

# Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

*And there he prayed.*—Mark 1:35 NRSV

## Explore

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### Pause to Pray

paper, pens or pencils

Look for opportunities to pray—morning, noon, and night. Ask the students to begin the practice of prayer by exploring the following:

1. Think about what you've done so far today. What are the positive things that have happened to you? Have you done a good deed for someone? Thank God for the positive things in your life and the opportunities to serve others.
2. Think over your day again. This time focus on the things that aren't so positive. Have a conversation with Jesus, and talk over how you might do things differently. Ask him to forgive you and agree to work on making positive choices.
3. Think about tomorrow and the activities and choices you will need to make. Put your hopes and concerns into words and phrases, and dialogue with the Holy Spirit. Ask the Spirit to guide your choices and give you the courage to meet your challenges. Trust that your prayer will be heard and the Spirit will help you every day.

Provide paper for the students and invite them to write on it their prayers and feelings of how they felt after they prayed. Ask them if they made any new commitments or decisions during this prayer experience.

## Extract

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### Healings

Bible, newsprint, paper, pens or pencils, tape

Mark 1:29–39  
(Mark 1:26–35 IV)

There are many stories of Jesus healing the people around him. Jesus modeled many things. Ask a class member to read from Mark 1:29–39 (Mark 1:26–35 IV) again. He modeled and reminded us that the time for personal renewal and spiritual growth is essential if we are to serve individuals and deal with circumstances that concern us. We must take time to prepare, renew our strength and spirit, and discipline ourselves to carry through with our plans.

The concerns of teens are real. The pace and intensity of today's daily life brings issues for their consideration that were never experienced by previous generations: issues related to the earth and its people. Everything is visual and virtually immediate in its impact. There is little passing of time to cushion or soften the experience. Take a few minutes for the students to write their week's schedule on sheets of newsprint taped around the room. Together analyze their activities. Notice how much time is set aside for rest, renewal, and healing of the physical body, the mind, and the spirit. Circle any that are found. Discuss with class members things they do to renew themselves, or have them suggest things they might do.

## Experience

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### Concerns

twin-sized sheet or large tablecloth, permanent markers

Cover a table with an old twin-sized sheet or tablecloth. These need to be white or a solid, light color. With a permanent marker, the teacher draws a large circle in the center. Tell the students this represents the earth. Give them each a permanent marker and have them write concerns they have for the earth. To the right of the circle, the teacher draws a cross. Have the students write concerns they have for the church. To the left of the circle, the teacher draws a house. Have the students write concerns they have for their homes and families. Below the circle, the teacher draws or traces a hand. Have the students write

concerns they have for their friends. Above the circle, the teacher draws an arrow. Have the students write concerns they have for the future. Ask students to form a circle around the table. Instruct each one to select a concern from the cloth, and have silent prayer for that concern for one minute. Choose a second concern, and pray for that one. Repeat for different concerns at least two more times. Hang the cloth as a reminder to pray continually for these many concerns.

## Renewal

Setting time aside for renewal takes planning and a lot of self-discipline. Journaling and rereading personal writing is one way to reflect and renew. Ask how many students have tried journaling. Journaling is a process that can reveal where one has been and may provide insight to where one is going. Review the following journaling helps and encourage the students to set aside time to write down or illustrate their thoughts. If possible, provide each student with a small journal for use at home. Begin it in class by reflecting on the concerns of the day.

journal, pens or pencils

### *Journaling Helps*

- 1. Schedule a consistent time each day or week for journaling.*
- 2. Look for a quiet place.*
- 3. Write what comes to your mind or from your heart.*
- 4. Let your thoughts flow. Don't be concerned with spelling words or using proper grammar—adjustments can be made later if you desire.*
- 5. If words don't come, try sketching or clipping pictures from magazines that reflect your thoughts.*
- 6. Some days you may write a prayer. Some days you may write a question as a response.*
- 7. Write legibly so when you return to reflect on your thoughts, you'll be able to read them.*
- 8. Journaling is what you make it. It is your response to a thought, event, or situation. It is personal. It is a record of your mental and spiritual growth and perhaps a venturing into unexplored territory. It can be sacred space between you and God.*

**Expand**

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## Prayer of Examen

Ignatius of Loyola developed a prayer of examen. This type of prayer is a way to look over what you've done during the day, to look for God's presence in these activities, and to give thanks for that presence. As a class, complete the prayer of Examen by responding to each prompt either in writing or by illustrating.

1. Praise God.
2. Offer thanks for today.
3. Ask for understanding about what is happening to you today.
4. Give thanks for these opportunities to understand yourself and God better.
5. Sit silently and feel God's love.
6. Allow the Spirit to fill you.

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**Lectionary scriptures**—Isaiah 40:21–31; Psalm 147:1–11, 20c; I Corinthians 9:16–23; Mark 1:26–35 IV/1:29–39