need Acts 10

The church prays for Peter Acts 12:1–19

Paul prays in prison Acts 16:16–40

Paul prays for healing 2 Corinthians 12:7–10

Paul rejoices at God's providence
 Philippians 4:10–20

Many factors contribute to understanding how and when God answers prayer

Genesis 18,19 Isaiah 58:2–9

Luke 13:1–5 James 1:2–8

Prayer involves waiting on God and being persistent and confident

Matthew 15:21–28 Mark 9:17–29

Luke 11:1–13 Luke 18:1–8

The apostle Paul prays

2 Corinthians 1:3–7 Ephesians 1:15–23

Ephesians 3:14–21 Philippians 1:2–11

Philippians 4:10–13 Colossians 1:3–14

2 Thessalonians 1:3,11,12

2 Thessalonians 2:13 2 Thessalonians 3:1–3

1 Timothy 1:12 2 Timothy 1:3–7

2 Timothy 1:16–18

Examples of prayers

Genesis 32:9–12 Exodus 15:1–8

1 Samuel 2:1–10 1 Kings 8:22–53

Psalm 51 Isaiah 33:2–6

Daniel 9:4–19 Matthew 6:9–13

God will answer prayer

Matthew 7:7,8 Matthew 11:28,29

Matthew 21:22 John 15:7

James 1:5

3**Jesus taught people to pray****Jesus prays**

Matthew 27:46 Mark 14:22–26

Luke 22:39–46 Luke 23:34,46

John 17

Places where Jesus prayed

Matthew 4:1–11 Matthew 14:13,23

Matthew 17:1–13 Matthew 26:36–44

Mark 1:35–39 Luke 4:42

Luke 5:16 Luke 6:12–16

Luke 9:18 Luke 9:28,29

Yielding to God

Psalm 34:18 Psalm 37:4–7

Philippians 2:5–11 Hebrews 3:1,2

Hebrews 12:2,3

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9–14 Luke 11:1–4

Prayer when life is a struggle

Luke 4:1–13 Romans 7:15,18–25

Ephesians 6:10–20 James 4:1–6

1 John 2:15–17

MENU

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

1

God invites people to pray to him in Jesus' name

EVERYBODY DOES IT Andrew Knowles begins his book *Discovering Prayer* by claiming that everyone prays.

Students conduct a survey in the class, at home, among their friends and in the local shopping centre (if appropriate) to test the truth of the statement. Students find out when and where people have prayed, how often people pray, to whom they pray, what they expect from prayer.

Students survey the number of times the name of God is used in conversation in a film. Is it ever used for a prayer?

Students reflect on their experience of prayer: difficulties in praying, answered prayer, times they will most likely pray, etc. Each student writes a definition of prayer. (1a)

GIVING AND RECEIVING The challenge of Christian prayer is that people approach God ready to accept gifts for which they can give nothing in return.

Students explore the practice and ritual of giving and receiving gifts in their society. They think of emotions they have experienced on receiving gifts that they liked or did not like, or that were unexpected. Students write a definition of a gift. They discuss:

- Which is easier: to give or to receive?
 - How is prayer both giving and receiving?
- (1a)

TUNING IN Some Christians describe prayer as tuning in to the depths within ourselves, to the people around us and to the wonder, power, unseen reality, Spirit, God beyond ourselves.

Students think of events and experiences in life which have deeply moved them, listing their thoughts and emotions. To stimulate student responses, view excerpts of videos which engage the deeper emotions of wonderment, fear, compassion, eg a surf-rider negotiating huge ocean waves in Hawaii, scenes of devastation caused by a hurricane.

Alternatively, ask students how they feel when they hear/see news of people in war-torn areas, when they have gone on a thrill ride, etc.

Students describe times when they have sensed the presence of God or something or

someone larger than themselves in the events of their lives. They discuss ways this experience has changed the way they see events and people and whether this has ever had an impact on their behaviour and attitudes. (1a)

LIKE A LITTLE CHILD Christian prayer requires an attitude of humility, dependence and trust. Involve students in a series of trust exercises, eg one person stands between two others with eyes closed, allowing the two others to rock them backwards and forwards, trusting them to catch them each time. Students then share what 'letting go' requires from them.

OR Students observe young children with their parents or teachers. How do young children demonstrate their trust and dependence on adults? Students discuss what prevents them from placing their trust in other people. They think of whom they trust and why.

OR Place a coloured counter in the palm of each student's hand. Students imagine that the counter represents what is most precious to them. Ask them to clench their fingers over the counter to protect it. Students choose the person to whom they would reveal, and even give, their treasure. They open their hands to symbolise releasing their treasure. They discuss reasons people have for placing or not placing their trust in God. (1a,1b)

PROTOCOL Students write down the procedures a student or parent needs to follow to have an interview with the school principal. They investigate the channels a customer must go through to see the store manager, how fans can see their favourite singer, etc. Students determine on what basis a person can walk directly into a principal's office or store manager's office or singer's dressing-room. This can lead to students investigating what gives people access to God. (1b)

AIDS TO PRAYER Students brainstorm what they think helps people pray and/or reflect about God and their life, eg use of music, focal points such as a picture, sculpture, use of lighting (eg a bright light, a solitary candle), choice of location, use of space. They set up, experience and reflect on their own ideas. They discuss the value of putting aside a time and place for prayer and personal reflection. (1a,1c,2a)

CALLING FOR HELP Students think of three different situations in their lives when they have needed help. Students recall and record

- the problem they were experiencing and how that made them feel
- from whom they asked for help and why they went to that person
- how they asked for help
- what help they were given and how this made them feel.

Students discuss:

- Was it easier to ask for help when you were younger than it is now?
- What encourages you to ask for help? What discourages you from asking?
- How do you feel about helping out other people?
- How is prayer like calling for help? (1a,1b,1c)

PRAYER ANTHOLOGIES Students examine collections of prayers written by individual people, eg *A Common Prayer* by M Leunig, *Australian Images* by A Podlich, *Brief Prayers For Australians* by B Prewer.

They identify the different styles, structures and contents of the prayers, the main concerns of the writers, the writers' views of God and themselves. Students indicate which prayers they like best, giving their reasons. (1a,1c)

PRAYER RITUALS Using encyclopedias and books about different religions, students find out about objects and practices associated with prayer: mantras, meditation, yoga, prayer wheels, prayer beads, prayer shawls, rosary beads, retreats, stations of the cross, icons.

Students draw pictures or write explanations of the objects and practices, identifying

- by whom they are used
- when and where they are used
- the purpose each serves.

Students summarise what they learn about prayer from the objects and practices. (1c)

BODY LANGUAGE A range of postures and gestures are associated with prayer, eg lying prostrate, kneeling, outstretched arms, begging.

Students list the postures and gestures of prayer familiar to them. They experiment with different postures and gestures, exploring what each one communicates about a person's attitudes, feelings, beliefs. (1c)

2

God promises to hear and answer prayer

PRAYER JOURNAL Christian prayer reflects people's changing and growing knowledge, trust and love of God. Some Christians have found that keeping a prayer journal is a helpful way of being more aware of how God is at work in their lives, answering their prayers.

Encourage students to keep a prayer journal. To get them started provide some time to do this during lessons. Stress that the journal is for them and will not be read by anyone else.

KEEPING A PRAYER JOURNAL

- Set aside a special book for entries.
- Date each entry.
- Jot down the things you talk to God about, in particular your prayer requests.
- Record events and experiences in your life. Are they answers to your prayers.
- Experiment with different styles of entries, eg a letter, ideas in terms of the five senses beginning with *I hear . . . , I feel . . . , I see . . .* etc, simple line drawings, the imagined interaction between God and you, the writer.
- At the end of every month reflect on what you have written, summarising your growing understanding of God and prayer.
- The journal can include other people's prayers and thoughts on life, poetry, prose writing, newspaper clippings, drawings, pictures, pressed flowers, Bible verses etc.

NOTE: Where students indicate they are uncomfortable with keeping a prayer journal, encourage them to keep a journal of their thoughts, experiences and reflections which does not assume faith in God. (2a)

COMMUNICATION Students list what contributes to effective communication between two people, eg honesty, empathy, showing interest, eye-contact. Students then rate themselves on a scale of 'I always do this' to 'I never do this'. They suggest what effective communication with God involves. (1a,2a)

LISTENING AND SPEAKING Christian prayer involves two-way communication between the pray-er and God.

Working in pairs, students role-play conversations covering a range of situations, eg

- Two friends have not seen each other for a long time. They have a lot to share.
- A daughter is contacting her mum during the lunch hour at school, telling her about the bad time she is having with her friend.
- One person is accepting an invitation to a party and is offering to help out.
- Son and father have an argument. Later Dad says sorry.
- A music teacher contacts a student to offer congratulations for winning the eisteddfod.
- The coach of a soccer team has two flat tyres and needs to be at the ground within the hour. He/she contacts a friend for help.

Students role-play situations where listening and speaking is made difficult, eg one person continually interrupts another, one person doesn't reply to or acknowledge what the other person is saying, one person talks without interruption.

Students experiment with different ways of communicating (eg sign language, writing, painting, music), identifying which are most effective (the film *ET* has an interesting different form of communication). They suggest situations in which each method of communication may be appropriate.

Students think of how an invisible God may choose to communicate to people. (2a,2b)

SIMPLY SHARING Christians believe that God is interested in the ordinary aspects of people's lives. This means they can pray about everything. To introduce this concept to students, choose from the following activities:

- View sections of *Fiddler on the Roof* where Tevye speaks to God about the events and people in his life.
- Students each draw the shape of their hand. Inside the shape they write the things that are most important to them.
- Students draw concentric circles and write in them the names of people who are in their circles of concern, placing the people they are closest to in the inner circle.
- Students sit alone and imagine that God is sitting next to them, inviting them to share their hopes, concerns, hurts, frustrations, ambitions about themselves and others. They either conduct an inner monologue or write the dialogue in their journals. In small groups students share their experiences, reflecting on the nature of their communication: did it consist of whingeing, appreciation, requesting help, admitting wrong? Students describe how they pictured God. (1a,1b,1c,2b)

THE SOUND OF SILENCE Most writers on prayer make a connection between prayer and silence. Being quiet encourages reflection, contemplation, listening.

Students tell how they feel about silence or being quiet or being still — is it peaceful or threatening? They try to think of a time when they have experienced complete silence, eg no radio, CD player or television.

Students discuss: What can silence/stillness/quiet do for a person that sounds cannot do?

Give students an opportunity to experience silence during a lesson, eg students get comfortable, breathe slowly and deliberately, relax, close their eyes and listen to the sounds around them. Repeat this for several consecutive lessons, beginning with small chunks of time and building up to more extended times of silence. Students write in their journals about the sounds they hear and the thoughts and emotions they experience.

Build on this activity by giving students music to listen to and reflect by, pictures to contemplate, Bible passages, traditional prayers, a collection of objects on a theme, eg the bounty of nature. Students write their personal reflections in their journals. (1c,2b)

ON LIFE'S JOURNEY Christians understand prayer as an expression of the deepening relationship between a loving God and his people.

Students view a film which explores the development of personal relationships through life's events and experiences. For example, students plot the main events and experiences in Forrest Gump's life in *Forrest Gump*. They focus on his relationship with his mother and Jenny, identifying what keeps the relationships going through the many events of his life. (1a,2a,2b)

3

Jesus taught people to pray

ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS (1)

This is an introduction for a development activity of the same name. Students read the story of Jesus' last week before he died, beginning with his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. At each stage of the story students imagine what might have been Jesus' thoughts, feelings and reflections on his life, on his time with the disciples and on his relationship with his family and the citizens of his country. (3a)

QUIET PLACES Students discuss the importance for people of the bush, the sea, wide-open spaces, quiet places. What do these places mean to many people? What do people do when they visit such places?

Students write about or draw a place that has been special to them. They reflect on who or what is associated with this place to make it special and what happens within them when they visit this place either physically or in their memories.

Jesus went out into the wilderness to be alone to pray. Students think of places they go to when they want to think things through or to be alone and quiet. (3a)

THE LORD'S PRAYER Students examine the meaning of key words of the Lord's Prayer both as they are used in the prayer and as they are used in students' own daily life: Father, hallowed/holy, kingdom, will, daily bread, forgive, temptation, deliver, evil. Students rewrite the Lord's Prayer, using modern words to convey the same meaning. (3b)

THE CONCERNS OF LIFE Students look through newspapers or magazines to identify some of the major issues and concerns in people's lives, eg safety, security, enjoyment of life, health and wellbeing, justice, the environment, relationships between different sectors of the community.

Students list the chief concerns in their own lives at the present. They examine how the Lord's Prayer addresses people's concerns. This is further developed in *Guide on the Path of Life* in the Development Activities Menu. (3b)

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DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

1

God invites people to pray to him in Jesus' name

THE GOSPELS ON PRAYER Students investigate what the gospels teach about prayer. Divide the four gospels among the students. Using a Bible concordance and index as well as skim reading, they find every reference to prayer in the gospels. They copy out each of the references and pool them together (if you have a Bible on PC use it!).

Students collate the references under such headings as

- who prays
- where to pray
- who to pray to
- what to pray for
- how to pray
- when to pray
- faith and prayer
- prayers that work
- prayers that do not work.

Students each reflect on what has been learnt about prayer from the gospels, using sentence beginnings such as *I have learnt . . . , I am puzzled by . . . , I am surprised . . . , I agree . . . I do not understand . . . , Prayer is . . .* (1,2,3)

WHAT KIND OF GOD? Christians believe that prayer is communication with God, the God revealed in the Bible.

Using OHT 3 in *The Divine Drama*, students imagine the nature of the communication that would take place if God is seen as a kind old Santa Claus, an invisible police officer, a judge, a magician, an academic, a doctor, a 'goody-two-shoes'.

Students explain in their own words the kind of God to whom Christians pray as presented in the following passages, and the kind of prayers you would then expect from people who worship such a God:

Genesis 2:4 – 3:24	Exodus 3:1–12
Isaiah 1:18–20	Ezekiel 37:1–6
Micah 6:6–8	Matthew 27:32–50
John 14:1–14	Acts 2:1–8, 22–24, 32–39
Revelation 5:11–14 (1a)	

PRAYING WITH HUMILITY Prayer requires a humble, listening and hopeful heart.

Using a Bible concordance, students look up 'humility/humble'. (The book of Proverbs is a good starting point. *The Life Application Bible* has a useful list of references in the *Index to Notes*.) Students create a bank of words and movements to explain the meaning of humility.

Students study a church service/liturgy to find out how humility before God is emphasised in the rituals and wording.

Students read the following Bible verses and discuss how humility expresses itself in prayer:

Psalms 62:5–8	Psalms 130:5–8
Isaiah 40:27–31	Matthew 6:5–8
Romans 12:1,2	2 Corinthians 12:8,9
Philippians 4:4–7	1 Thessalonians 5:16–18
James 4:7–10	1 Peter 5:6,7

Students examine Jesus' parable *The Pharisee and the tax collector*, contrasting the Pharisee's approach to prayer with that of the tax collector. Students discuss:

- Is the Pharisee's prayer in fact a genuine prayer?
- What does a person need in order to be able to approach God? (1a,2b)

A FAITH WALK Christian prayer expresses a relationship of faith and trust in God. The Bible presents the story of people's faith walk.

Students produce a prayer journal of the faith walk of a Bible character such as: Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, Job, Jeremiah, Jonah, Nehemiah, Hannah, Paul, Peter. They use a Bible concordance or encyclopedia to find information. They read the life story from the Bible, examining the relationship the person has with God and looking in particular at

- the form of communication between the person and God
- the understanding of and belief about God
- the changing nature of the relationship
- any concrete expression of faith in God.

Students interview a Christian, comparing and contrasting that person's experience with the experience of the Bible character investigated. (1a,1b,2a,2b)

FAITH / LACK OF FAITH In his dealings with people Jesus commended people for expressions of faith, as well as pointing out instances of lack of faith.

Examples of faith:

Matthew 8:5–13 Matthew 9:18–26
Matthew 15:21–28 Luke 23:39–43

Examples of lack of faith:

Matthew 8:23–27 Matthew 14:22–33
Matthew 17:14–21 Matthew 19:16–26
Matthew 21:23–27 Mark 6:1–6
Luke 12:22–31

Students identify what characterises faith and lack of faith. They discuss the importance of faith in having a healthy prayer life and what a person can do to overcome their lack of faith (Hebrews 12:2).

Students reflect on:

- In what or whom do I have faith?
- What difference does this faith make to the way I approach life and interpret what happens to me? (1a,1b)

EVER-PRESENT Conduct a guided reflection in which students think of a time when they have been lost, hurt, confused or angry. Use symbols and pictures to help students focus their thoughts, eg barbed wire, a bird in sole flight in a vast sky. Students then think of who or what was able to restore their sense of peace and wellbeing.

Students work in pairs, examining one of the following texts which express people's confidence in God. Students create a picture, painting or collage to demonstrate the truth to which the Bible verse points.

Deuteronomy 30:19,20 Joshua 1:8,9
Psalm 121 Isaiah 40:28–31
Isaiah 65:24 Daniel 2:20–23
Daniel 3:17,18 Matthew 18:20
Matthew 28:19,20 Luke 12:22–31
Luke 24:36–39 John 14:16–18
Romans 5:2 Romans 8:38,39
Ephesians 2:18 Ephesians 3:12
Hebrews 4:16 Hebrews 9:24
Hebrews 10:22. (1b,2a)

IN THE FATHER'S CARE Young children usually go to their parents for all their needs.

Students brainstorm the features of an ideal father/child relationship. They examine Jesus' use of the father/child image to describe the relationship that can exist between God and his people.

Matthew 6:25–34 Luke 11:5–13
Luke 18:16,17 John 3:3,5,6
John 14:16–18,26 John 15:26
John 16:8–15.

Students discuss:

- What can a person who approaches God in prayer expect from God?
- What is required of the person who comes to God in prayer?
- What is the significance of the gift of the Holy Spirit for the person who prays?

The father/child image may be a difficult one for some people to relate to because of abuse in families. Students think of images suitable for their own peer group and people living in their society to convey the same message Jesus communicated to his readers. (1b)

JESUS OPENS THE WAY According to the New Testament, people can approach God directly through Christ. His death and resurrection broke down the barrier between God and people, created by human rebelliousness. People receive this gift by faith.

Students write the following Bible references on large sheets of paper in large print, displaying them around the classroom walls:

Mark 15:38 John 6:37
John 10:7,9 John 14:6
Romans 8:34 Ephesians 3:12
Hebrews 4:14–16 Hebrews 9:24
Hebrews 10:19–22 Hebrews 12:2,3
Hebrews 13:15 1 John 5:14

Students explore the implications of this Christian teaching for prayer in the life of people in a range of situations, eg when they are lonely, tired, frustrated, feeling rejected, confused, anxious about the future, in difficult relationships, fearful for their lives.

Students discuss what place praise will have in prayer. (1b,2b)

FOUR ELEMENTS OF PRAYER Most Christian prayers contain four elements:

- adoration (praising God)
- confession (regret for wrongs committed, and need of forgiveness)
- thanksgiving (recognition of God's blessings)
- requests (asking God for personal help or to intervene on behalf of others).

Give students examples of the four elements of prayer outlined above (refer to Bible References Menu under Faith Statement 2).

Students collect examples of Christian prayers, past and present, identifying the four elements in those prayers (see prayer books in the Recommended Resources Menu). They list the beliefs about God contained in the prayers.

Students examine how all four elements come together in the Lord's Prayer. They identify what the Lord's Prayer teaches about God. (1a,3b)

PSALMS The psalms in the Bible are centuries-old prayers which were part of the worship and spiritual life of the Hebrew people. Many psalms celebrate the relationship God initiated with Israel in the calling of Abraham. The psalms emerged from the experiences of human life, expressing a range of strong emotions and thoughts.

Students examine selected psalms (eg 35, 40, 72, 92, 103, 111, 131) in two steps:

1. Students research the circumstances which prompted the writing of the psalm. NIV Bible study notes give relevant details.

They explain what they learn about how the psalmist and the Hebrew people related to their God (eg the depth of their emotions) and what the psalms reveal about the God the Hebrews worshipped (his responses to the people, his interests).

2. Students respond to a psalm, choosing from a range of approaches, eg reading the psalm in several translations; highlighting the words and phrases which have special meaning for them; reading the psalm slowly, stopping at words of significance and reflecting on the meaning of the words in their lives; rewriting the psalm to incorporate their own life experience. (1a,1b,1c,2b)

PRAYER IS UNIVERSAL Students investigate the place of prayer in different religions. One approach is to contrast the beliefs and practices surrounding prayer in Christianity with one or two other religions such as Islam and Buddhism.

Students determine how each of the religions would respond to the following statements on prayer:

- Prayer is talking to the deity.
- Prayer is merely talking to yourself.
- Prayer is therapeutic.
- Prayer is a way of life.
- Prayer helps a person on the path of salvation.
- Prayer is emptying your mind.
- Prayer is a way of entering psychic energy.
- Prayer is asking for help.
- Prayer must have symbols and rituals.
- Prayer is an optional extra. (1a,1c)

PRAYING COMMUNITIES Prayer has always played a significant role in the life of Christian communities. Each community develops its own prayer life.

Students investigate different Christian communities, examining the place of prayer with its accompanying structures and rituals. Some suggested approaches:

- Students who attend local congregations report on the place of prayer in worship, in congregational life, in people's personal lives. Student bring examples of prayers used in their community.
- Invite Christians of different denominations to tell about the practice of prayer in their own religious communities and families.
- Students research religious communities, such as the Taizé community in France, looking at the forms and purpose of prayer in those communities. If possible and appropriate, students visit a local monastery or convent, even attending one of their worship times. Alternatively, organise a prayer experience/retreat for students.
- Students examine the practice of prayer in the school community, eg use of prayer in the classroom, at school functions, staff meetings, parent prayer groups. Students identify the prayers that are said and known by the whole school community. (1c)

DIVERSE PRAYERS Just as there are various genres of communicating, so also there are various genres of prayer. No one genre is the correct way of praying, although some genres may be chosen for their appropriateness and effectiveness in a given situation.

- Students examine the prayers that were prayed by the kings and leaders of Israel at public functions, identifying the style of language used and the content of the prayers (1 Kings 8:22–53; Nehemiah 9). Students compare these prayers with those said at public functions today, eg the opening of Parliament, induction of teachers or pastors, or 'prayers of the church' in a Lutheran church service.
- Students find examples of collects, litanies, responsive prayers, table prayers, doxologies, chants (eg Gregorian chants), blessings, praise, intercession, laments, confession, thanksgiving. They identify the generic features common to each genre.
- Students collect prayers of famous people. They compare the content and style of the prayers, eg prayers by poets, monks, religious and political leaders (see Recommended Resources Menu and consult prayer anthologies). (1c)

PRAYER EXPERIENCES Prayer is the simple and natural part and outcome of a person's relationship with God. However, in order to enter into the spirit of prayer (communion with God), people often need a focus — whether it be a special time and place for prayer or some form of ritual. Give students opportunities to experience different ways of

focusing on prayer. They reflect on their experience in their journals, indicating the effectiveness of any one method for their reflection/prayer time. They can experience and contribute to any one of the following:

- Students meditate on a Bible passage (eg Isaiah 49:16; John 15:12), thinking about how the message in the passage applies to them, their relationship with others and God. They write a one-sentence response at the end of their time of reflection.
- Take students on a walk, encouraging them to experience the walk with their senses, eg listening to water rushing over stones, feeling the rough texture of bark. Give students Psalm 8 printed in the middle of a page. Around the psalm students draw or describe some of the things they experience during the walk.
- Students use the Ten Commandments or the Apostles' Creed as a starting point for their personal prayer or reflection.
- Students research the history of rosary beads and then create a set of their own beads and choose prayers and/or reflections on life that are meaningful for them and can become part of their daily prayer/reflection time.
- Students research the history of the Stations of the Cross, examining some of the practices attached to this form of praying. Students create their own stations in a reserved part of the school grounds, selecting Bible readings and prayers as part of a meditation for themselves and other members of the school.
- Students listen to music, view artwork, slides, videos, create banners, altar cloths, mimes or dramas, find symbols, use candles to help them focus and reflect.
- Students create a mural as a class, using a prayer theme or an extract from the Bible, eg God the perfect Father, hope, the creation story, the parable of *The lost son*. (1c)

2

God promises to hear and answer prayer

IF YOU WERE GOD Students imagine how they would answer the following prayers if they were God, the creator of the universe:

- God, give us fine weather for our sports day.
- God, we need rain for our crops.
- God, this rain is damaging our harvest. Please don't send any more rain!
- God, please heal my uncle of his lung cancer.
- Dear God, help the poor people of Sudan to have enough food.
- Two nations at war both pray for victory.

Students imagine all the prayers were prayed simultaneously and consider whether their answers, as God, would be any different.

Students examine

Genesis 18,19

Isaiah 58:2–9

Luke 13:1–5

James 1:2–8.

How do the passages speak to the following issues in relation to God answering prayer?

- the nature of God
- the role of God's will
- individual free will
- natural cause and effect
- human responsibility
- trust in God.

In the light of the Bible study, students suggest how the prayers in the first part of this activity might be reworded. (2a)

DIFFERENT ANSWERS Christians believe that God answers prayer in various ways, eg

- by what he does
- by what he says
- through other people
- through the person who did the praying
- through the circumstances of people's lives.

While God's action in people's lives is often interpreted as a 'no', 'yes' or 'wait' in response to their requests, Christians accept by faith that the whole of one's life is in the care of God.

There are numerous stories of God answering people's prayers in both the Old and New Testaments. In groups students read one or more of the stories listed in the Bible References Menu under *God answers people's prayers*. Students

1. summarise the context of the prayer
2. analyse the prayer: Who is addressed? What is the content?
3. identify what answer is given and how it is given

4. evaluate the appropriateness of the answer in the given situation
5. examine people's response to answered prayer.

Alternatively, students write the pray-er's prayer journal (see Introductory Activities Menu), incorporating the above points in the reflections.

Students share what they have learnt about God and how he answers prayer, discussing which of the following comments apply to him:

- God is generous.
- God likes to make life difficult for people.
- God knows best.
- God removes people's problems.
- God has favourites.
- God is a God of surprises.
- God wants to punish people.
- God withholds what people most want.

In addition students find the biblical stories and compare them with modern stories of answered prayer recounted in Christian biographies or told by Christians students know. (2a,2b)

WAITING ON GOD We live in a society that expects immediate, positive results and has little patience for waiting. People are quick to offer explanations for unanswered prayer. Students make a list of such explanations, eg:

- 'You prayed for the wrong thing.'
- 'God only listens to you if you do the right thing by him.'
- 'You didn't have enough faith.'
- 'You are only talking to yourself.'
- 'You have already decided what the answer will be, so you can't see God's answer.'

Students determine how the Old Testament psalmist and Jesus would have responded to the above explanations. They read a psalm such as Psalm 10, 13, 18, 27, 37, or 42, summarising

- the psalmist's problem/situation
- the psalmist's emotional turbulence
- the psalmist's confidence in God
- what the psalmist does while he waits for an answer.

Students read Jesus' comments on prayer:
Mark 9:17–29 Luke 11:1–13
Luke 18:1–8.

Students discuss why Christians are to persist with prayer even when they think God is not answering them. See

Matthew 7:7,8 Matthew 11:28,29
John 15:7 James 1:5. (2a)

THE BIBLE HOLDS THE ANSWER

Christians believe that one way God answers people's prayers is through his revelation in the written word of God — the Bible.

Many Bibles have a *Where to look* (if you are feeling angry, sad, guilty . . .) section in either the front or back of the publication, eg in front of *The Bible For Today CEV*.

Students make a list of what they think might be common requests people put to God. They look up verses listed in the *Where to look* section and determine what help God's word is in answering people's prayers and meeting their needs. (2a,2b)

WHERE ARE YOU, GOD? Christians believe that God is gracious to people because of Jesus and therefore hears people's prayers and promises to respond to them. They also believe that God is present in all of life and that his presence is in itself already an answer to their prayers.

Students read Psalm 139 and plot on a diagram the psalmist's description of God's presence in his life.

Students explore how Christians find in the events and circumstances of their lives God's answers to their prayers. They investigate what the Bible says about God revealing himself and consider how Christians could see God's answers to their prayers:

- in nature Psalm 104; Acts 17:24,26
- in humanity Genesis 1:27,28; Psalm 8
 Acts 17:26–28
- in loving relationships 1 John 4:7–11
- in spoken and written communication
 Psalm 147:15–20; John 20:31
 Hebrews 1:1–3
- in people's lives 2 Corinthians 3:2,3
 1 Peter 2:12
- in the events of life Psalm 105
 Mark 2:1–7; Acts 9:1–19
- in Jesus Christ John 1:1,2,14; John 3:16,17

Students plot their life's journey to the present, including significant places, events, experiences and people. Students reflect on how God may have been present and speaking to them in those moments of life, whether or not they or their parents or anyone else were praying for their wellbeing. (2a,2b)

WHO OR WHAT TO PRAY FOR?

The Bible contains both exhortations to pray and examples of prayer. In groups students examine a selection of Bible references to create a list of people and things to pray for.

Students compare this list with the prayers in church worship and the prayers found in prayer anthologies, old and new, eg students look at

hymnbooks and prayer books which include prayers from various stages in church history (eg *A Hymn of Ambrose* in *The Lion History of Christianity*).

Students cut out newspaper articles describing situations and people that need prayer in the world today. They match the prayers they have found with needs identified in the cuttings. Or give students the option of writing their own prayers.

Examples of prayer

Genesis 32:9–12	Exodus 15:1–8
1 Samuel 2:1–10	1 Kings 8:22–53
Psalms 51	Isaiah 33:2–6
Daniel 9:4–19	Matthew 6:9–13

Exhortations to pray

Psalms 50:15	Matthew 7:7
Ephesians 6:18,19	Colossians 4:2–4
1 Thessalonians 3:1–3	Timothy 2:1–6,8
Hebrews 13:18,19	James 5:13–18

(1c,2b)

PAUL, MAN OF PRAYER The letters of Paul contain some of his prayers for others and prayer requests for himself and his work, eg

2 Corinthians 1:3–7	Ephesians 1:15–23
Ephesians 3:14–21	Philippians 1:2–11
Philippians 4:10–13	Colossians 1:3–14
2 Thessalonians 1:3,11,12	
2 Thessalonians 2:13	
2 Thessalonians 3:1–3	1 Timothy 1:12
2 Timothy 1:3–7	2 Timothy 1:16–18

In groups students examine one or more of Paul's prayers, analysing what the prayers reveal about Paul's

- relationship with God
- vision for his life and work
- concern for others
- priorities in life.

An optional activity is for students to select one or more of Paul's prayers which they would like to pray for themselves or another person and adapt the prayer(s) to their situation. (1a,2b)

3

Jesus taught people to pray

PLACES WHERE JESUS PRAYED

Students examine passages in the gospels which describe places Jesus went to pray:

Matthew 4:1–11	Matthew 14:13,23
Matthew 17:1–13	Matthew 26:36–41
Mark 1:35–39	Luke 4:42
Luke 5:16	Luke 6:12–16
Luke 9:18	Luke 9:28,29.

From the context students determine Jesus' reason for praying and the outcome of his prayer. (3a)

ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS (2)

Students do the introductory activity of the same name.

Most of Jesus' prayers recorded in the gospels are those prayed just prior to his death and while on the cross. Students read

Matthew 27:46	Mark 14:22–26
Luke 22:39–46	Luke 23:34,46
John 17.	

Students discuss what Jesus' prayers reveal about his relationship with his Father. They explore the idea that prayer involves coming to terms with life's circumstances, being totally honest with God and being open to listening to what God has to say.

Students discuss what this requires of individuals. See Psalms 34:18
Psalms 37:4–7 Philippians 2:5–11
Hebrews 3:1,2; Hebrews 4:14–16
Hebrews 12:2,3 (3a)

JESUS' PRIESTLY PRAYER Jesus gives the Lord's Prayer to his disciples as a prayer they can pray and as a guide for praying.

Students compare Jesus' prayer in John 17 with the Lord's Prayer. They analyse these aspects in each prayer:

- the relationship between Jesus and God his Father
- how Jesus honoured God's name
- what Jesus understood God's will to be for people
- what Jesus asked for himself
- what Jesus asked for his disciples
- what Jesus asked for the 'Christian church'.

Students explain in their own words, or in actions or in symbols Jesus' experience of being one with God.

Christians in a school community are included in Jesus' prayer for 'everyone who will have faith' (v 20). Students discuss the implications of 'being one with God and one another' for a school, the obstacles to that unity and the special prayer-needs of people within that community. (3a,3b)

THE LORD'S PRAYER Students explore the meaning and focus of the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer can be examined in several ways:

- Students examine the meaning of each petition in the Lord's Prayer — referring to the explanations given in Luther's Small and Large Catechisms — and determine which aspects of life are addressed in the prayer.
- Students investigate how the theme of each petition in the Lord's Prayer is developed in the Bible. They can use *Growing as God's*

People and Bible concordances and dictionaries as a starting point for references.

- Students make a list of antonyms for key words in the Lord's Prayer, examining the insight this gives to the focus of the Lord's Prayer, eg if life were to be characterised by the attitudes expressed in the antonyms, what motivation would this give for personal and community life?
- Students substitute the pronouns *me* and *my* for *us* and *our* in the Lord's Prayer. Students discuss how the focus of the prayer changes and what limitations this would place on prayer and life.
- Students consider why Jesus included only one petition that relates directly to people's physical needs. Discussion can include reference to Bible texts such as Matthew 6:25–34 and Luke 12:22–34. (3b)

GUIDE ON THE PATH OF LIFE In his introduction to *Luther's Large Catechism*, F Hebart states that the 'purpose of the catechism is to accompany and guide Christians along the path of life' (p vii).

Students identify the two main sections of the Ten Commandments: commandments relating to our duty to God and commandments relating to our duty to our neighbours (see Jesus' summary of the commandments Matthew 22:37–40). They examine the Lord's Prayer for parallels with these two kinds of concerns.

Students discuss whether the Lord's Prayer can be prayed by people who say they are not Christian.

Following on from the introductory activity *The Concerns of Life*, students examine how each part of the Lord's Prayer addresses people's concerns in life, including their own concerns. (3b)

LIFE'S A STRUGGLE Students begin a study of the Lord's Prayer by examining the last three petitions: *And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* In small groups students discuss the reality of guilt, the need for forgiveness, the experience of temptation and evil in their own lives. Each group role-plays the struggles, conflict and opposition associated with dealing with guilt, quarrels, temptation, deciding between right and wrong.

Students consider how well some of the New Testament writers describe the reality expressed in the role-plays. See Romans 7:15, 18–25 James 4:1–6 1 John 2:15–17.

Students rewrite the petitions in their own words, incorporating their real-life situations.

Students explore the relationship of the last three petitions to the first three: *hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven*, identifying the struggles, conflict and opposition people might face if they try to focus on God first.

Students read the story of Jesus' temptation (Luke 4:1–13) and Ephesians 6:10–20, to explore the value of prayer and how Christians can pray. (3b)

MENU

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

1

God invites people to pray to him in Jesus' name

Please note that several of the activities in Development Activities Menu have response activities as a natural outcome of what students are learning about prayer.

PRAYER ANTHOLOGY Each student produces a collection of prayers entitled *Friendship with God*, including a selection of other people's prayers, hymns, songs, illustrations, pictures, etc. They introduce the collection of prayers with a preface which explains the choice of items in the collection and what these items demonstrate about the place of prayer in a person's relationship with God.

Alternatively, students produce a collection of prayers that people of their age-group can use when they feel lonely, rejected or thankful, or a collection of prayers for the people of the world. (1a,1b,2b)

BANNERS Groups of students design and create a banner, using colour, symbols and words to depict any one of the following Christian beliefs about prayer:

- Prayer requires a humble approach.
- Prayer expresses a relationship of faith and trust in God.
- Prayer is for everyone in every situation.
- Prayer is praise, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, asking for needs.
- Prayer is in Jesus' name.
- Prayer is waiting on God.
- Prayer is listening, thinking, acting, responding.

Alternatively, students create a banner for each part of the Lord's Prayer or one which depicts God's promise to those who come to him in faith (refer to *Ever Present* in the Development Activities Menu). (1,2,3)

AN ESSAY Students write a short essay on how Christian prayer differs from prayer in other religions. Students who are not confident writers can present their essay as a series of diagrams and symbols which can be explained to the class.

Alternatively, students present a series of short plays which compare Christian prayer with prayer in other religions. (1,2,3)

WRITE YOUR OWN PRAYERS

In pairs students try writing prayers of different genres, eg collects, litanies, doxologies. They use events related to the school, local community (see local newspapers) or their own lives for the content of the prayers. They think of how and when the prayers they have written could be incorporated into school worship. Refer to *Diverse Prayers* in the Development Activities Menu. (1c)

2

God promises to hear and answer prayer

PRAYER SCRIPT In groups students write a script (which they can perform) of the dialogue between God and a person their own age over a period of time.

As a backdrop for the dialogue, use novels, films or TV soaps which focus on issues that are relevant to students.

This activity could be done in conjunction with a novel or film that students may be studying in English. Or you might read a novel together in class, for example *Lockie Leonard Scumbuster* by Tim Winton, which deals with issues that are pressing for 12–14-year-olds: friends, family issues, self-awareness, growing up, the environment. Students write the dialogue between either Lockie and God or Egg and God. Students draw on their understanding of prayer, exploring how God answers prayer in the context of real life.

Encourage students to use a Bible concordance to find out what the Bible has to say about any of the issues raised in the novel so that this information can be incorporated into the dialogue.

Gillian Rubenstein, John Marsden and Robin Klein are some Australian authors who write for this age-group. Your school librarian can supply you with many more ideas. (1a,1b,2b)

PEOPLE WHO PRAY Students retell the story of people's faith journey with God in the form of a prayer journal (eg Moses, Jesus, Peter, Paul). *A Faith Walk* and *Paul, a Man of Prayer* in the Development Activities Menu have suggestions on where to locate information about people of faith.

The journal entries need to focus on the relationship between the person and God. The

journal can record the person's feelings, thoughts, analysis of the events, spoken words, wishes, requests and communication with God, answers to prayer. Refer to TRS D1/1 of Level 1 Model Unit for information about journal writing. (1,2,3)

PLANNING A PRAYER EXPERIENCE

This is an activity for students who express a desire to plan a prayer experience for themselves or other interested school students in the school community. Students work with the school chaplain, select a theme, the type of experience they want to create (eg Taize-style experience), and decide on a time and place for the experience.

Students can plan the experience around traditional orders of service such as the Order of Matins or Responsive Prayer in *The Lutheran Hymnal with Supplement*.

Alternatively, they plan an experience using a psalm, a gospel story/parable, selected Bible verses on a theme.

Students create rituals and symbols to use as focus points in the experience. The Australian edition of *Prayer Resources for Secondary Schools* has numerous suggestions. (1,2,3)

3

Jesus taught people to pray

ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS (3)

In groups students create a series of tableaux, using a medium of their choice (eg drawing, painting, body sculptures) to depict the nature of Jesus' prayers on the way to his death. The tableaux can be accompanied by students' own prayers, reflections, meditations, selection of poems, etc. (3a)

POSTERS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

Divide the class into eight groups, giving each a different part of the Lord's Prayer (follow the divisions of the Lord's Prayer set out in *Luther's Small Catechism*). Students design a poster which includes

- a symbol or logo which conveys the meaning of the part of the Lord's Prayer the group is examining
- prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and petition related to that part of the Lord's Prayer, incorporating references to real-life situations found in newspaper articles or students' own experience of life.

Each student in the group writes an explanation of the symbol or logo which can be displayed along with the poster. (3b)

KEEPING A SPIRITUAL JOURNAL

This activity is to be undertaken only by students who voluntarily express a desire to begin their own prayer journal.

The introductory activity *Prayer Journal* and TRS D1/1 outline steps and ideas on how students can go about keeping a spiritual journal. *How to Keep a Spiritual Journal* by R Klug has some suitable suggestions. Students look at examples of spiritual journals that have been published, eg Thomas Merton, St Teresa of Avila.

Students can model some of their prayers on the psalms, the Lord's Prayer or prayers found in anthologies. (1,2,3)

MENU

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The introduction to LIFE contains suggested general resources for all LIFE concepts.

The following resources may be used to develop a unit about *God helps people pray*.

Some of these resources may be out of print.

They are listed because they (or others similar to them) may be found in school libraries.

Preview these and any other resources you intend using to be sure that they are appropriate for your students.

TEACHER RESOURCES

GENERAL RESOURCES

- Keene M *Believers in One God* 1993
Cambridge University Press
- Keene M *Seekers after Truth* 1993
Cambridge University Press
- Klug R *How to Keep a Spiritual Journal* 1993
Augsburg
- Life Application NIV Bible* 1991 Tyndale
House Publishers
- Lucado M *The Applause of Heaven* 1990
Word Publishing
- Mackay H *Why Don't People Listen?* 1994
Pan Australia
- Malone P *Traces of God — Understanding
God's Presence in the World Today* 1991
Collins Dove
- Nolan E *Christian Beliefs Book 1* 1994 JBCE
The Lutheran Hymnal with Supplement
Openbook Publishers
- Wendt H N *The Parables of Jesus* 1997
Crossways International

BOOKS ABOUT PRAYER

- Foster R *Prayer* 1992 Hodder & Stoughton
- Fuller J *Dreams and Visions — A Way into
Prayer for Young People* 1997 Kevin Mayhew
- Lucado M *The Great House of God* 1997
Word Publishing (Lucado examines the Lord's
Prayer as a model for living)
- Warden M (ed) *Prayer-Group's Active Bible
Curriculum* 1990 Group Publishing Inc
- Nouwen H *With Open Hands* 1995 Ave Maria
Press
- Prayer Resources for Secondary Schools,
Australian Edition* 1992 National Centre for
Religious Studies New Zealand
- Rust R *Making the Psalms Your Prayer* 1988
St Anthony Messenger Press

PRAYER BOOKS

- Abbott M *Igniting Sparks of Reconciliation and
Passion (Prayer and Ritual for Staff Gatherings
in Catholic Schools Today)* 1996 Catholic
Education Office, Adelaide

- Brandt L F *Psalms Now* 1976 Lutheran
Publishing House
- Famous Prayers* 1987 Abingdon Press
- Foster R J & Smith J B *Devotional Classics*
1990 Harper
- Hutson J *Heal My Heart, O Lord* 1997 Eagle
- Leunig M *A Common Prayer* 1990 Dove
- Podlich A *Australian Images* 1985 Lutheran
Publishing House
- Prayers of Famous People* 1991 Chi Rho
Books
- Prewer B D *Jesus Our Future* 1998
Openbook Publishers
- Prewer B *Brief Prayers for Australians* 1991
Lutheran Publishing House
- Schubert D *Days and Seasons* 1989 Lutheran
Publishing House

JOURNALS

- Bonhoeffer D *Letters and Papers from Prison*
1971 SCM Press Ltd
- Kramer V (ed) *Turning toward the World —
The Journals of Thomas Merton Volume 4*
1996 Harper
- Lachman B *The Journal of Hildegard of
Bingen* 1993 Bell Tower
- Peers A (ed) *The Way of Perfection — Teresa
of Avila* 1991 Image Books

AUDIO-VISUAL

- Acts* volumes 1–4 1995 Visual International
- Fiddler on the Roof*
- Forrest Gump*
- Jesus of Nazareth*
- Jesus* (follows the gospel of Luke)
- The Gospel of Matthew* volumes 1–4 1995
Visual International

Put a plastic sleeve in this section of your LIFE binder to keep your own collection of clippings, cartoons, stories, photos, etc which you can use for these units. Add to your collection whenever you come across something that might be useful.

