

Prayer is ...

Prayer is one of the most difficult things for me to do. Sure, it's easy for me to talk to my friends on the phone, or in class. But it's hard to talk to You, God. I can't see You. I realize that is no excuse, but it is harder to talk to You when I can't see You. And the hardest thing is that You don't talk back to me. Please help me, dear God, to realize that I should talk to You in spite of these feelings. You really do talk to me through Your Word. And You really desire to fellowship with me. After all, You are the only real friend I have. You died for me, so why shouldn't I talk to You? I think You said enough when You died on the cross to save me from sin. Now I need to say "thank You." And there is no better way to say that than to do what You ask. So I'll try harder to pray, dear God.
— High-school junior

Pathway

PERSONAL CHRISTIAN GROWTH SERIES

Set aside a special time each day to go through a *Pathway* study. Even if you miss a day or two, don't skip those studies. Begin again where you left off! Each daily study is designed to take only 10-12 minutes, or longer ... it's up to you! Be honest with yourself. This is a private time just between you and God.

Introduction — *Who You Are*

God knows EVERYTHING about you. Scary thought, isn't it? Our relationship with God is enhanced as we begin to admit that we cannot fool Him about who we are. There is no use in pretending with God. It's relatively easy to fool other people. But God is never fooled. But He also cares for you and knows your needs. He wants you to share your concerns with Him; He's always listening. This *Pathway* study will help you to focus on the real you, not the pretender. You'll be better able to establish the right priorities and develop the right attitudes which will please God.

DAY ONE — Who You Are

TALK TO GOD: Thank the Lord for the identity you have as His child. Ask Him to help you realize more and more just how much He loves you and how valuable you are to Him.

VERSE TO THINK ABOUT: *For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people (Psalm 149:4).*

Free to Be Me?

Jackie stood in front of the full-length mirror critically surveying her appearance. She felt so ugly. After a moment, she pulled off the blue sweater and new jeans and went to her closet again. On Jackie's bed lay a pile of inside-out clothes she had tried on for her date. Nothing she owned was giving her the right image. Finally, she went to her sister's closet, hoping to find something that would make her look just right.

Meanwhile, Bruce was fighting Friday rush-hour traffic as he inched his way through downtown Fort Lauderdale. With the windows rolled up, and air-conditioning on, he kept rehearsing his possible opening lines.

"Hi, Jackie! (in a cool tone) You look great. Ready to go?"

Bruce slammed his fist on the seat beside him. He felt like a jerk. He knew anything he said would sound stupid. He probably was dressed all wrong, too. Why had he asked Jackie out in the first place?

Both Bruce and Jackie are confused about who they are. This is more than predate jitters. They lack confidence in themselves! Jackie can't accept her appearance. Bruce isn't happy with his personality. And while they're out for dinner, they will feel uncomfortable and unable to portray the real person God intended for each of them to be. Each is convinced that he or she is unacceptable.

Have you ever felt like Jackie and Bruce do? How often do you feel unhappy about your looks or the personality God has given you? Do you ever wish you were someone else? When was the last time you felt like a fake because you tried to act like someone else and were afraid to let people see the real you? Think about these questions and then write your thoughts below.

This week, you'll look at many different aspects of who you are. You'll read about your personality and attitudes, your personal disciplines, your relationships and others, your

priorities in life, and your Christian testimony. You'll take an honest look at WHO YOU ARE as an unique, individual Christian teen who is important to God.

A Look in the Book: From the following verses, tell how God sees you.

John 1:12: *But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.*

Ephesians 1:4: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Ephesians 1:7: *In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*

Can you see how much God loves you? Can you tell from these verses how special you are to Him? God chose you to be His child and a member of His family. He has forgiven all your sin, and He sees you as holy and blameless in Christ.

Read Psalm 139:13-16 which lists some other things God did for you.

God planned your face, your body, your laugh. So when you look in the mirror and call yourself "stupid and ugly," you're saying God made a mistake. But God never makes a mistake! He has a reason for the way He put you together. Think of how much care He took to plan you.

Sometimes it's easy to feel God goofed when you realize, compared to others, you're not so smart, or pretty, or athletic. But never forget, God has a special blueprint just for you, like none other. Appreciate your uniqueness and the positive qualities He has given you.

How does your own view of yourself differ from how God sees you, if at all?

Remember, there's only one you ... a person whom God designed and calls His child. You are precious in His sight!

God is your heavenly Father, and He delights in you!



DAY TWO — Who You Are

TALK TO GOD: Ask God to fill you with joy, thanksgiving, and praise for all He is doing in your life. Thank Him for creating you to be just who you are. Ask for daily help in having a Christ-honoring attitude.

VERSE TO THINK ABOUT: *Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established (Prov. 16:3).*

Your Attitude Is Showing!

Who are you? What are you like? What's your personality? Do you generally have an optimistic attitude, or a negative outlook? Let's examine the kind of person you are. To do so, complete each of these statements:

If my friends all want pizza, but I'm hungry for a cheeseburger, I'd:

- complain until I got my way.
- go along and try to enjoy the pizza anyhow.
- go home.
- go along, but hope the pizza tastes horrible.

Around the house, I'm usually:

- in a good mood.
- making everyone miserable.
- moping around.
- not causing much commotion.

People might tend to call me:

- Mr. (Miss) Crabby!
- a Ray of Sunshine!
- the Party Pooper.
- Mr. (Miss) Nice Guy!

From the items you checked, do you seem to be:

- a pretty nice person?
- a pain in the neck?
- (other) _____

A Look in the Book: Your attitudes in life demonstrate the real you perhaps more than anything else. Personalities are unique, and God has given each of us a different one. But some teens blame their attitudes on the way God made them! And that's not legitimate! A negative attitude is difficult to overcome, but God commands it. A helpful, cheerful attitude is part of a positive testimony for Christ, and it's pleasing to the Lord. Look up these verses and then answer the questions.

Romans 12:10: *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.*

Main point: _____

My performance: Great Medium Poor

Philippians 2:4: *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

Main point: _____

My performance: Great Medium Poor

Philippians 2:14: *Do all things without murmurings and disputings.*

Main point: _____

My performance: Great Medium Poor

Because a positive attitude is so uncommon these days, it's something people notice. The person you are inside shows through in your words and actions, and especially in your attitudes.

Pretend someone is describing you! What would you want him or her to say?

When hard times make it difficult not to grumble and complain, let Christ be your hope. Think of all He's done for you and how much He loves you right now and enjoys you as His child. Consider where you'd be without the Lord in your life. Then make that important choice — to rejoice in Christ! A positive, confident attitude doesn't come from what's happening around you. It comes from realizing how important you are to God and maintaining a close relationship with Jesus Christ.

DAY THREE — Who You Are

TALK TO GOD: God knows your heart so well! Talk to Him about what needs special attention in your life today. Talk to God about who He wants you to be for Him.

VERSE TO THINK ABOUT: *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven ... He hath made every thing beautiful in his time ... (Ecc. 3:1, 11).*

Messy Lockers — Messy Drawers

Rick keeps his dresser drawers neat. Allan, however, is content to keep his clean clothes in the laundry basket and throw his dirty clothes on the floor.

Patty's locker at school is a disaster zone. Dawn's locker is nice and neat! Her mom would be proud!

Dan showers once or twice a day, sometimes more. But it's a rarity if Dan's brother, Bob, gets in the shower twice a week.

Teen lifestyles are so different. It doesn't really matter to anyone else if Rick's dresser drawers are neat, or if Allan's clothes are on the floor. Five years from now, no one will care how Dawn and Patty kept their lockers. And you may even forget how everyone avoided Bob because he didn't take enough showers.

For each of these areas, mark which person you're more like.

Your clothes: ___ Rick ___ Allan

Your locker: ___ Patty ___ Dawn

Personal cleanliness: ___ Dan ___ Bob

If your personal life is one of discipline, others will usually see the results. Many personal disciplines, however, may seem insignificant at times. But the kind of person you are NOW shapes much of who you'll be tomorrow, and later in life. God might not care if your locker is a mess. But a messy outside life may also indicate a life that is messy on the inside.

A Look in the Book: Sometimes when you rush through each day, it's impossible to take time for the little, YET IMPORTANT, things. But when you take time to organize your life, you'll also find time for what God says is important.

In Matthew 10:42, for instance, giving a *cup of cold water* highlights an important principle. *And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*

We should never be too busy to be concerned about the needs of others, no matter how insignificant those needs may seem.

Think about it. Would you have time to care for the needs of a friend, or a younger brother or sister, if you're already running late in the morning?

Read Psalm 25:4-5. *Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day.*

What is the Psalmist, David, asking God to do for him?

Think about it. If your room is a mess, and your homework isn't done at 10:30 p.m., will you find time that night to let God speak to you through His Word?

Read 1 Timothy 4:12. *Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

What is Paul's main point to Timothy (and you) in this verse?

Think about it. Can you be a good Christian example to those around you if all they see is your messy appearance? Or how does an unclean body affect your Christian testimony? People may not be able to see past the mess to observe your testimony!

Your testimony as a Christian is even stronger for the Lord when your life is orderly. This doesn't mean that you can't witness for Christ if you don't make your bed and wash your P.E. clothes. It does mean, however, that an orderly outside life makes more room for an orderly walk with Christ.

Name some areas of personal discipline that need special attention in your life.

DAY FOUR — Who You Are

TALK TO GOD: Talk to God about the kind of relationships He wants you to have. Ask Him to make you a loving person to those people in your life.

VERSE TO THINK ABOUT : *O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together (Psalm 34:3).*

To Those Around You

Eighteen-year-old Steve had a really bad day. It affected everyone around him. His mom got screamed at because his red T-shirt wasn't clean. His friends on the school bus were ignored. His English teacher received a sarcastic comment when she asked Steven a question. His buddies at lunch heard him cut down the football coach for 30 minutes. On that particular Thursday, Steve should have worn a sign which read: "Steer clear of me. I'm having a bad day!"

When you're having a really bad day, do those around you usually suffer? Be specific and tell how these people might get treated on your bad days.

Your parents: _____

Your brothers and/or sisters: _____

Your close friends: _____

Your boyfriend or girlfriend (if applicable): _____

Everyone has bad days. But the kind of person you are during a difficult time reflects much about your true character. When you yell at your brother just because you are tired or upset, you reveal how selfish you are.

A Look in the Book: You can't always dictate how your friends will look at you. You can't determine how your family will react to you. Yet, you can use the Bible as your guide and let others see Christ in you! Read these verses. Then write the kind of person you should be to (or the attitude you should show toward) the people in your life.

John 13:35: *By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Proverbs 18:24: *A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

Proverbs 11:13: *A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.*

Ephesians 4:32: *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

The kind of person you are to your friends and family NOW may indicate how you'll care for people the rest of your life. When you're 30, do you plan to treat people as you do now? If you know in your heart that you're good to those around you, then keep it up! Thank the Lord for giving you this loving, Christlike attitude. But if your relationships need work, resolve right now to make some changes in your life. You can't change others, but you can let God work on you! Be obedient to His Word, and give Him first place in your life. Spend time talking to God about attitudes that need changing.

Think about "who you are" with friends and family and who you want to be with God's help. Then finish these statements:

I want my parents and family to see me as: _____

When someone around me needs a friend, I want to: _____

If I'm having a hard day, I will desire to: _____

Ask God to make your individuality special to your family and friends.



DAY FIVE — Who You Are

Hiding It in My Heart: The memory verse for today is one you may find helpful the rest of your life. It's a commandment with a promise! *Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass (Psalm 37:4-5).*

TALK TO GOD: Ask God to help you really appreciate who you are as His child. Thank Him for making you just who you are!

What's Important?

Mixed-up priorities may be the hardest area for Christian teens to handle. Consider, for instance, these stories of real teens (whose names have been changed):

Melinda, 17-years-old, was saved as a freshman. She is the kind of person who wants everyone to love everyone. But in real life, everyone doesn't love everyone. Even some Christians argue, backbite, and bicker. This discouraged Melinda so much that she quit her youth group. Melinda let *who others were* become more important in her life than the kind of person she could be as a Christian.

Don, a freshman, really loves playing in the band. He wants to be the best trombonist in his school. The band director admires Don's dedication, but Don's friends are frustrated. Don never takes time for them anymore. He has started bringing his homework to youth group because he doesn't have any other time to finish it at home. Don is letting something good take over and get in the way of something more important, Christian fellowship.

A Look in the Book: In which area(s) of life do you have priority problems? Maybe you can answer right off, or maybe you're not even sure what your priorities should be. The Bible talks a lot about what's important in life. Read Matthew 6:19-20, 33. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal ... But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

What does this passage say to you personally about your priorities — about what's important and what's not?

The Psalmist, David, said: *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple (Psalm 27:4).*

David had one desire and aspiration in life. He wanted to spend his life becoming more like God and learning more about Him. David wanted to live a life of fellowship not only with God, but also with other believers. Read that verse again. Isn't it a beautiful statement of personal desires and priorities in the Christian life?

Possible Christian Teen Priorities:

To please the Lord in everything I do by:

1. Being a consistent Christian in front of my family and friends
2. Doing my best in school
3. Maintaining a close, loving relationship with Christ
4. Developing the specific personal interests and abilities which the Lord has given me

Now, select two of the above items that are of greatest concern to you. For each, write what needs to change or to be worked on for it to become a characteristic of your Christian life.

1. _____
2. _____

On My Own: Many mature Christians have gone through times of identity crisis when their self-image hit rock bottom. Talk to a Christian whom you respect. Ask him or her to tell you about such a time and how he or she worked it out with the Lord's help. Then write what you learned from this person.

DAY SIX — Who You Are

Hiding It in My Heart: Memorize this verse that Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians. It assures us that God will keep on working in our Christian life to make us more like Christ. *Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).*

TALK TO GOD: Talk to the Lord today about your priorities. Ask if they are pleasing to Him.

As You Walk with Christ!

If you knew Jon Higgins, you'd probably like him. He's a nice guy! He's not perfect in looks, and he might be described as tall and lanky. He's not a superstar athlete, although he's not bad in basketball. Jon just seems like your average Christian guy next door. Although Jon has his own problems, he's got it all together! Jon knows who he is.

On an assigned English composition entitled, "Why I Smile at Life," Jon received an A for content, and a B for grammar. His last paragraph read:

"... smiling at life isn't just for good times like when no one is mad at you, or when you do good on the basketball team. You can smile at people and things because you know God's in control of your life, and He never makes mistakes. I smile at life because I've got God as my friend, and He's real to me. I think life is the best when you know who you are and where you're going."

As a Christian teen, you can know who you are. You don't know all you'll accomplish in life, or who you'll be. But you can know who you are today!

The Lord made you unique. He made you special. List some things about yourself that give you individuality. (Everyone can list something, no matter how common or average he or she thinks himself or herself to be.) See some of the examples listed. Then write your own!

Examples: I'm a thinker. When I'm alone, I like to just sit and think about life.

I'm good in wrestling because I'm so strong.

Your own:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

A Look in the Book: Confidence that you're somebody special to the Lord helps your witness for Christ become stronger and more effective. People see that you've been able to get it all together with Christ's help.

As you live your Christian life before an unsaved world, pray that Jesus will be seen in you. Jesus is a people-person. To Him, relationships are important. Read the following verses. What qualities are called for?

To be like Christ, I'll trust God to display these qualities in my life:

Ephesians 4:32: *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

1 John 4:16: *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

Romans 12:15: *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

Romans 12:16: *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*

All week, you've been looking at who you are as an individual Christian teen. You've thought about who you can be with Christ's help. As a Christian, your disciplines, priorities, and attitudes can either lead people to an interest in Christ, or turn them off to Christianity. Spend time talking to the Lord. Then, on the lines below, describe the kind of Christian you want to be with His loving, patient help.
