

Prayer Works  
for Teens  
Book 4

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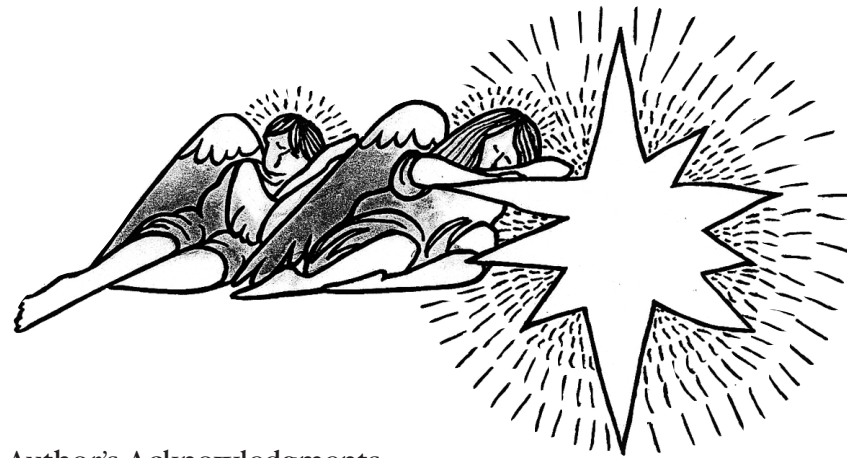
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This book is dedicated to

David L. Chang  
1958–1994

David, you gifted me with imagination and spirit.  
You stretched my religious boundaries  
to help me form new images for faith and worship.  
You taught me to see all of life as art and service,  
and to see all of prayer as exploration and discovery.



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## Introduction to *Prayer Works*

Prayer works. It really does. Or does it?

Does it work for you? When you try to put together a meeting or an event, what's the hardest part to plan? the icebreakers and games? the theme presentations? the small-group discussions? the large-group activities? or the prayer time?

If you're like many youth ministers, the prayer time is the most difficult to plan. Why? Is it because prayer really *doesn't* work, or because it's really challenging to find ways to pray that are suitable and meaningful for teenagers?

You probably wouldn't be involved in ministry if you truly thought that prayer doesn't work. So, more than likely you just need some help finding ways to pray with young people that connect with who they are and what's important in their lives.

Perhaps you also need a renewed sense of what to expect from teenagers. For instance, if you use the same worship experience with a peer ministry team of high school seniors at a leadership training retreat, and then with a group of seventh graders at an all-night movie lock-in, can you expect the same degree of involvement and prayerfulness? Probably not.

### Sets of Prayer Experiences

Here's what *Prayer Works* offers. Each of the four books includes three sets of prayer experiences. Each set consists of four prayer formats: a short prayer, a medium-length reflection prayer, a long ritual prayer, and a family prayer. Every prayer set focuses on a different image or object. The three focus objects in this book are bread, puzzles, and ice and snow.

To find out what the focus objects are for the other books of *Prayer Works*, check the back cover of this book. And while you're checking, note what comes at the end of this book. You'll find that the prayers for all four books are indexed by Scripture citations and themes.

The prayer experiences in each book are easy to lead, but you will need adult volunteers to help you with many of them.

### Short Prayer

The short prayer can stand by itself, or it can be the introductory prayer at an event that will include an additional prayer or two with the same focus. The short prayer is perfect for that situation

when you want to start off with some sort of prayer, *but* . . . —“*but* everyone doesn’t know one another yet,” “*but* teenagers will be feeling awkward and it probably won’t be too prayerful,” “*but* it can kill your event to get too involved too soon with anything deep or complex.” You probably know what I mean.

So this first prayer is short and sweet. It reminds us of our connection to God, quiets down the participants, focuses them, and gets them ready to begin. *But* it isn’t so long or cumbersome that the young people start getting restless.

**Medium Prayer** The medium-length prayer can stand by itself, or it can be the second prayer in a series of two or three prayers that you lead at an event or class. It is a faith-sharing prayer that involves self-reflection using Scripture passages or comments, reflection questions, and a conversation with a partner or small group. This prayer has an accompanying handout that contains the Scripture passage(s) or comments and the reflection questions. Directions for using the reflection part of the medium prayer follow. The directions are customized to apply to three different types of groups.

#### Self-Reflection and Sharing with a Small Group

If you have a group of fewer than fifteen teenagers who know one another well, give everyone a copy of the reflection handout, found at the end of the prayer set. Direct them to listen while the Scriptures and comments are being read, and then to jot down some thoughts or feelings that are triggered by the reflection questions. Naturally, you will always have some folks who aren’t “jotters” or journalers, and there is no need to pressure them to write if they don’t want to. But giving the participants time to reflect quietly, whether it is in their head or on paper, is very helpful if faith sharing is expected in the group.

One effective way to use this reflection method is to have volunteers read the different sections of the handout. For example, if the handout is arranged in this order—Scripture passage, comments, and questions—then one person reads the Scripture passage, a second person reads the comments, and a third person reads the questions, pausing after each question so that everyone (including the readers) can reflect and jot down their thoughts. That pattern would be repeated for the next set(s) of Scripture passage(s), comments, and questions.

Using different voices for different sections of the handout will help everyone listen more carefully. It’s easier to listen when different people alternate reading, as long as every reader speaks with a clear, confident voice that can be heard and understood.

Allow everyone to share verbally with the group. This can be done in a random, spontaneous, whoever-is-ready-to-share-can-share method. Or it can be done with an ordered, go-around-in-a-circle-and-share method.

Often the focusing object (for example, bread) can be used as a turn designator for this type of prayer. When it’s time for sharing, you, as the prayer leader, pick up the object first, offer your reflections, and then pass the object to the next person to do the same. Or, after you pick up the object and offer a reflection, you place it back in the center of the group and whoever else is ready to share can pick up the object and start sharing.

By the way, not only does the focusing object make an excellent turn designator, it also does a fine job of helping people forget that everyone is watching them. It can be awkward for some people—especially teenagers, but adults as well—to talk to a group when everyone is looking at them. Having an object to fiddle with can distract them from that awkward feeling and help them feel more comfortable.

The prayer experience can be ended with the closing reflection included in the prayer set or with any spontaneous words you think are appropriate.

#### Self-Reflection and Sharing with a Large Group

If you have a group larger than fifteen and don’t want to separate the young people into smaller groups for the process just described, you can change the dynamics of this experience by not distributing the reflection handout to everyone. Instead, tell everyone to find a partner to share with. Call on designated readers to read the Scripture passage(s), comments, and questions from the handout. As each question is read, the partners can share with each other. You might direct the young people to switch partners periodically if you are trying to build community in your group. Or you might direct them to keep the same partner if you are more concerned with developing fewer but deeper relationships. End the prayer experience with the closing reflection or words of your own choosing.

#### Self-Reflection and Sharing with a Journaling Group

If you intend to have the group write in a journal, have the Scripture passage(s), comments, and questions from the handout already written on a chalkboard, piece of poster board, or overhead projector. Everyone can then write the questions in their journal, respond to one or more of them, and then join a journaling partner for a faith-sharing walk. Because this type of sharing disperses the group, it doesn’t always work well to end the activity with a closing reflection, but that’s up to you as you plan your event and assess your group’s needs. Sometimes you might want to regather and close as a unified group; other times you might want to let the partners’ sharing flow into a break or meal and have no official closing.

**Long Prayer** The long prayer can stand by itself or serve as one in a series of two or three prayers at an event or class. This prayer involves more creativity and ritual than the short and medium ones. It is difficult



to describe or summarize because it varies so much from prayer set to prayer set. The long prayer, as its name suggests, usually takes the most time, but it depends on your group and the situation.

Here are examples of the processes in some of the long prayers in the four books of *Prayer Works*:

- ♦ In book 1, the long prayer with the rock image focuses on the strength and permanence of virtues and principles. It involves painting words on actual rocks.
- ♦ In book 2, the long prayer with the nuts image focuses on the importance of God in a life of many choices. It involves creating a faith carrier out of a jar of rice and walnuts.
- ♦ In book 3, the long prayer with the four seasons image focuses on the seasons and repeating patterns in our life. It involves a prayer journey to four different environments.
- ♦ In book 4, the long prayer with the puzzle image focuses on the puzzle of sin and on finding our peace (as well as our piece) in a reconciliation service. It involves working with puzzle pieces.

## Family Component

The most unique aspect of *Prayer Works* is the family component. So often families have no idea what their teenage members do at parish events and retreats. But *Prayer Works* gives you an easy way to involve parents and siblings in the prayer experienced by the teen. Two items make up the family component: a family handout and a sample letter for families.

### Family Handout

Each set of prayers includes a handout containing a family faith-sharing prayer. The family handout is modeled after the medium prayer handout, but the teenager does *not* need to have experienced that prayer for the family handout to be effective. The family handout includes directions and questions designed for use in family settings. You can photocopy the handout and use it in one of the following settings:

**A gathering of families after a retreat or long event.** End a youth retreat or other event with a family meal. Invite all the parents, brothers, sisters, and whoever else may share your young people's homes with them. After the meal, invite several young people to get up and share about parts of their prayer experience by telling stories, doing skits, or showing examples of what happened.

The families can then share their answers to the questions on the handout. Even young children can participate in answering most of the questions. In this way, the families not only have some idea of the kind of experience their teenagers had but also share in the experience itself.

**A separate gathering of youth and families.** Hold a reunion for the teens who participated in an event or retreat, and invite all their family members to attend. Or just have a gathering for the young people you work with and their families. In either case, after a

meal, do an activity that involves storytelling or skits related to the event in which the prayer was used, or just distribute the family handout and move the family groups into conversation using the faith questions.

**A bulletin or parish newsletter insert.** Use the family handout as a bulletin or parish newsletter insert. This is a wonderful way to spread the good news about what young people in your faith community are doing. Write a brief article about the event in which you used the related prayer forms with the young people. Include other folksy details about where you were, the history of the event, or some of the related activities. Explain that you are providing this family prayer handout as a service to *all* families, whether or not they had a teenager who attended the event, and that you hope it helps spread the kind of spirit the parish's young people experienced at the event.

**A personal letter and take-home handout.** Send a personal letter home to the parents of the participants, highlighting parts of your group's event or retreat, and thanking them for making the family arrangements that were necessary for their teenager to attend the event. A sample letter for families (described below) is included at the end of each set of prayers for you to use as a guide in composing your own letter.

**A follow-up mailing.** A few days after the meeting or event, mail the family handout to the parents of the young people who attended, along with a letter of explanation.

### Sample Letter for Families

At the end of each set of prayers, a sample letter for families is offered for possible use with the family prayer handout. Be sure to customize the letter to match the prayer and the setting in which it was used. And be sure to personalize the letter by using the names of the young people and parents. If you do not have access to a computer to make this feasible, then you could ask a few volunteers to type up the letters for you. Simply supply the basic text, with a list of the names and addresses of the young people and their parents. You'll find this extra effort goes a long way.

## Benefits of the Family Component

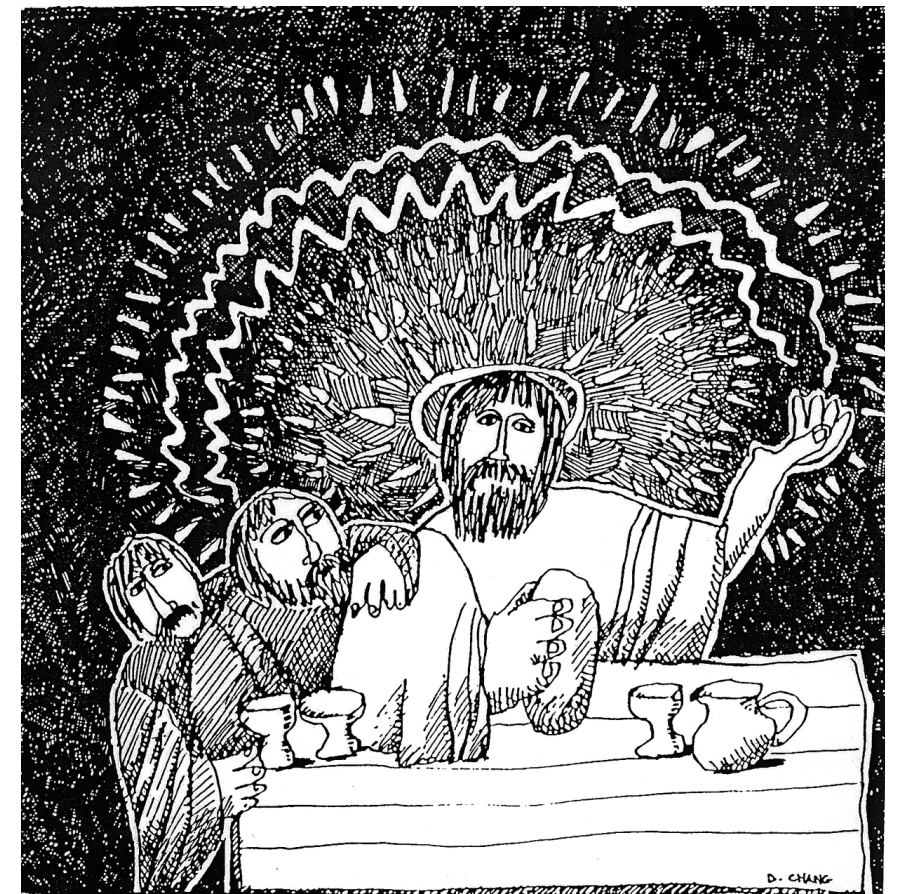
If you are hesitant about including a family component in your plans, please consider the benefits. If you get to know your young people's families, the young people will be more apt to come to future events because their parents will feel a greater attachment to you and your parish. The parents will be more likely to call on you in an emergency because they have developed trust in you, and they will also be more likely to say yes when you need volunteers. Besides, taking care of family needs and helping families develop their faith is a wonderful way to improve the lives of your young people. So how can you go wrong? That's a winning combination!

## Prayer Works for Youth Leaders, Parents, and Peer Ministers

Don't worry about how to pull off these prayers—each one is simple to do and has already proven successful with teenagers. And the instructions are very specific and easy to follow, which makes it possible for peer ministers, parents, and youth leaders to run the experiences. For instance, material that is to be presented aloud to the group is highlighted with a black rule at the left margin. Teen leaders who are looking for prayers to facilitate will like these because they get the participants involved. Moreover, the prayers in each set have the same format, and that makes it easy to add icebreakers or related activities with a similar focus.

If the teens can do it, so can you. All you need is a little faith. So relax. Remember, prayer works. It really does.

## Prayer Set 1 Bread



# Short Prayer

**Themes** ♦ individual giftedness  
♦ unity

**Background Information** This prayer reminds us that we all contribute different gifts to a group, yet together we become united—just as bread is a united loaf baked from the blending of many different ingredients, each with its own purpose.

## Preparation

### Supplies

#### Option 1.

If you are going to use the long prayer in this set, which involves making a loaf of bread, then it is most effective to use the bread-baking supplies listed in option 1 as the focusing objects for this prayer. If you are not going to use the long prayer in this set, then it is most effective to use already-baked bread (option 2) as the focusing object for this short prayer.

- ingredients for bread, placed on a tray or table:
  - 2 cups whole wheat flour, in a clear measuring cup
  - 1 cup white flour, in a clear measuring cup
  - 4 teaspoons baking powder, in a small, clear container
  - 1 teaspoon salt, in a small, clear container
  - 1/2 cup shortening, in a small dish
  - 1 1/3 cups milk, in a clear measuring cup
  - 3 teaspoons honey, in a small, clear cup

If your group is large and is gathered in an area with plenty of room, then it's most effective to place these measured ingredients on a table, next to the containers (jars, bags, cartons, canisters) they came from. That way the original container is there to identify each ingredient. Be sure that the placement of the ingredients next to their original containers makes it visually obvious which ingredient comes from which container. If the ingredients are all pushed together, the participants might miss the point that these are all *separate* ingredients before they are combined to form a loaf of bread. Be sure to put away the items that need refrigeration as soon as the prayer is over so they will still be fresh if used later for the actual making of bread.

#### Option 2.

- a loaf of bread (unsliced) or a piece of bread (from a sliced loaf)

If you wish to bake your own bread so that the group can smell hot, oven-fresh bread as they gather, here is a simple recipe using the ingredients listed under option 1:

- Sift flour, baking powder, salt.
- Add shortening, milk, and honey.
- Mix well; roll out to about 1/4-inch thickness.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 12–15 minutes.

**Setting** This prayer can take place almost anywhere, with the participants arranged in almost any position. They can sit around a meeting table, on the floor, or on couches and chairs spread out around the room. They can even stand. Because the prayer is so brief, it doesn't require a distraction-free environment. As long as the participants can hear the words and see the speaker, the prayer can be effective.

**Expectations** This prayer works equally well with junior high youth, senior high youth, and adults. It is short and makes a concrete comparison between a loaf of bread made from separate, different ingredients, and a united group, made up of separate, different people.

**Procedure** If you have an active or restless group, first ask them to quiet themselves in order to become more aware of God's presence. If the group has more than ten members, have one person proclaim the prayer in a clear and confident voice. If the group has nine members or fewer, and you know that none of them has a problem reading aloud, introduce the prayer and then ask each person to take a turn reading a paragraph or two of the prayer. There are nine paragraphs; more than half the paragraphs are only one sentence long. If you use this option, each person will need a copy of the prayer.

**Prayer** 1. First read the following Scripture passages, pausing between each one:

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| “But I would feed you with the finest wheat<br>and satisfy you with wild honey.” | (Ps. 81:16, TEV)  |
| “The salt of the earth.”   | (Matt. 5:13, NAB) |
| “A land flowing with milk and honey.”  | (Exod. 3:17, NAB) |



Fine flour mixed with oil.

(Num. 7:13, NAB)

“A little bit of yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise.”

(1 Cor. 5:6, TEV)

2. Next, read aloud the following reflections:

This sampling of quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Testament sounds like God’s recipe for baking bread. Each of these ingredients brings something unique and important; each contributes to the texture of the loaf.

Wheat is the basic staple; honey is the sweetener. Salt is a preservative that adds flavor; milk adds nutrition. Oil gives consistency and prevents drying; yeast makes the dough rise.

In the same way, each of us makes a unique contribution to the group. As we begin our time together, may we recognize the giftedness in each of us and the character our individuality brings to the group.

3. Finally, read aloud the following closing prayer:

Loving Creator, we ask you to gather us together and fashion us into one united people to do your work, as a baker fashions a loaf from different ingredients. Bless our efforts as we celebrate our successes, identify our challenges, and strengthen the bonds of our faith community. Amen.

## Medium Prayer

### Themes

- ♦ paschal mystery
- ♦ doing God’s work
- ♦ trust

### Background Information

The focus of this prayer is wheat growing as a symbol of people growing.

There are actually two handout options for this prayer. Use handout 1–A, “Bread for Leadership,” with a group of senior high youth leaders, such as a peer ministry team, or with a team of adults in ministry, such as a parish council, parish staff, or school faculty.

Use handout 1–B, “Growing into Bread for Life,” with any junior high, senior high, or adult group that is not actively involved in formal ministry as a team.

The procedure for either option is identical, although handout 1–A is slightly longer than handout 1–B.

## Preparation

### Supplies

- a copy of handout 1–A, “Bread for Leadership,” or handout 1–B, “Growing into Bread for Life,” for each participant (see the background information for instructions on choosing a handout for your group)
- a pen or pencil for each participant
- a loaf of bread (unsliced) or a piece of bread (from a sliced loaf)
- a candle, cross, or other objects symbolic of Christian worship
- a sheaf of wheat as an alternative turn designator (available at many floral shops)

If you are not going to use the long prayer in this set, which involves making a loaf of bread, then it is most effective to use already-baked bread as the focusing object for this prayer. If you wish to bake your own bread so that the group can smell hot, oven-fresh bread as they gather, use the ingredients and recipe given in the short prayer.

If you are going to use the long prayer in this set, then it is most effective to use the bread-baking supplies as focusing objects.

If your group is large and is gathered in an area with plenty of room, then it’s even more effective to place these measured ingredients on a table, next to the containers (jars, bags, cartons, canisters) they came from. That way the original container is there to identify each ingredient. Be sure that the placement of the ingredients next to their original containers makes it visually obvious which ingredient comes from which container. If the ingredients are all pushed together, the participants might miss the point that these are all *separate* ingredients before they are combined to form a loaf of bread. Be sure to put away the items that need refrigeration as soon as the prayer is over so they will still be fresh if used later for the actual making of bread.

### Setting

How you arrange the prayer participants depends on the size of your group. Very small groups could sit around a table with the bread or bread ingredients in the middle. Or they could sit in a circle on the floor, with the bread or ingredients on a cloth in the middle.

For larger groups, chairs could be arranged in a circle, with the bread or ingredients clearly visible on a table. Consider adding a large candle or cross to more clearly designate this activity as Christian worship. Sit or stand nearby the focusing area to lead the prayer.

**Expectations** This prayer, when used with handout 1–B, “Growing into Bread for Life,” works equally well with junior high youth, senior high youth, and adults. Naturally, however, the depth of the answers and the conversation will vary according to the maturity levels and degree of intimacy of the group.

It’s probably not a great idea to use handout 1–A, “Bread for Leadership,” with a junior high group, even if it is a type of leadership team. The reflections deal with more abstract ideas and are difficult for junior high youth to relate to and understand. Handout 1–A is intended for mature high school leadership teams or adult ministry teams interested in looking at their efforts as leaders.

## Procedure

**Opening Reflection** Welcome your group to prayer. Tell the participants that they will be spending time thinking about what it takes to grow wheat for bread, and what it takes to grow people for the world.

Begin the prayer with the following verse, or choose words of your own:

Bless our hearts  
to hear in the  
breaking of bread the  
song of the universe.

(Fr. John Giuliani, in Kelly and Kelly, eds.,  
*One Hundred Graces*, p. 22)

**Self-Reflection and Sharing** Use handout 1–A, “Bread for Leadership,” or handout 1–B, “Bread for Growing into Life,” for self-reflection and sharing. This part of the prayer can be done with small groups, large groups, or journaling groups. Details for using handouts with each of these types of groups are included in this manual’s introduction, on pages 8–10.

**Closing Reflection** If a meal is to follow the self-reflection and sharing, you could announce ahead of time that the meal will begin right after the self-reflection and sharing and thus the group will not have a formal gathered closing.

If you are going to have a closing reflection, the prayer in this section is offered as an option. You can either read the closing prayer yourself or have a volunteer who is a good reader do so.

You could instead end the self-reflection and sharing with words of your own, or ask the small groups or prayer partners to end their time together with spontaneous prayer. Use whatever seems most fitting for your group, your setting, and your time schedule.

We thank thee for our daily bread.  
Let, also, Lord, our souls be fed.  
O, Bread of Life, from day to day  
Sustain us on our homeward way.  
Amen.

(Eckhardt family, in Kelly and Kelly, eds.,  
*One Hundred Graces*, p. 109)

**Optional closing prayer.** If you are not planning to use the long prayer in this set, and if you used a full unsliced loaf of bread for this prayer, then you might want to consider breaking the bread and eating it as a closing meal together, especially if you just baked it and it’s still warm.

## Long Prayer

### Themes

- ♦ thanksgiving
- ♦ unity
- ♦ appreciation of work and ministry

### Background Information

This prayer focuses on bread making as a prayer of appreciation and thanksgiving.

Before you lead this prayer, bake the bread yourself, using the ingredients and recipe given in the short prayer in this set. Then you will be familiar with how the bread looks, how much it makes, and how to coach the prayer participants in case they have never made bread before. It is a very easy recipe because it uses baking powder instead of yeast and thus requires very little kneading and no rising time.

## Preparation

- Supplies**
- the ingredients and recipe for bread, as given in the short prayer (pp. 14–15)
  - a large mixing bowl (a clear bowl is best so that the ingredients are visible during mixing)
  - a large spoon
  - a large spatula
  - a sifter (Optional; it makes a smoother bread, but I've made this recipe without sifting the ingredients, and it's not really grainy or coarse. If you do want to sift, the flour, baking powder, and salt can be sifted as each is added to the bowl, or the ingredients can be sifted before they are put into the containers and set onto the tray of ingredients.)
  - a rolling pin
  - a floured wooden or plastic board to knead and roll the dough on
  - two (or more) copies of the bread-making ritual

**Setting** If you have a small group, everyone can stand or be seated around a table, with the ingredients for the bread on a tray that can easily be passed from person to person.

If your group is larger, everyone can be seated in chairs in a circle or semicircle, with the bread table in the middle or front so that all can see.

It is best to do this prayer in a kitchen, or in a room adjacent to a kitchen, so that the prayer participants can smell the bread baking once it is put into the oven.

**Expectations** This prayer works equally well with junior high youth, senior high youth, and adults. Expect the older, more mature participants to have a deep experience of unity and appreciation, and the less mature participants to have an experience that is not as deep but still significant.

## Procedure

**Preparation for the Prayer** Make sure everyone washes their hands before this prayer begins! Place the ingredients on a table or counter. Explain that the group will be making a loaf of bread together and reflecting on the individual gifts that each ingredient brings to the unified bread being made.

If you have a small group sitting or standing around a table, each person can take a turn adding an ingredient, mixing it in the bowl, and then sliding the tray of ingredients over to the next person.

If you have a large group sitting in chairs, and the bread-making table is separate, people can come forward to add and mix the ingredients and then sit back down when their turn is finished. Ahead of time, instruct the people who will be coming forward to mix or knead the bread dough so they will know what to do. Minimal kneading is needed during the part of the ritual that calls for it. Molding the dough into a loaf is the main concern.

If you have a very large group, you might want to consider setting up several bread-making stations so that everyone gets a chance to participate in the bread preparation.

For each ingredient of the recipe, there is a blessing and a reflection. Two readers are needed to read these so that one voice blesses and a different voice leads the reflection. These two readers can be the same two for the entire prayer experience, or different people can take turns in order to involve more participants.

If you have a small group and are sure that all the participants are comfortable reading aloud, you can have each person take a turn reading as well as adding ingredients.

Instruct the participants to make the bread prayerfully. Tell them that when it is their turn to add an ingredient, they first need to hold it up reverently so that everyone can see it as it is blessed. Then they are to pour it or combine it slowly so that everyone can see its color and texture.

At the end of each step of the recipe, one of the readers calls the people to praise God. That reader's next line is repeated by the prayer participants. For example, after the flour is poured, the reader says, "People, let us praise our God. We praise the God of flour." Then all the prayer participants repeat, "We praise the God of flour." Don't worry about this detail too much. If you lead them in that response, they'll catch on.

After praying the prayer of bread making, it is most effective for the group to bake the bread and then eat it warm. The bread takes only 12 to 15 minutes to bake, and that time can be spent in quiet reflection or free activity, depending on the energy level and personality of your group.

**Call to Prayer** Welcome your group to prayer with words similar to these:

I invite you into the experience of bread making. Our prayer will be the prayer of mixing, the prayer of kneading, the prayer of baking. We will be able to see our prayer, hear our prayer, touch our prayer, smell our prayer, and even taste our prayer.

**Scripture Reading** Have an excellent reader proclaim the following Scripture passage:

“I am the bread of life.  
 . . . . .  
 I myself am the living bread  
 come down from heaven.  
 If any eat this bread,  
 they will live forever;  
 the bread I will give  
 for the life of the world  
 is my flesh.”

(John 6:48–51, INT)

**Bread-Making Ritual** Begin the bread-making ritual with these words:

The Holy Spirit has gathered us together as a baker gathers all the ingredients for bread making. Each of us adds a different flavor, a different texture to the loaf.

#### Step 1: Flour

With a silent gesture, invite the readers to begin. Have one or two people hold up the two types of flour and then pour them into the bowl.

##### Blessing (Reader 1)

Bless this flour, this staple of nourishment.  
 Bless the farmers who sow and the millers who grind.  
 Bless the light flour and the dark flour  
 that cooperate without domination.

##### Reflection (Reader 2)

We thank God for the substantial people in our life.  
 We thank God for those who have been  
 foundations of character;  
 the ones who have helped us form the basis of our faith.  
 Let us pause a moment to think about  
 who these significant people are. [Pause]  
 People, let us praise our God.  
 We praise the God of flour.  
 [All respond] We praise the God of flour.

#### Step 2: Baking Powder

With a silent gesture, invite the readers to begin. Have someone hold up the baking powder, pour it into the bowl, and mix it with the flour.

##### Blessing (Reader 1)

Bless this leaven.  
 Bless this substance so mighty  
 that it causes the whole loaf to rise.  
 Bless the leaven whose power has been compared  
 both to the evil of hypocrisy and to the Kingdom of God.

##### Reflection (Reader 2)

We thank the people who have been  
 the leaven and the yeast in our life.  
 We thank God for the people whose subtle presence  
 can change our attitudes.  
 Let us pause for a moment to think about  
 what influences, good or bad,  
 have affected our outlook on the world. [Pause]  
 People, let us praise our God.  
 We praise the God of leaven and yeast.  
 [All respond] We praise the God of leaven and yeast.

#### Step 3: Salt

With a silent gesture, invite the readers to begin. Have someone hold up the salt, pour it into the bowl, and mix it with the flour.

##### Blessing (Reader 1)

Bless this salt.  
 Bless all people who follow the Way,  
 for Jesus has called us the salt of the earth.  
 Bless this chemical that preserves and flavors.

##### Reflection (Reader 2)

We thank God for the gift of saltiness in our life.  
 We thank God for flavor.  
 Let us pause for a moment to think about what it is  
 that keeps us from growing stale. [Pause]  
 People, let us praise our God.  
 We praise the God of salt.  
 [All respond] We praise the God of salt.

#### Step 4: Shortening

With a silent gesture, invite the readers to begin. Have someone hold up the shortening, add it to the mixture in the bowl, and stir until it is blended.

##### Blessing (Reader 1)

Bless this oil, this shortening.  
 Bless this smooth, slippery ingredient  
 that gives consistency to the dough.  
 Bless this substance that has been found  
 in the stone jugs of the poor  
 and the alabaster jars of the wealthy.

##### Reflection (Reader 2)

We thank God for the people who keep us from drying out.  
 We thank God for the people who soothe and comfort us.  
 Let us pause for a moment and think about  
 our connection to both the poor and the wealthy. [Pause]  
 People, let us praise our God.  
 We praise the God of oils.  
 [All respond] We praise the God of oils.



**Step 5: Milk**

With a silent gesture, invite the readers to begin. Have someone hold up the milk, pour it into the bowl, and mix until it is blended.

**Blessing (Reader 1)**

Bless this milk, this first source of nutrition.  
Bless cows and goats whose milk we drink.  
Bless nurturing mothers with infants.

**Reflection (Reader 2)**

We thank God for the nurturing people in our life.  
We thank God for the people whom we ourselves nurture.  
Let us pause for a moment and think about  
how we are interdependent like a family. [Pause]  
People, let us praise our God.  
We praise the God of milk.  
[All respond] We praise the God of milk.

**Step 6: Honey**

With a silent gesture, invite the readers to begin. Have someone hold up the honey, pour it into the bowl, and mix until everything is blended.

**Blessing (Reader 1)**

Bless this honey.  
Bless flowers, bees, and beekeepers.  
Bless the sticky, the sweet, and the golden.

**Reflection (Reader 2)**

We thank God for the gift of sweetness.  
We thank God for all the “honeys” in our life.  
Let us pause for a moment and think about  
the ways we might have been “stung”  
while searching for sweetness. [Pause]  
People, let us praise our God.  
We praise the God of honey.  
[All respond] We praise the God of honey.

**Step 7: Kneading**

With a silent gesture, invite the readers to begin. Have someone hold up the bread dough mixture, work it with her or his hands, form it into a loaf, place it on the floured breadboard, and then turn it upside down again to ensure that both sides are dusted with flour.

**Blessing (Reader 1)**

We are the Body of Christ.  
We are the bread of life.  
In order to nourish and give life,  
we must break ourselves open  
in service to others.

**Reflection (Reader 2)**

The bread has no nutritional value,  
as long as it stays together as one loaf.  
It doesn't nourish us until we break it apart,  
feed upon it, and let it become part of us.

**Step 8: Rolling and Forming a Loaf**

With a silent gesture, invite the readers to begin. Direct someone to roll out the bread dough to about a one-quarter inch thickness, and then to round off the edges to make it look even and finished.

**Blessing (Reader 1)**

Bless us, O God.  
Bless us as we struggle to be people  
of substance and character.  
Bless us as we seek the courage to be leaven for the world.  
Bless us as we fight the urge to grow stale.  
Bless us as we seek comfort from drying out.  
Bless us as we stoop down to nurture  
and stretch up to be nurtured.  
Bless us as we endure the sting we receive  
in the midst of sweetness.

**Reflection (Reader 2)**

People, let us praise our God.  
We praise the God of bread. Amen.  
[All respond] We praise the God of bread. Amen.

With a silent gesture, invite the last person to pick up the bread and carry it into the kitchen, where it will be placed on a greased cookie sheet and baked in the oven. If your group is small enough, you might want everyone to follow into the kitchen to see the bread all the way into the oven.

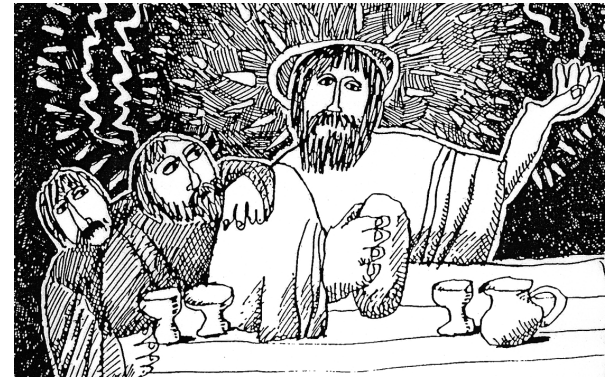
## Family Component

Details for using the family component are included on pages 11–12 of the introduction to this book. Here are a list of the supplies you will need and a reminder of the settings in which the family component can be used.

- Supplies**
- handout 1–C, “Growing into Bread for Family Life”
  - sample 1–A, “Sample Letter for Families”

- Settings**
- ♦ a gathering of families after a retreat or long event
  - ♦ a separate gathering of youth and families
  - ♦ a bulletin or parish newsletter insert
  - ♦ a personal letter and take-home handout
  - ♦ a follow-up mailing

## Bread for Leadership



### Scripture Reading

“A grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains.” (John 12:24, TEV)

### Comments

Out of death springs new life. From pain comes birth. Out of suffering comes new growth.

### Questions

Self-evaluation can be a painful and difficult process.

- ♦ As you look at your role in this group and at the group’s effectiveness, what pain or suffering can you identify? Where is there death?
- ♦ Where can you look for the birth of new life in this group? What new growth can you see emerging?

### Scripture Reading

“Some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain: some had one hundred grains, others sixty, and others thirty.” (Matthew 13:8, TEV)

### Comments

For every seed that falls in good soil, there is a seed that falls on rocky ground, among thorn-bushes, or along the hard path.

### Questions

- ♦ Regarding your involvement in ministry, how do you feel about sowing seeds? Do you think it works?
- ♦ Is there enough good soil? What happens when the soil isn’t so good?
- ♦ Do you feel a need to till the soil to improve the quality, or do you think that’s God’s job?

### Scripture Reading

“Let the wheat and the weeds both grow together until harvest.” (Matthew 13:30, TEV)

### Comments

It’s hard to live with weeds if you think you are wheat. It’s harder to live with wheat if you think you are a weed.

### Questions

Diversity is a challenge as well as a gift. Sometimes differences in style bring rich new insights to a group. Other times they bring unresolved conflict.

- ♦ What is your perception of this group’s leadership? How is it working?

### Scripture Reading

God, who supplies seed for the sower and bread to eat, will also supply you with all the seed you need and will make it grow and produce a rich harvest from your generosity. (2 Corinthians 9:10, TEV)

### Comments

We are taught to trust our Creator, imitate Jesus our Savior, and follow the direction of the Spirit. The rest is supposed to take care of itself.

### Questions

- ♦ Do you believe the rest will take care of itself? What are your doubts and hopes?
- ♦ How can you cooperate with the divine plan?

# Growing into Bread for Life

## Scripture Reading

“A grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains.” (John 12:24, TEV)

## Comments

No bread can be made without wheat. To become bread, the wheat flour, the milk, and all the other ingredients give of themselves and change in order to become bread.

The new life of springtime grows out of the death of winter.

Every time a baby is born, it is the result of great pain. Sometimes it’s very hard to grow.

## Questions

- ◆ When has life been most difficult for you? What happened?
- ◆ How did you get through it? Did you become stronger because of it? If so, how?
- ◆ Did it cause you to grow?

## Scripture Reading

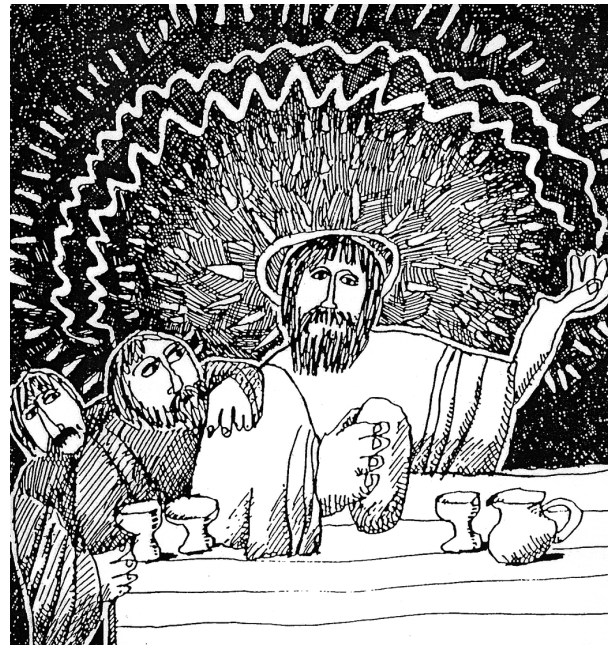
“Some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain: some had one hundred grains, others sixty, and others thirty.” (Matthew 13:8, TEV)

## Comments

Sometimes we are like farmers, and the other people in our life are like soil. Other times we are the soil, and the other people in our life are farmers. We couldn’t bake bread if we didn’t have farmers to grow the wheat and milk the cows.

## Questions

- ◆ First, think of the important people in your life as farmers. Who has planted seeds in your life? Whose involvement with you has made a big difference in the way you have grown? How do the actions of others shape your opinions and habits?



- ◆ Next, think of yourself as a farmer. What kinds of seeds are you sowing with your life? Are you working hard to make the world a better place? Why or why not? How do you feel about being a “farmer” with your life?

## Scripture Reading

“Let the wheat and the weeds both grow together until harvest.” (Matthew 13:30, TEV)

## Comments

It’s hard to live with weeds if you think you are wheat. It’s harder to live with wheat if you think you are a weed.

## Questions

- We all know people whom we don’t like. We all know people who don’t like us.
- ◆ If someone doesn’t like me, does that mean I’m not a good person?
  - ◆ If I don’t like someone, does that mean he or she is not a good person?
  - ◆ How can we get along with people we don’t like?

# Growing into Bread for Family Life

## Scripture Reading

“Some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain: some had one hundred grains, others sixty, and others thirty.” (Matthew 13:8, TEV)

## Comments

Sometimes we are like farmers, and the other people in our life are like soil. Other times, we are the soil, and the other people in our life are farmers. We couldn’t bake bread if we didn’t have farmers to grow the wheat and milk the cows.

## Questions

- ◆ Think of the important people in your life as farmers. Who has planted seeds in your life? Who has made a big difference in the way you have grown? How do the actions of others shape your opinions and habits?
- ◆ Next, think of yourself as the farmer. What kinds of seeds are you sowing with your life? Are you working hard to make your family relationships better? Why or why not? How do you feel about being a “farmer” with your family?

## Scripture Reading

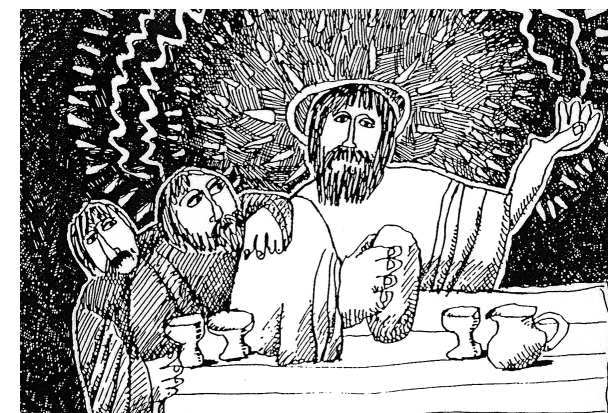
“Let the wheat and the weeds both grow together until harvest.” (Matthew 13:30, TEV)

## Comments

It’s hard to live with weeds if you think you are wheat. It’s harder to live with wheat if you think you are a weed.

## Question

- We all do things that members of our family don’t like. We all know of things that members of our family do that we don’t like.
- ◆ How can we get along better in our family when things happen that we don’t like?



As a family, you might sit down together and go over this meditation. One family member could read the Scripture reading; another, the comments; and still another, the questions. You could share your answers to the questions, along with any other insights you may have.

## Scripture Reading

“A grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains.” (John 12:24, TEV)

## Comments

No bread can be baked without wheat. To become bread, the wheat flour, the milk, and all the other ingredients give of themselves and change in order to become bread.

The new life of springtime grows out of the death of winter.

Every time a baby is born, it is the result of great pain. Sometimes it’s very hard to grow.

## Questions

- ◆ When has family life been most difficult for you? What happened?
- ◆ How did you get through this difficult time? Did you become stronger because of it? If so, how?
- ◆ Did this difficulty cause you to grow?



Sample 1-A

# Sample Letter for Families

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

It has been a pleasure having \_\_\_\_\_ with us. Thank you for making all the necessary family arrangements so that he/she could be with us. It was truly a gift from your family to our parish community.

During our time together, we focused on bread. Making bread requires a lot of different ingredients, each contributing a different flavor or texture. The same is true of a family.

In fact, we shared a prayer experience based on baking and eating bread. You might ask \_\_\_\_\_ what she/he thought of the experience. You might even bake bread together as a family activity. The recipe we used is printed at the end of this letter.

Enclosed is a family-based version of the reflection prayer we used. I encourage you to take some time during or after a family meal to go through the questions and discuss them as a family. These are just a few ideas to help you get in touch with \_\_\_\_\_'s experience with this prayer.

If you have any questions about our programs, or if any of your family members would like to become more involved with our parish in any way, please don't hesitate to call me. I wish your family great peace and joy.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

## Bread Recipe

2 cups whole wheat flour	1/2 cup shortening
1 cup white flour	1 1/3 cups milk
4 teaspoons baking powder	3 teaspoons honey
1 teaspoon salt	

Sift flour, baking powder, salt.  
Add shortening, milk, and honey.  
Mix well; roll out to about 1/4-inch thickness.  
Bake at 350 degrees for 12–15 minutes.