



# Prayerful Echoes

## OVERVIEW

This strategy offers a new twist to traditional antiphonal prayer by inviting the participants to echo and re-emphasize the key words of a scriptural passage or a well-known prayer. Using this simple echo technique in almost any prayerful setting with young people can deepen their participation in, appreciation for, and understanding of the Scriptures and familiar prayers.

### Suggested Time

5 to 10 minutes, depending on the length of the scriptural passage or prayer you chose to adapt

### Group Size

This kind of prayer can be done with any size group, but it is most effective with groups of ten or more individuals.

### Materials Needed

- ☀ two copies of resource 2, "Prayerful Echoes"
- ☀ a Bible

## PROCEDURE

*Preparation.* Select two readers. Ideally, the first reader should be an adult or a recognized leader of prayer in your group. Give the readers each a copy of resource 2. Indicate which prayer echo on the handout you are planning to use and invite them to practice it before the session.

1. Introduce this prayer with comments like the following:



Many people use different voices and refrains when they pray. A number of our prayers were originally songs or have been set to music as chants, with refrains and choruses. Echo prayer, like a litany or a chant, enables us to focus our mind and heart and listen more closely as we share prayer.

Listen closely, especially to the echo. The two readers are the only people in the group who will be able to see the prayer. The rest of you are the chorus, and so must listen to the words of the second reader and in unison repeat those words as an echo.

You may wish to practice this at least once with the whole group. Before praying, affirm with the group members that this is a prayerful exercise that requires their attention and reverence. Then invite the readers to begin.

2. Conclude the activity by reading Eph. 5:19–20.

## ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- ☉ A few examples of echo prayer are given on resource 2, but this technique can be applied to almost any prayer or scriptural passage. Once the group becomes familiar with the technique, little explanation will be needed, but preparation is still important. If you select your own scriptural passage or prayer, write out the words in full, including the voices and responses. Provide the readers with copies of the prayer and practice it with them before using it with a group.

Other helpful notes to consider when creating your own echo prayer:

- ☉ Write out the complete prayer or scriptural passage line by line and highlight one or two key words in each line.
- ☉ Break long sentences into several lines or clauses.
- ☉ Write the highlighted words from each line in the corresponding margins so that they can be read as refrains or echoes of each line.
- ☉ Ensure that the echoes are short, no more than three or four words, so that they can easily be echoed by the large group. The echo responses, read alone, should summarize in a coherent way the basic message of the prayer or passage.
- ☉ Put the complete prayer with responses onto a single page that can be shared by both readers.
- ☉ The effect of this prayer is heightened when the ritual is done in darkness. If you plan to do it that way, give the readers lit candles or small flashlights.

- ⊙ After the prayer has been read line by line and echoed by the chorus, read the echoes in their entirety. Together they provide a summary of the prayer or scriptural passage and can add deeper insight to the prayer.
- ⊙ Add a new dimension to a well-known prayer by reversing the procedure. Instead of starting with the complete prayer, have reader 2 recite his or her line, the others echo that line, and reader 1 recite the complete line. For example:

<i>Reader 2</i>	<i>Chorus</i>	<i>Reader 1</i>
Mary	Mary	Hail Mary
of grace	of grace	Full of grace
Lord with you	Lord with you	The Lord is with you
blessed	blessed	blessed are you among women
of your womb,	of your womb,	And blessed is the fruit of your womb,
Jesus	Jesus	Jesus

- ⊙ Rather than having the group members recite the echo in unison, have them each repeat the echoes individually, going around the circle until the echo returns to the reader. This mantra-style prayer works best with smaller groups.
- ⊙ Divide the large group into boys and girls, or seventh graders and eighth graders, and organize these into different choruses. For example: the boys read the first echo (reader 2's part), and the girls repeat the echo. You will need to provide the first echo readers with a copy of the prayer.
- ⊙ This style of prayer can be adapted for use at youth-led liturgies. After appropriate training a group of young people could use the echo format to present the first or second readings or to recite the responsorial psalm.

## SCRIPTURAL CONNECTIONS

The following scriptural passages easily can be adapted into echo prayers:

- ⊙ Psalm 23 (The Lord is my shepherd.)
- ⊙ Psalm 148 (Let everything give praise to God!)
- ⊙ Isa. 9:1–7 (The people in darkness have seen light, for a child is born to us.)
- ⊙ Matt. 5:1–12 (The Beatitudes)
- ⊙ Luke 1:46–55 (The Magnificat)
- ⊙ Luke 3:4–6 (A voice cries out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way!")
- ⊙ John 15:12–17 (This is my commandment, love one another. I call you friends.)
- ⊙ 1 Cor. 13:1–13 (The qualities of love and the three things that last)

## NOTES

Use the space below to jot notes and reminders for the next time you use this strategy.



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## The Lord's Prayer (Adapted from Matthew 6:9-13)

<i>Voice</i> <i>Reader 1</i>	<i>Echo</i> <i>Reader 2</i>	<i>Re-Echo</i> <i>Chorus</i>
Our Father in heaven May your name be held holy Your kingdom come Your will be done On earth as in heaven Give us today our daily bread And forgive us our debts As we have forgiven those who are in debt to us And do not put us to the test But save us from the Evil One Amen	Father name held holy kingdom come your will done on earth give us daily bread forgive our debts  as we forgive debts not to test but save us	Father name held holy kingdom come your will done on earth give us daily bread forgive our debts  as we forgive debts not to test but save us

## Hail Mary

<i>Voice</i> <i>Reader 1</i>	<i>Echo</i> <i>Reader 2</i>	<i>Re-Echo</i> <i>Chorus</i>
Hail Mary Full of grace The Lord is with you Blessed art thou among women And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus Holy Mary Mother of God Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death Amen	Mary of grace Lord with you blessed  of your womb, Jesus Holy Mother pray for us now and at death	Mary of grace Lord with you blessed  of your womb, Jesus Holy Mother pray for us now and at death

**Paul's Affirmation of Timothy  
(Adapted from 1 Timothy 4:12-16)**

*Voice*

*Reader 1*

The first letter of Paul to his  
    young friend Timothy  
"Let no one disregard you  
Because you are young  
But be an example to all  
In the way you speak  
And behave  
And in your love  
Your faith  
And your purity  
You have in you a spiritual gift  
Which was given to you  
When the prophets spoke  
And the elders laid hands on you  
Do not neglect it  
Think hard about this  
And put it into practice  
And everyone will see  
How you are advancing  
Take great care  
About what you do  
And what you teach  
This is the word of God"

*Echo*

*Reader 2*

young friend  
no one disregard  
you are young  
an example  
speak  
behave  
in love  
faith  
purity  
a spiritual gift  
given you  
prophets spoke  
elders laid hands  
not neglect  
think hard  
practice  
everyone see  
you advancing  
take care  
do  
and teach  
word of God

*Re-Echo*

*Chorus*

young friend  
no one disregard  
you are young  
an example  
speak  
behave  
in love  
faith  
purity  
a spiritual gift  
given you  
prophets spoke  
elders laid hands  
not neglect  
think hard  
practice  
everyone see  
you advancing  
take care  
do  
and teach  
word of God