



Jesus Teaches Us to Pray

Goal: To practice the prayer Jesus taught.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 6:9-15

The most famous prayer in the Bible is the Lord's Prayer. We know it by heart. We utter its familiar words in many times, at many places. The phrases in the prayer are deeply meaningful to us. They express thoughts and themes that should mark all our prayers, whenever and wherever we pray them.

But do we stop to think about the great grace we receive simply by being able to pray—this prayer and all others? Without the invitation to prayer, we would be silent. But Jesus gave his disciples a model prayer, marking for us what true prayer embraces. Jesus also opened for us the way to pray. He showed us that prayer can be, as John Calvin said, an “intimate conversation” with God.

We praise God, petition God, and express to God the deepest desires of our hearts. We communicate with God. God always answers our prayers. God's grace enables us to pray.

The opportunity to pray, to share our intimate thoughts and desires with God, makes us grateful. What a wonderful blessing! What can give us a stronger sense of trust and faith? We are deeply grateful that Jesus taught us to pray!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

We teach children to pray by offering blessings, spoken or sung at our tables at home, and by helping them say their own prayers at bedtime. When children are present in worship, they will hear and begin to learn the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. Children's spiritual lives grow and deepen as we provide experiences for them with prayer. Notice the four requests in the Lord's Prayer. We pray for the bread we need for today. We pray that God forgives us when we do something bad. We pray that we won't be tempted to do wrong things, or that if we do, God will be with us, helping us. Children can understand and appreciate each of these. And remember in the story, Jesus says to keep it simple and that fancy words and long prayers aren't needed.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This is the First Sunday in Lent. You have an excellent opportunity to invite children to think about the season of Lent as a time of personal reflection to consider how Jesus wants us to live. This session offers a time to engage children in a conversation about prayer and when and where they do it, or the kinds of prayers they pray. Children know about how to say thanks to God, how to pray for things they want, and how to pray for others. Help them see how, in this prayer, Jesus also says it's important to tell God about the mistakes we have made. When we pray, God hears and remembers.

*O God, give me a heart for prayer and for your children.
In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 1, 21, 25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack (or bread
baked in “Guided Play”
choice 3)

Guided Play

choice 1: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

choice 2: **SCM 1a**

choice 3: packaged
refrigerated dough,
nonstick cooking spray,
oven, pan, potholders

Exploring

choice 3: food
magazines

choice 4: copies of
GN 2

If you do not have a kitchen, use this opportunity to stretch their imaginations and play pretend bakers. The children can act out how to mix the ingredients, knead the bread, roll the bread, and put it in an oven.

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children, so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii-iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Welcoming and Guided Play

L C FA

Welcome the children by name as they arrive and say, “You are God’s beloved child.” Prompt the response, “Amen” or “Thanks be to God.” Be sensitive to any children who might be visiting for the first time. Explain to the parents/caregivers that the children will hear a story about how Jesus teaches the disciples to pray. Invite the children to look at the guided-play activities and pick one to start:

- 1. Coloring**—Give the children copies of **GN 1**. Invite the children to color the picture. Wonder together what the people are doing. Mention that prayer is talking with God. Sometimes it is speaking, and sometimes it is being quiet and listening for God.
- 2. Wondering**—Invite children to look at the pictures of samples of bread on **SCM 1a**. Wonder what kinds of bread the children like best. Invite children to imagine stories to go with the pictures of bread. They might imagine themselves going into the bakery. Wonder what they see, smell, and taste. Wonder which bread they will choose.
- 3. Baking**—One phrase in the Lord’s Prayer that young children may in part understand is “give us this day our daily bread.” The children can help you bake bread that they will later eat together. An easy way to do this is to use packaged refrigerated dough for rolls. Go to the kitchen for this activity. The children can assist in greasing the pan and putting the dough on it. Use for a snack in “Loving and Serving God.”

T *Transition times vary, so plan accordingly. Cleanup may require only a short warning, while hand washing may require more warning and time. Use a song or short activity to signal the change.*

Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven”—**SCM 21**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Come and Hear

Say or sing the following song to the tune of “The Bear Went over the Mountain” and do the motions indicated. Invite the children to join in with you.

Come and hear God’s story. (*walk four steps to the right*)
 Come and hear God’s story. (*walk four steps to the left*)
 Come and hear God’s story. (*walk four steps to the right*)
 Sit down and fold your hands. (*fold hands in your lap*)

I Can Pray in Different Ways!



Invite the children to repeat your words and actions as you lead this poem. Tell the children that, after you say the last line of the poem, they may choose one of the ways of praying mentioned, or a position of their own.

I can pray while standing up. (*stand up straight*) /
 I can pray while sitting down. (*squat down*) /
 I can pray with arms held high. (*stretch arms up and stand on tiptoes*) /
 I can pray while looking down. (*head down, eyes closed, hands together*) /
 I can pray in different ways! /
 Guess how I am praying today. (*everyone assumes a prayer position*) /

 *The session plans for Growing in Grace & Gratitude follow a common flow. This helps in planning an effective schedule with transitions to help decrease the number of behavior issues.*

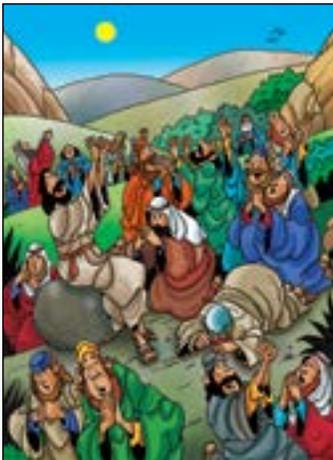
Hearing the Story



Open a Bible to Matthew 6. Comment that we read the Bible to hear stories about all of God’s people. Tell the children that today’s story is about Jesus teaching his friends a special prayer.

Read **SCM 1**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Mention (if it is true) that the Lord’s Prayer is always (or often) part of worship in your congregation.



Luke’s version of today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.



Tell the children that there are some big words in the prayer, but it is one that everyone can learn and pray when they are alone or with other people. Use the following notes and questions to “walk through” the prayer with the children:

- ▼ “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” This means that Jesus tells us to talk with God like we would talk with our mom or dad. God’s name is *hallowed* or *holy*, which means it is special. Are there other names you have heard God called? (*some suggestions may be Spirit or Creator*)
- ▼ “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus wants us to pray for God’s way of living to be our way of living, which means loving God and loving others. What is something we do to follow God’s way of living?
- ▼ “Give us this day our daily bread,” means that we can ask God for the things we need to live each day, like food to eat. What are other things that we need each day to live?
- ▼ “and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” means that we can ask God for forgiveness when we do something wrong, but we also need to forgive others when they do something wrong. What is something for which we might ask God for forgiveness? How might you forgive someone else?
- ▼ “and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Jesus taught us to pray that God would keep us safe, from things we know we shouldn’t do (temptations) and also things that may hurt us. When can we ask God to be with us?

EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

1. Moving in Prayer



Play “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven.” Wonder how the children can show how they feel by moving when they hear the music and words. Encourage the children to move around as they listen to the music again. Move your body to the prayer too.

Try this activity with each person moving freely. After a short period of free movement, channel the natural responses of the children into an organized expression of prayer. Use some of the following movements: bow head, kneel, lift hands and eyes upward, turn to the side, look back over the shoulder, fold hands together, and join hands with others in a circle. Keep your feet and body moving to the beat.

MS *As you select and plan activities, think about the space children need to maneuver a wheelchair, walker, leg casts, or crutches.*

**The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in
heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily
bread;
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into
temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory,
forever. Amen.

2. Learning the Lord's Prayer

Pray the Lord's Prayer using an echo style. Recite each line of the prayer, then pause and the group will repeat the words just spoken:

Our Father, who art in heaven, /
Hallowed be thy name. /

Follow this pattern for the entire prayer, using the version of the prayer that is most often used in your congregation so the children will become accustomed to saying the words. See the sidebar for the version many Presbyterian churches use.

3. Favorite Foods

Help children to draw their favorite foods on a paper plate or cut or tear pictures of them from food magazines and glue them to the plate. Talk with the children about how God provides the food we eat. You might teach them one of the following table graces while they work.

Thank You, God

Sing this to the tune of "*Frères Jacques*":

God, we thank you, God, we thank you,
For this snack, for this snack,
For our friends at church school, for our friends at church
school,
Thank you, God, thank you, God.

For Food

The words to this grace are more complicated, but they are fun to sing. Sing this to the tune of "*Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*."

Thanks for all the foods we eat,
Crackers salty, apples sweet,
Smooth banana, carrot crunchy,
Snacks so chewy, juicy, munchy,
Now to you, O God, this day,
Thanks for food, to you we pray.

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

Say a personal word to each child. It might be no more than “I’m glad you were here” or “I’m sorry you have such a bad cold,” but let each child know you paid attention to him or her today.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

4. Coloring Page C

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What are the people praying about?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What are different ways we can pray?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What do you pray about?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as squeezing your hands, stretching, and so on.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD FA LG

Call the children to snack time, singing “Thank You, Jesus”—**SCM 25**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite everyone to sit around a table or on the floor.

Before eating the bread you baked (or a snack), say the Lord’s Prayer. Ask the children to listen for the word *bread* as you pray.

Remind them that all of the food we have to eat is a gift to us from our gracious God.

Enjoy a snack.

Encourage the children to tell about bread as a gift from God that we enjoy every day.

As the children leave, bless each one, saying, “(Name), God hears your prayers. The grace of God is with you.”



Jesus Teaches Us to Pray



Jesus taught his friends a prayer.

