

Bible background

Matthew 6:5-15

Aim of lesson

To help the children formulate their own prayers, using the Lord's Prayer as a model.

Preparation required

You will need scissors, glue and colouring materials and, if possible, a toy telephone and a cassette recorder. A consideration of your own prayers and the Lord's Prayer would be helpful. There is a useful analysis of the Lord's Prayer in 'Prayer - Studies in Principle and Practice' by Melva Purkis and Cyril Tennant. You may like to think about your own prayers in terms of A.C.T.S - Adoration, Confession of sins, Thanksgiving and Supplication.

Suggested outline of lesson

1. Ask the children what they talk to parents, friends and teachers about. Try and draw out the less obvious things like saying sorry, sharing worries and asking for advice, as well as sharing joys, asking for things and so on. How can they talk to people far away? Let them pretend to phone their mother or father and thank them for all their love and care. Ask them if we can telephone God, and how we can talk to him?
2. Talk about prayer and what to include. See if they remember the proud and humble man and their contrasting attitudes. Try and draw the emphasis away from asking for things and point out that we can share our joys with God, thank him, say sorry and ask for advice as we can with our parents. Make clear the need to show reverence when we talk to God.
3. Describe the wrong ways to pray; going on and on or standing on street corners for maximum effect, then contrast that with how we should pray, privately and thoughtfully. Tell them they can pray at any time and in any place, as long as it is for the right reasons.
4. Go through the Lord's Prayer breaking it down into small sections and putting it into simple language. Older children could follow the words in their worksheet. Show how the first half relates to God and his purpose with the world; with personal requests making up the second half. The final 'for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen' (N.I.V) may not be included in all manuscripts but it is a fitting way to end. Explain the meaning of 'Amen'.
5. Many children will already know the Lord's Prayer. Help those who do not by saying it with them into the tape recorder and letting them listen to it several times. Other children could be making up their own prayers to record, and these could be played back to discuss what they have, or have not, included.
6. Complete the activity sheet by colouring the door and cutting along the thick lines, then folding the sheet in half and drawing a picture of themselves praying behind the door. Glue the two sides together, leaving the door free to open. Older infants could copy the Lord's Prayer in the spaces underneath.

Alternative activities

1. Ask the class to draw pictures of things we can say thank you to God for or people we can pray about.
2. Divide the Lord's prayer into sections and write each section on a slip of paper. Jumble the slips up in a box or bag and ask a child choose one. Read the slip to the class and help them to decide whether it goes at the beginning, middle or end of the prayer. Repeat with the next child until the prayer is in the correct sequence. With very young children you may wish to number the slips so that they can sequence them more easily.

Relevance to the children's lives

Do they fidget during prayers? Encourage them to listen and feel involved in communal prayer. Suggest that they try and pray regularly, remembering the needs of others as well as themselves.

Prayer

Perhaps Sunday School could be closed with the Lord's Prayer, now it is more meaningful to the children.

Verse

'Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray.' James 5:13.

Song

There are several settings of the Lord's Prayer to music. If you can teach one of these it will help the children to remember it.