

Jesus Teaches about Prayer

Grades
3-4

PRAYER

MATTHEW 6:5-15

What's happening in this story?

In this part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he instructs his followers concerning prayer. Jesus tells them not to be like hypocrites who pray publicly to get others' attention, nor like Gentiles who think God values long prayers over sincere ones. Instead, Jesus teaches that faith is about connecting with God, who sees even the hidden moments of our lives. Jesus then offers his disciples a blueprint to guide their own prayers.

What does this story mean for kids?

This passage invites kids to think about how they talk and listen to God. Some kids may be open to sharing prayer requests but shy about speaking their prayers aloud in a group. This passage lets kids know their prayers don't need to be perfect; in fact, God already knows what we need and is eager to connect with us!

Why this theme?

This story shows kids the context in which Jesus first taught the Lord's Prayer and helps them think about why he gave it to his followers. All Christians pray some version of this prayer, so knowing its background and pondering its meaning can help kids grow as Christians.

AGE LEVEL TIP

Praying out loud can seem intimidating to some kids. Let them know that God *wants* to hear from them and will love them no matter what they reveal in prayer. God already knows!



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- White paper
- Pens
- Construction paper
- Markers
- Scissors
- Clear tape

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Yarn
- Highlighters (2 colors per kid)

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Provide paper and pens, and have kids write a blessing prayer for the rest of the group. Kids may work alone or in twos or threes. Post blessings around the room when it's time to start.

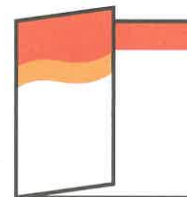
Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

Raise your hand if you have prayed before. Prayer is an important part of our faith lives. It's how we talk to God. We pray during worship and at Sunday school, before meals, and at bedtime. We can pray anytime and anywhere. When and where do you talk to God? Allow time for responses. There are many different ways to pray. Sometimes we pray out loud, sometimes in a whisper. Some prayers are to praise God. Others are an opportunity to ask God for help. Prayer is our most personal interaction with God.

Pray together: **Dear God, thank you for the gift of prayer—the invitation to come to you with all that's on our minds and hearts. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets, construction paper, scissors, and clear tape.

Using construction paper, draw and cut out clock hands. Place them on the clock to represent one time of day you like to pray. Let kids share what time of day that is. Remember, the whole clock represents opportunities to pray! Set your clock for what time you'd pray if you did it right before you went to bed. What about if you pray when you get up in the morning? When you eat lunch? Now set the hands for a new time you want to try praying this week. Tape the hands there so you don't forget.



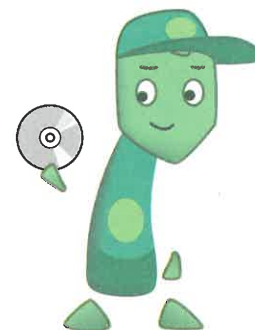
Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

There are certain times when we all pray the same prayer out loud. Have you ever wondered why we do that? When do you remember that happening?

View Episode 10, "Postscript Prayer," on the Year Gold Winter Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- Why do we call this prayer "the Lord's Prayer"?
- Why were the Whirl kids surprised by Gabe's prayer?
- What stood out to you about Gabe's prayer?
- What is the purpose of everyone praying out loud together?
- What is your favorite way to talk to God?



Open your Whirl Kids Study Bibles.

Today's passage is in the book of Matthew. It's in the New Testament in the Gospels and Acts section of the Bible. If this is your first time reading from Matthew, invite kids to check out the book introduction and comic on page 1156.



Today's story comes from a section of the Bible where Jesus is teaching about how to show our love to God. One important way that we can spend time with God is through prayer. Jesus gives us some words to teach us how to pray.

Help kids find Matthew 6:5-15 and read it in this creative way together: Have kids settle into a prayer position. They can kneel, stand, lie down, or sit, as long as they can see their Bibles. **Take turns reading verse by verse from your prayer position.**

Invite kids to check out what Gabe says about Matthew 6:7-13.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- What did Jesus teach about how to pray?
- Do you think Jesus meant that there is only one way to pray? Why or why not?
- When do you pray with other people?
- When do you pray by yourself?
- How does it feel to know God is listening when you pray?

Make your mark on the Wall Chart.

Look at the chart and find the theme for today. Give kids time to find the word *Prayer*. There are different kinds of prayer, and there are different ways to remember to pray. Some Jewish people wear prayer shawls with tassels at the four corners to remind them of their faith. Let's put four pieces of yarn in the corners of the box by *Prayer* to remind us that there are many ways to pray.



BIBLE BIT

A *hypocrite* is someone who presents a false version of themselves. In this passage, *hypocrite* is a reference to Greek actors, who wore masks and costumes to hide their true selves.

WATCH IT AGAIN

Sometimes people try to get God to take sides when they pray. If you watch the video again, discuss how Gabe talks to God about his baseball game without being selfish about the outcome.

OUR CHURCH

Invite someone to talk about a prayer ministry your church participates in outside of worship.

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out highlighters (two different colors per kid).

Tear off leaflet square.

1. **Jesus taught us one prayer we can use when we talk to God. The words of the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13 are printed on your leaflet. The red words are hidden in the word search.**
2. Have kids each choose one highlighter, and give them time to find the words in the word search. If someone is stuck, have a neighbor help them find any missing words.
3. **How do the words on the leaflet compare to the Lord's Prayer we say in worship?**
4. **When we pray, we can say words like those in the Lord's Prayer or use our own words. Look at the word search. What other prayer words you can find hidden in the puzzle?**
5. Have kids choose a different color highlighter and give them time to search for other words. If they get stuck, offer hints. Other possible words are:

amen	deliver	God	holy	Lord	power	prayer	Spirit
ask	forever	hear	Jesus	love	praise	save	temptation
dear	glory	help	lead	name	pray	thank	tresspasses
6. After kids have found a few new words, wrap up. **What does it feel like when you're searching for the right words to pray?**
7. **God wants to hear our prayers—it doesn't matter what words we use. Whenever you pray, you can be confident that God is listening.**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

The truth is there is no wrong way to talk to God. Things like when, where, and how we pray can distract us from the simple joy of saying a prayer. What else did you learn about prayer today?

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out markers.

Did you know you don't have to use words to pray? Writing can be a prayer. Art can be a prayer. Draw a heart on the picture of the way you pray most often. Draw a star on a new way to try. Use the blank space to draw a picture of another way you pray.

Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest). **And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world.**

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.