

Prayer Coach Power Move—The Journal

[“The purpose of practice is to make your actions automatic; no thought is required. Build in the muscle memory and the psychomotor pathways, and tell your mind to get out of the way.”](#)

Dan Kelbick was speaking about the basketball free throw when he said the above. The perfect throw results from the perfect habit which allows the mind/body connection to ‘flow.’

Creating a habit of prayer is similar to creating any other habit, including the perfect free throw: it takes self-discipline, repetition, and is helped along by pursuing small term goals. While the perfect shot will take years of mastery, the roots of most new habits—including a prayer habit—can be in place in about 21 days.

Our youthful friends are poised to learn ANYTHING. This is because of the explosion of brain growth that takes place between the ages of 12 and 24. Creating a habit of prayer during these years can be wildly successful precisely because of this brain plasticity. Surely, this is a part of God’s plan in enabling us to seek and choose Him!

You play the role of coach in this endeavor. Your task is to offer guidance, feedback, and fruitful, constant access points that will help your teens establish neural passageways for prayer. With you as their guide, they will begin laying ruts in the road of the white matter of their brain. The dynamic nature of the adolescent brain, coupled with discipline and repetition, will help those ruts deepen rapidly, forging a habit of prayer that has great promise of ‘sticking.’

When it comes to guiding groups of teens in learning to pray, I like to use a constant basic format (journal) for everyone,

and then offer a variety of creative exercises, experiments, access points, and approaches for all to try out. I'll make a big deal out of this, stressing that this relationship building is really powered by God's grace at work. Our job is just to get out of the way so he can reach us. While we may feel awkward trying meditation, do we really want to get in God's way if that's how he wants to reach us? Any avenue we refuse to investigate could lead to a detour along our PATH! Instead, challenge the skeptical teen to stand in the Upper Left Corner and say, "Alright. Let's try this together."

I encourage the use of prayer journals because they

- are visual reminders
- track habits, progress, obstacles, and growth
- uncover missed patterns and messages
- give concrete edges to an often abstract activity (some of our younger teens will be less comfortable with the abstract)

One caveat: I steer away from electronic journals. While there are fun and useful apps for this, they are, of course, stored on devices that also store games, social media, and homework. That's just too many distractions and temptations for most of us—teens and adults alike.

There are all sorts of journal templates on line. If your school or organization has the capabilities, it isn't that difficult to create your own for students. Of course, you could always fall back on the ubiquitous composition notebook, but a special format will encourage more faithful interaction.

Here are a few links for journal making and journal pages.

[Smash Prayer Journals](#) Super fun guidelines for creating personalized faith journals. Would be a great year long project in conjunction with Confirmation Preparation and forming a habit of prayer and reflection. Step by step format reflects Catholic content and is easy to adapt to the

particulars of your groups. Leans heavily towards the girls, so you'll have to get creative in finding/scouring for resources for the boys. For example:

- scrapbook paper/cloth remnants in masculine colors and themes
- flat hardware/desk supplies—washers, metal brads, paperclips, rubberbands
- twine, cording, string, leather
- templates of baseball cards (turn into saint cards)

[Chat Prayer Journal Page](#) Downloadable daily prayer page with CH@T as its moniker. For the free-flowing writer; no prompts here, beyond the C-H-@-T.

[Daily Prayer Journal](#) Good for the younger set with six distinct areas of response. Could be used daily or as a Monday morning reflection, a mid-week check in, or as a planner for the weekend.

[Better is one day in your court](#) Simple three part page. Straight forward.

[Daily Bible Study Notes Page](#) At \$2.50, you could download this PDF, make copies and use it for a weekly bible prayer session. Use it to help begin a collection of templates that can build variety into a weekly reflection journal.

Do you have a journal idea to share? Leave a comment or picture!