



Jesus Teaches Us to Pray

Goal: To practice the prayer that 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, 1a, 1b, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

purple cloth
candle

Responding

Praying

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Offering

copies of **GN 2**

Extra

copies of **GN 3**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on 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.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

MS A B M L

Play “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven”—**SCM 23**—as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (Name).” Prompt the response, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help set the scene. On a table, place a purple cloth, a Bible, and a candle to signify the light of Christ. Tell the children that this is the First Sunday in Lent, a time to think about how Jesus wants us to live. Explain that today you will be learning about a special prayer Jesus taught us to pray.

Post **SCM 1a** and **1b** near the worship table. Ask for volunteers to practice the Lord’s Prayer motions and be prepared to lead the group later in the session.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Mix with the group and encourage conversation.

Singing

Play “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven”—**SCM 23**—as the children listen. Sing the song together.

Praying

T M

Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus, the light of the world. Take time to show gratitude for God’s gifts. After each line, have the children respond, “We thank you, God.”

For shining light into the world,
we thank you, God.
For the gifts you give us,
we thank you, God.
For grace and peace,
we thank you, God.
For showing us how to live in your way,
we thank you, God.
Amen.

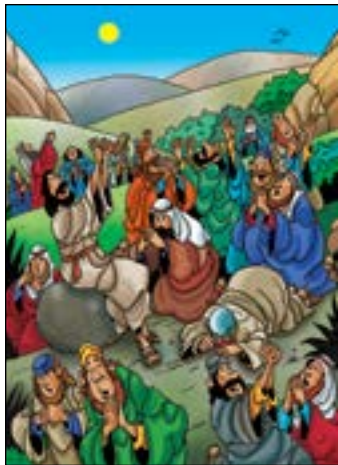
C Give children time to respond and to share; for some children, listening and speaking may take longer.



Preparing to Hear the Story C

Tell the children that Jesus gave us a prayer to use to talk with God. Invite the children to name what they know about the Lord's Prayer. Some children may have it memorized.

Comment that Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer so we have words when we don't know what to say to God.



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.

Hearing the Story L A MS

Invite a child to find Matthew 6 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 1** or listen to the story audio. Use your voice, expressions, and feelings to make the story more engaging. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Draw the children's attention to the Lord's Prayer motions. Invite the volunteers who practiced the motions to lead the children in the prayer. Then read the story again. Prompt the children to say the Lord's Prayer with motions during the story. If your congregation uses a different version of the Lord's Prayer (such as "sins" and "sin against us" instead of "debt" and "debtors"), make those changes so that the children learn the prayer as your congregation prays it in worship.

L *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty following directions. Provide specific instructions and time for children to complete each step with sign language motions.*

Reflecting on God's Grace C

The Lord's Prayer helped the disciples of Jesus to remember all the things they needed to talk to God about. Engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

- When have you heard or said the Lord's Prayer?
- What words or phrases do you like?
- How do you feel when you hear or say it?
- Why do you think Jesus taught his friends to ask God about these things?

Singing

Give God an offering of music. Sing "Our Father, Who Art in Heaven"—**SCM 23**. Encourage the children to incorporate the motions they learned.

Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Celebrating God's Grace

M

Guide the children in a rap about prayer by saying one line at a time and encouraging them to follow along. Boldface type indicates the downbeat:

We can **pray** in the **morn**-ing.
We can **pray** at **night**.
We can **pray** when we're **close**
and **when** we're out of **sight**.

We can **pray** with **whis**-pers.
We can **pray** with a **song**.
We can **pray** when we're **sick**.
We can **pray** when we're **strong**.

God is **with** us all the **time**.
God **hears** the words we **share**.
God **loves** every **one** of us.
God **lis**-tens to our **prayers**.

Encourage the children to create motions appropriate to the words. Ask the pastor or worship committee to let the children lead the rap in an upcoming worship service.

M *Some children need to move more than others, which makes sitting still a difficult task. Set clear expectations for appropriate movement to meet the needs of the child while not disrupting the rest of the group.*

Praying God's Grace

Tell the children that, when we pray, we are having a conversation with God. Sometimes it's easier to write down what we are thinking about than to talk about it. Explain that a journal is one way of thinking through things to say. Hand out copies of **GN 1** and colored pencils. Read the prompts aloud and tell the children that they reflect parts of the Lord's Prayer.

Play quiet music while the children fill out the journal page. Encourage them to draw or write what they are thinking about in each of the prompt areas. Tell the children that God hears their prayers whether they speak them aloud, write them down, or color pictures. Consider having additional copies of the prayer journal page for children who would like to write additional prayers at home.



Offering God's Grace

FM

Before the children arrive, cut 5" x 7" rectangles from colored construction paper. Cut two 15" lengths of twine or yarn per child.

Tell the children that, like Jesus, they too can share the Lord's Prayer with others.

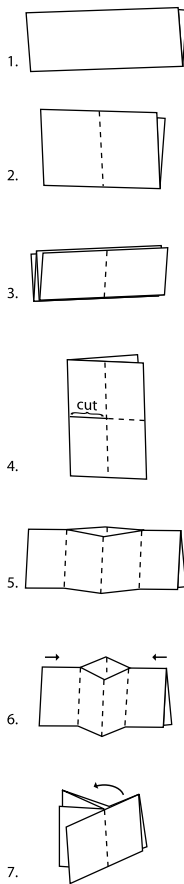
Give each child a copy of **GN 2** and have them cut it apart. Provide two lengths of yarn or twine and four jumbo craft sticks to each child. Let them select two colored rectangles and glue the Lord's Prayer to the center of each. Have them turn the paper over and glue one craft stick to the top and one to the bottom of each prayer banner. Tie the yarn or twine to the top of the banner at each end of the craft stick. Allow time to decorate the banners.

Encourage the children to keep one banner for their family and give the other to a friend or family member, telling them that these are the words Jesus used to teach us to pray.

Extra Activity

L

Help the children make a booklet to remember the Lord's Prayer. Provide scissors and copies of **GN 3**. Have them cut the rectangle from **GN 3**. Lead the children in these steps, waiting until each one is finished before going to the next step:



1. Fold in half lengthwise along the line, then open it.
2. Fold the paper in half widthwise, then open it.
3. Fold each short end to the center fold, then open it.
4. Fold the paper in half widthwise again. Use scissors to cut along the solid line, stopping when you reach the dashed line.
5. Open, then fold in half again along the length.
6. Holding each end of the fold, gently move toward the middle until the center sections move away from each other to form two separate paper folds.
7. Bring the cover around the center sections to form a booklet.

Read the prayer book with the children and discuss the symbols. If you have time, they can decorate their books with crayons or colored pencils. Talk with them about ways they can share their books and Jesus' words with others.

- L** *Comprehending instructions can be a challenge for some children. Support these children with clear expectations, organization, checking for understanding, and providing the time needed to complete steps.*



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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather in a circle and wonder together how praying the Lord's Prayer would be a helpful practice during Lent. Pray the Lord's Prayer together using the motions on **SCM 1a** and **SCM 1b**.

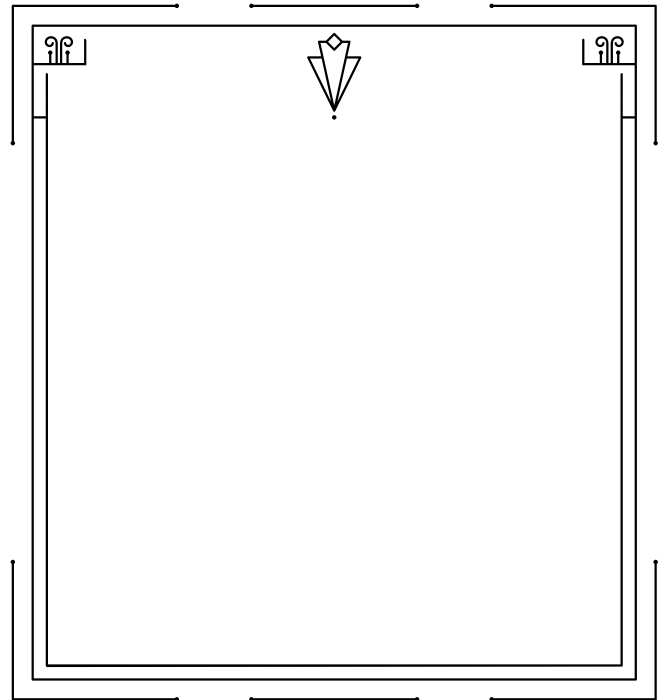
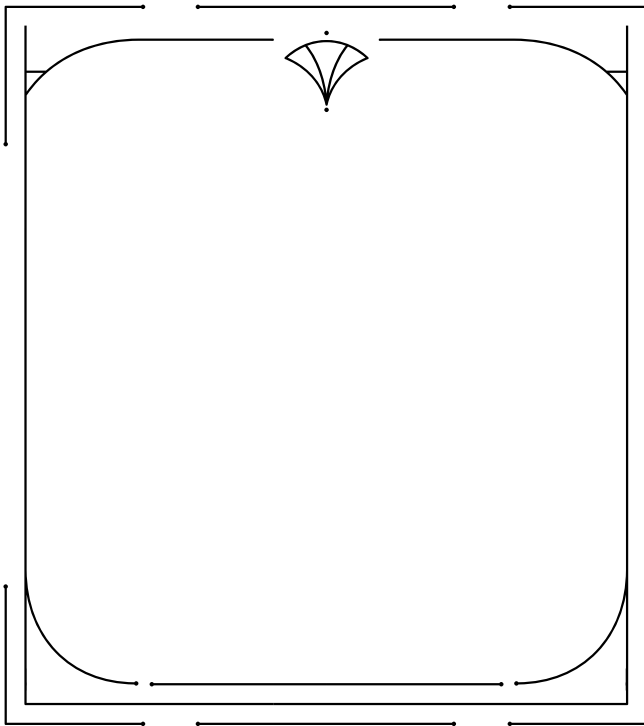
Encourage the children to pray the Lord's Prayer each day this week, emphasizing a different word in the prayer each time they pray it. For example, "**Our** Father, who art in heaven . . ." one day, "Hallowed be thy **name** . . ." another day, "Give us **this day** our daily bread . . ." another time, and so forth.

Invite the children to repeat your words and actions as a blessing:

- ▼ Touch your head, and say: "May God bless my thoughts";
- ▼ touch your lips, and say: "May God bless my words";
- ▼ place your hands over your heart, and say: "May God give me a desire to do God's will."

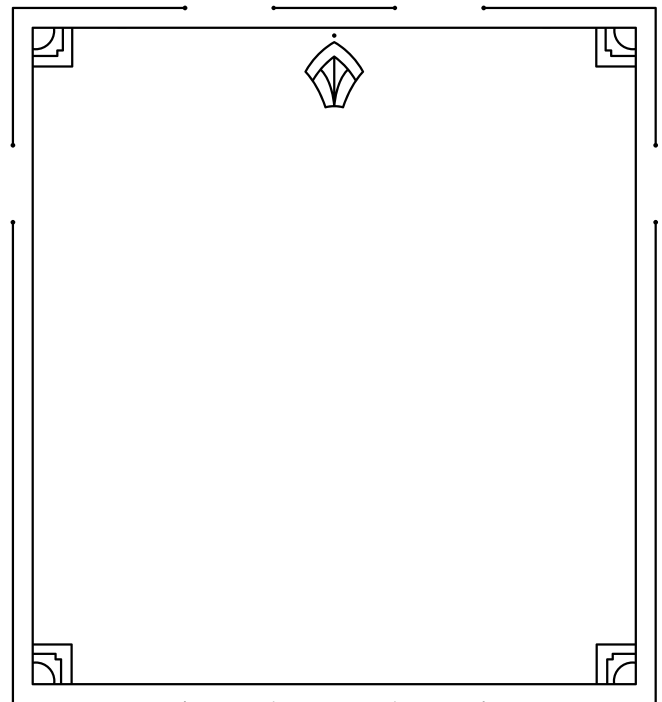
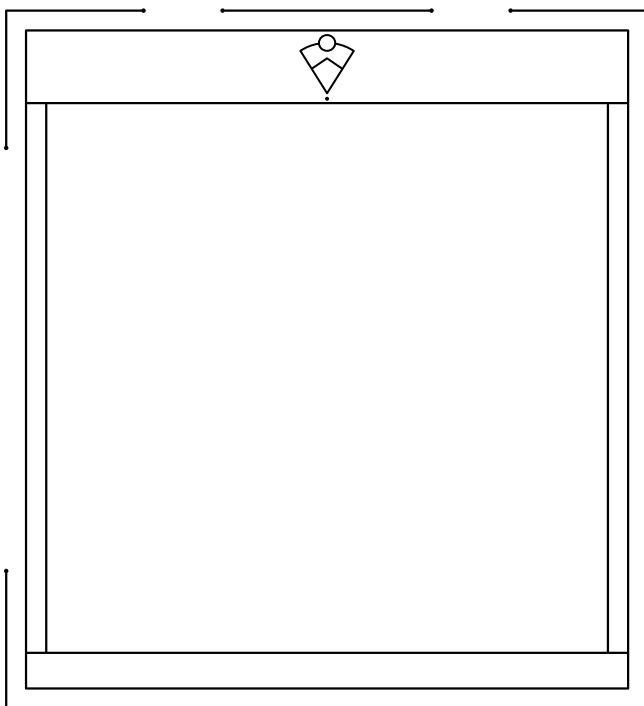
Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to read the story during the week.

God, I praise you for . . .



What I need today is . . .

Please forgive me for . . .



and help me forgive . . .

Amen.



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.



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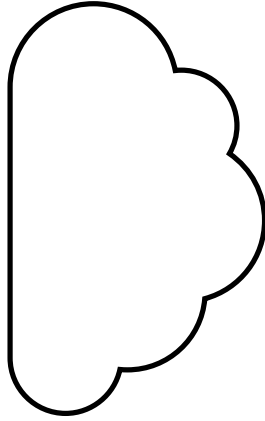
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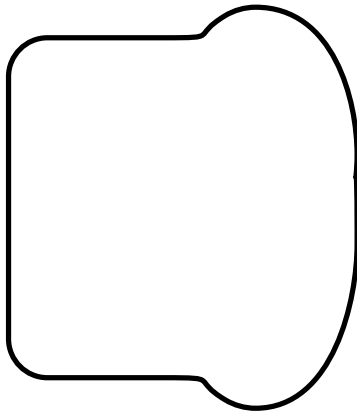
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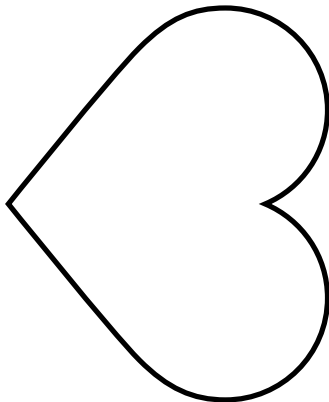
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