

1

Pray Honestly

MATTHEW 6:9–13



GOAL

Children are introduced to the language of the Lord’s Prayer, begin to recognize the words and rhythms of this prayer, and are challenged to memorize it over the course of the unit.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: [bit.ly](#) addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Christ our teacher, even when we lack the right words, you hear our prayers. Help me to teach these children in my care that their prayers are acceptable in your sight. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Probably the most well-known of all Christian prayers is the Lord’s Prayer. Although there are slight variations in wording, this prayer unites Christians around the globe. Sometimes this prayer is introduced by saying, “let us pray the prayer we learned as children. . . .” And indeed, many children do learn and memorize it. In this session, this is our challenge, but even more important, we break down its unfamiliar or abstract language to begin to understand its meaning.

THE BIBLE STORY

In Luke’s Gospel (Luke 11:1–4), Jesus teaches his disciples to pray in response to a request for such instruction. However, in Matthew 6:9–13, Jesus teaches his followers to pray in the midst of a collection of teachings called the Sermon on the Mount. In this particular section, Jesus encourages sincerity and authenticity in relation to God, including in prayer. As instruction, Jesus begins, “Pray, then, in this way . . .,” providing a simple and sincere prayer that praises God and acknowledges God’s role, asks for needs and forgiveness while recognizing the need to forgive others, and asks for help in difficult times. The ascription of praise that concludes the prayer was added later by believers in the early church.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

The image of a young child, hands folded, eyes squeezed shut, kneeling at a bedside may come to mind when you think of children and prayer. While many children may have experienced prayer in worship and at home, prayer can still be abstract and confusing. Children have difficulty distinguishing prayers from wishes or wants. Hearing Jesus’ model for prayer helps them understand some basic elements of prayer: praise and thanksgiving, confession, and petition.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Lord’s Prayer Storybook” (p. 9): Obtain *The Lord’s Prayer* illustrated by Tim Ladwig (Eerdmans, 2002) or use the YouTube video “The Lord’s Prayer, Illustrated by Tim Ladwig” (bit.ly/FMLordsPrayerLadwig, 2:18).
- “Signing the Prayer” (p. 11): Familiarize yourself with the sign language motions for the Lord’s Prayer on Resource Page 4. To see a person signing the Lord’s Prayer, watch the YouTube video “The Lord’s Prayer in ASL” (bit.ly/FMLordsPrayerASL, 2:46).



GETTING STARTED

- Mural paper, 3'-4' per child
- Copies of Resource Page 1
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils

BODIES IN PRAYER A

Greet the children as they arrive. Trace each child's body outline, with arms and fingers stretched out on an individual sheet of mural paper. Label each outline with the child's name. Set aside for "Our Whole Bodies Pray!" (below).

As children are waiting for or finished with their body outlines, provide copies of Resource Page 1 and invite them to trace the word *PRAY* and color the pictures.

PRAYING PSALM 136 QC

Invite the children to join you in the following litany with their response: "God's love lasts forever."

Give thanks to God, for God is good.

God's love lasts forever.

Who hears us when we pray—

God's love lasts forever.

Who invites us to draw close—

God's love lasts forever.

Who welcomes us with open arms—

God's love lasts forever.

Give thanks to the God of heaven and earth:

God's love lasts forever.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Body outlines from "Bodies in Prayer" (above)

OUR WHOLE BODIES PRAY! C

Gather the children in a central space in the room and place their body outlines in front of them. Tell the children that they are going to be learning about praying and prayer. Draw the children's attention to their body outlines. Ask them to name body parts that they can see, and then what parts of their body they use for prayer. Some responses might include hands, mouths, ears, brains, heart, and so forth. Invite the children to share things that they have prayed for. Affirm all answers. Wonder what it means that prayer is described as a conversation with God. If necessary, explain that a conversation involves more than one person and usually requires both talking and listening. Comment that, when we pray, we often talk but sometimes our prayers may be silent and in our thoughts or hearts. Also suggest that, when we pray, we can be listeners, hearing God in many ways through other people, through words from the Bible, and in our own hearts and thoughts. Tell the children that they can share anything with God, the happy times and the sad times, the fun things and the hard things.

Tell the children that they will use their bodies to help them remember how they can pray. Today's session is about being open and honest with God and, since hands can be opened and closed (*hold your palms open, close them into fists, and then open them again*), the focus will be on using our hands in prayer.



Set aside the body outlines for "Hands in Prayer" (p. 11).



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

JESUS TEACHES US A PRAYER



Open the Bible to Matthew 6 and set the scene for the Bible story, telling the children that, long ago when Jesus lived, many people wanted to hear him teach about God and God’s love. One of these times of teaching took place on a mountainside, and Jesus talked about many things including how to pray. Explain that it wasn’t that the people listening to Jesus didn’t pray, but Jesus gave them an example of a simple prayer to God, giving God praise and asking for what one needs, forgiveness, and guidance. Read the adapted Bible story from Matthew 6:9–13 on Resource Page 2. Explain that the words of the prayer used in the story were to help us understand what the Lord’s Prayer is about, but that, throughout the ages and all around the world, followers of Jesus have prayed this prayer. Wonder if anyone knows what we call this prayer today and how it starts. Tell the children, if necessary, that the prayer that Jesus taught his followers is called the Lord’s Prayer and it begins, “Our Father, who art/is in heaven.”

- Bible
- Resource Page 2

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray the Lord’s Prayer using the version that is used in your congregation’s worship. The traditional version is on the left and the contemporary version is on the right below.

Our Father, who art in heaven, /	Our Father in heaven, /
hallowed be thy name. /	holy is your name. /
Thy kingdom come, /	Your kingdom come, /
thy will be done /	your will be done, /
on earth as it is in heaven. /	on earth as in heaven. /
Give us this day our daily bread. /	Give us today our daily bread. /
And forgive us our debts /	Forgive us our sins /
as we forgive our debtors. /	as we forgive those who sin against
And lead us not into	us. /
temptation,	Save us from the time of trial /
but deliver us from evil.	and deliver us from evil. /
For thine is the kingdom, and	For the kingdom, the power, and the
the power, and the glory /	glory are yours /
forever. /	now and forever. /
Amen. /	Amen. /

Explain that, many years later, after Jesus died, was risen, and went to be with God, followers of Jesus added the words of praise to the end of this prayer.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

LORD’S PRAYER STORYBOOK



Read aloud *The Lord’s Prayer* illustrated by Tim Ladwig or show the YouTube video “The Lord’s Prayer, Illustrated by Tim Ladwig” (bit.ly/FMLordsPrayerLadwig, 2:18). After the story, invite the children to share

- The Lord’s Prayer* illustrated by Tim Ladwig (Eerdmans, 2002) or internet-connected device

the things they saw happening in the story. Some responses may be the girl and her father helping a neighbor, not accepting payment from the neighbor, the girl finding the charm, the girl wondering if she should return it, and so forth. Ask the children how the girl and her father lived out the words of the prayer, and encourage them to share ways that they have lived out some of the words of the prayer.

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- Internet-connected device
 - Rhythm instruments

SINGING THE LORD'S PRAYER



Tell the children that one way to learn or memorize something is to sing it.

Give the children rhythm instruments and invite them to play them as they sing the response, "Hallowed be thy name." Show the YouTube video "Our Father, Who Art in Heaven (Caribbean Lord's Prayer) [with Lyrics for Congregations]" (bit.ly/FMLordsPrayerCaribbean, 2:31). For a more active version, show the YouTube video "The Lords' Prayer with Motions" (bit.ly/FMLordsPrayerMotions, 3:08) and invite the children to sing along and follow the motions in the video.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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- Copies of Resource Page 3
 - Markers, crayons, colored pencils
 - Scissors

MY LORD'S PRAYER BOOK



Tell the children that they will make a Lord's Prayer booklet that they can take home to help them memorize the prayer with their family. Provide copies of Resource Page 3 and coloring supplies. Read aloud the words to the Lord's Prayer as the children follow along. Invite the children to color the pictures as they think about the words on that page. Comment that the picture for "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" is a hard hat that people wear to be protected from something dangerous hitting their head. Suggest that when we pray that part of the prayer, we are asking God to protect us.

Use the following directions to make the booklet, assisting the children particularly with the cutting of the solid line and the folding in the final step.

- Cut out the booklet on the solid outside lines.
- Fold the paper in half lengthwise, like a hot dog, with the pictures on the outside.
- Fold the paper in half along the dashed lines, and in half again.
- Open the paper up and fold it in half widthwise, like a hamburger. Cut along the solid line in the center.
- Open the paper up and fold again lengthwise, but this time the two center sections should form an open diamond shape. Pinch those two sections, forming a T-shape. Fold the front and back covers around the center pages to form the booklet.

SIGNING THE LORD'S PRAYER



Tell the children that people who are deaf or hard of hearing often use their hands to communicate with a language called American Sign Language, or ASL. Ask the children if they know any signs or know anyone who uses ASL. Demonstrate the signs for *Lord* and *prayer*.

- **Lord:** If right handed, form an L with thumb and forefinger of right hand. Move right hand from left shoulder to right hip, as if making a sash. If left handed, use left hand for L and move from right shoulder to left hip.
- **Prayer:** Place palms together in front of you and slightly move them back and forth.

Distribute copies of Resource Page 4 and lead the children in signing the Lord's Prayer. Not all the words are signed, just the words in bold font. When a word is repeated in the prayer, make the sign used previously for that word. The children may color the pictures during the session or at home. Encourage the children to share this Resource Page with their families and learn the prayer together.

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- Copies of Resource Page 4
 - Markers, crayons, colored pencils
 - Internet-connected device (optional)



To see a person signing the Lord's Prayer, show the YouTube video "The Lord's Prayer in ASL" (bit.ly/FMLordsPrayerASL, 2:46).



FOLLOWING JESUS

HANDS IN PRAYER



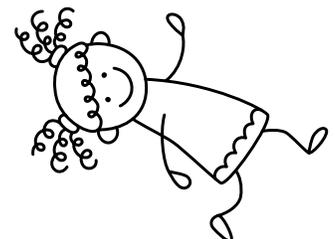
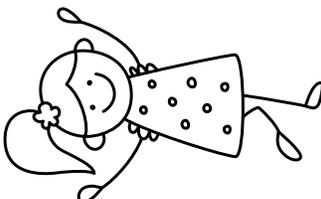
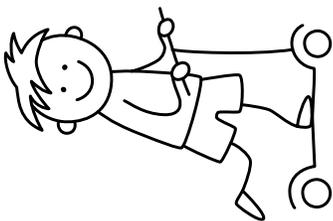
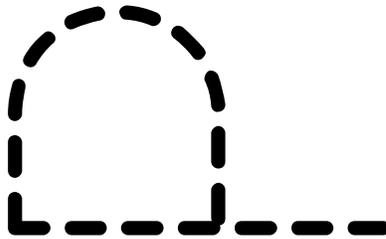
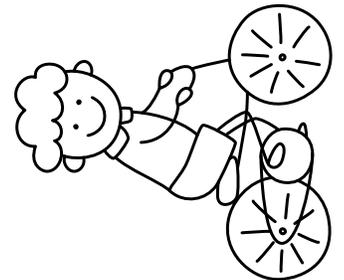
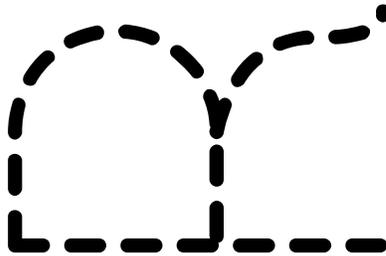
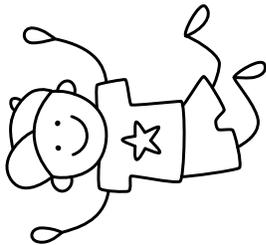
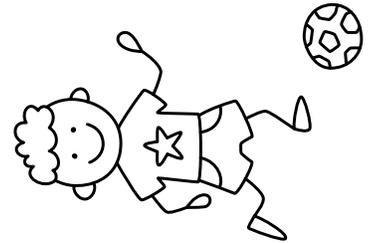
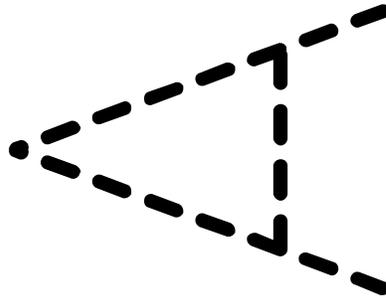
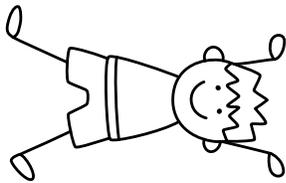
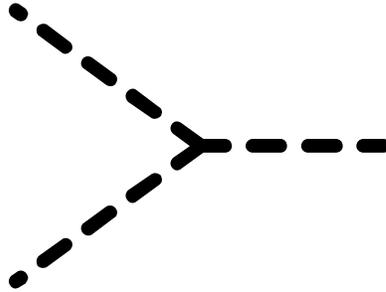
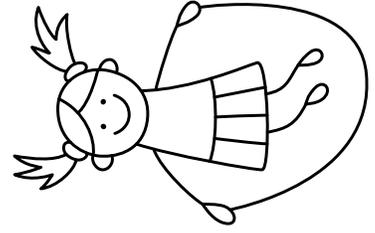
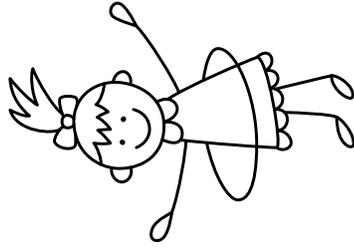
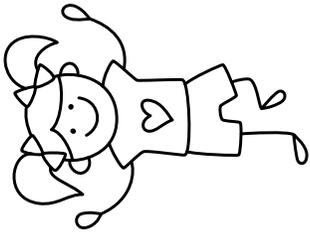
Give the children their body outlines from "Our Whole Bodies Pray!" (p. 8) and invite them to decorate and color their hands on the outline to remember that we can pray with our hands. While the children are coloring, designate a wall, ideally a corner, of the room where the body outlines can be displayed. Invite the children to bring their body outlines to this place and hang the outlines on the wall(s). Tell the children that this will be a prayer corner for the rest of the sessions of this unit.

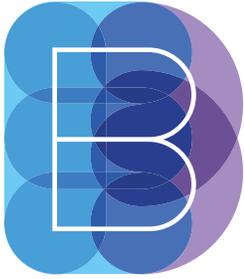
Invite the children to engage their hands for a closing time of prayer. Wonder together what options might be to use their hands in prayer. Some ideas might be holding hands with one another, lifting hands toward heaven, folding hands in prayer, using the sign language sign, and so forth. Lead the children in the Lord's Prayer, having them repeat each line after you. Use one of the versions of the Lord's Prayer with the line breaks from "Jesus Teaches Us a Prayer" (p. 9).

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- Body outlines from "Our Whole Bodies Pray!" (p. 8)
 - Markers, crayons, colored pencils
 - Painter's tape



Keep body outlines displayed for sessions 2, 3, and 4.





BIBLE STORY

BASED ON MATTHEW 6:9–13

A teacher's job is to help their students to learn. Jesus was a teacher to his followers, and he was always finding new ways to help them know more about God and understand God's way of living. He taught them using stories, and he taught them by example. When Jesus was teaching one day, he talked about prayer. He noticed that some people liked to pray using fancy words and to be heard by others.

So Jesus said, "Instead of praying like that, pray like this instead:

God in heaven, your name is holy.

Help our world to be as wonderful as heaven is with you,
and so your dream for the world can exist here on earth.

Each day, please give us the things we need, like food to eat.

Please forgive us when we do things that we shouldn't,
and with your forgiveness to us, help us to be just as forgiving to other
people.

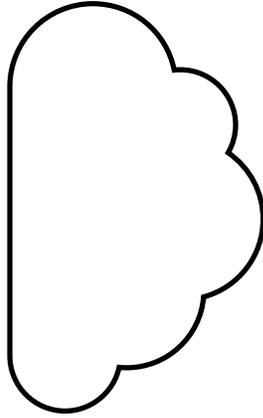
Help us not be tempted to do things that we know are not right; save us
from those bad choices."

The Lord's Prayer

Amen.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

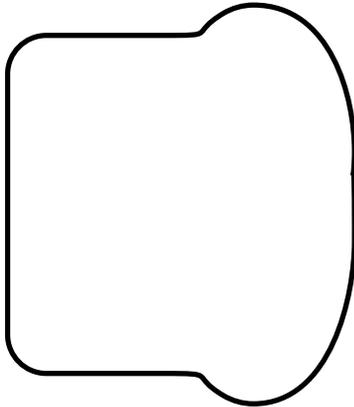
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.



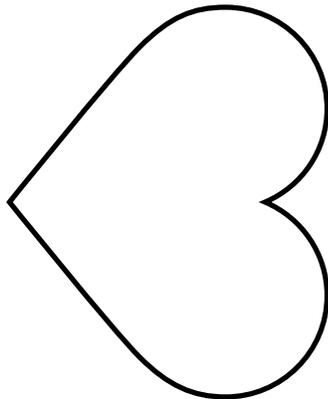
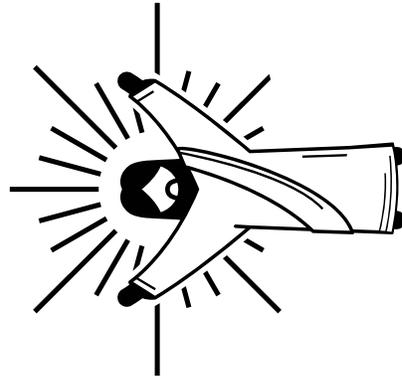
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.



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;

The Lord's Prayer

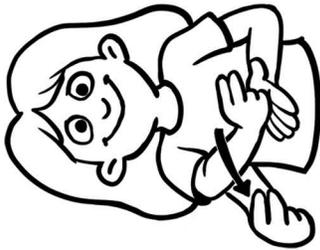
Not all the words are signed, just the words in bold font. When a word is repeated in the prayer, make the sign used previously for that word.



Our **Father**



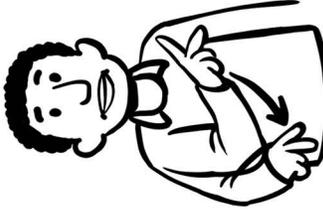
in **heaven**



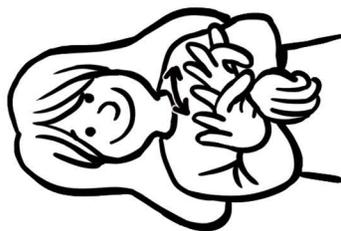
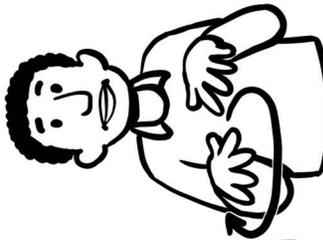
holy



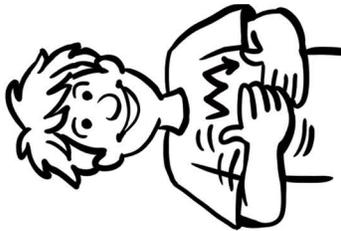
is your **name**.



Your **kingdom** come, your will be done,



on **earth** as in **heaven**.



Give us today our **daily bread**.



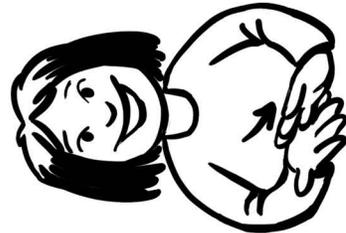
Save us from



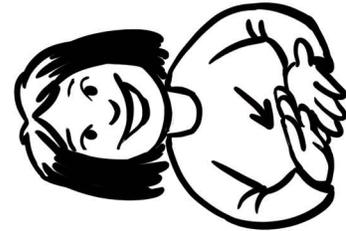
the **time of trial**



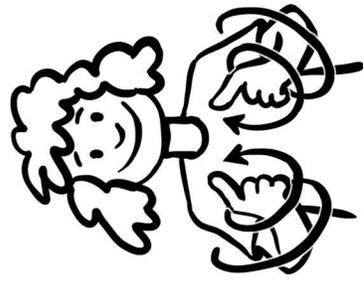
and **deliver** us



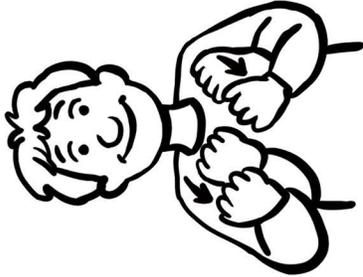
from **evil**.



Forgive us our **sins** as we **forgive** those



who **sin** against us.



For the **kingdom**, the **power**,



and the **glory** are yours. **Amen**.