

CHRISTIAN PRACTICES WITH CHILDREN
Session 4: Prayer

Resources

Audience	This class is designed for parents of children ages 3- 11.
Setting	Sunday afternoon Lunch and Learn Series
Time Frame	Approximately 1 hour class, 12:15 – 1:30
Environment	Fellowship Hall, round tables, chairs, dry erase board, CD player, DVD player and TV.

Leader Preparation Bring laptop, markers, crayons, colored pencils, magazines with pictures, catalogs, glue, scissors, water-color paints and brushes, cookies, frosting, sprinkles, construction paper, lunch-size paper bags, staplers, zip lock baggies, CD player and CD; hymnals open to *When a Poor One*, and construction paper strips, faith review sheets with guiding conversation starters, two boxes with lids, hole punch, strips of yarn, Handel's Messiah CD and CD player, large piece of poster board, Psalms of Praise, small cafeteria trays filled with damp sand, small-wooden crosses, little plastic lambs, pieces of palm branches, cut fragrant flowers; cut soft lambs ears; bright green magnolia leaves; stuffed song birds that sing, small bowls of apple slices, raisins, orange segments, cinnamon granola, Ina Hughes' *A Prayer for Children*, *Tough Boris*, *How to Heal A Broken Wing*, *Miss Tizzy*, *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, *Down the Road*. Cover 5 tables with paper.

Study Focus Practicing Prayer with Children

Invitation(4-8 minutes)

We are going to listen to the Nkomazi children, members of the African Children's choir, sing *You Are The Shepherd* as our opening devotion. Play you tube video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5ThwVGrt80&feature=related>

Amen

One Sunday in a Midwest city a young child was "acting up" during the morning worship hour. The parents did their best to maintain some sense of order in the pew but were losing the battle. Finally the father picked the little fellow up and walked sternly up the aisle on his way out. Just before reaching the safety of the foyer the little one called loudly to the congregation, "Pray for me! Pray for me!"

During the minister's prayer one Sunday, there was a loud whistle from one of the back pews. Gary's mother was horrified. She pinched him into silence, and after church, asked: "Gary, whatever made you do such a thing?" Gary answered soberly: "I asked God to teach me to whistle... And He just then did!"

Children pray and are prayed for—today we are discussing **Practicing Prayer with Children**. Before we get started, let's think back about some of the characteristics of children who are three to five years old. (List thoughts on wipe board, 5 minutes)

First we are going to consider what prayer is, and then we will explore ways to practice praying with children.

Encountering Prayer (5 minutes)

Hallowed be thy name; help me; help him; help us; I am sorry; we are sorry; I thank you for...; we thank you for...; shhh—be still and know; ??????!!!!!!!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX; I don't know what to say; I don't know what to ask; I don't know what I think; I don't know how to be still and listen; I don't know if you are there; why...

In one large group consider:

What are the prayers we pray? How do we pray the prayers we pray? When do we pray the prayers that we pray? (List thoughts on wipe board.)

Encountering Prayer with Children (Allow 20-25 minutes for this activity)

Types of prayers—Prayers of praise; prayers of confession; prayers of thanks; prayers of supplication: prayers for help for the child, prayers of intercession: prayers for help for the family, prayers of help for the church, school, neighborhood, friends, creation, world...

How to prayers—talking prayers, listening prayers, drawing prayers, painting prayers, looking prayers, writing prayers, singing prayers, tasting prayers, feeling prayers, smelling prayers...

Set up centers on large tables. Break class into # groups. Each group will move through each center and engage in each activity.

Table #1. Prayers of Thanksgiving

This table will be covered with paper. There will be markers, crayons, colored pencils, magazines with pictures, glue, scissors, water-color paints and brushes spread all over the table. "God, we thank you for..." will be written in the center of the paper. Parents at this table will be asked to draw, paint, cut and glue, or write prayers of thanksgiving.

Instruction sheet

Think of all the things you are thankful to God for...family, friends, food, mountains, swimming, pianos, puppies, painters, poets... Write, draw, paint, cut and glue your

thank-yous to God. (The finished paper could be used as a table cloth for lunches, or kept out for a period of time to be added to, or used each night as a bedtime thank you prayer. You might even use this as a kitchen-wall mural!)

Table #2. Prayers of Intercession

This table will have an assortment of children's books that tell stories about people who are grieving, people who are sick, people and/or animals who are injured—people, animals, creation in need. For example, I will have *Tough Boris*, a story about a pirate who grieves the loss of his parrot; *How to Heal a Broken Wing*, a story about a little boy who discovers and cares for an injured bird; *Miss Tizzy*, a story about a neighborhood lady who befriends and nurtures the neighborhood children and then in turn needs befriending and nurturing from the children when she becomes ill; and *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, a story about a little boy who helps his elderly friend find her lost memory spread out on the table. There will be cookies, frosting, sprinkles, construction paper, markers, scissors, glue, lunch-size paper bags, staplers, zip lock baggies, CD player and CD; hymnals open to *When a Poor One*, and construction paper strips. Each book will have a faith review sheet with guiding conversation starters. The parents at this table will read the books, read the review sheets (they will contain guiding questions for parents to use for demonstrating to children **who** might need our prayers. The questions will read like: what does someone who is grieving need? what does someone who is injured need? what does someone who is sick need? who do you know that needs our prayers for healing, comfort, love?). Lastly they will make care-package prayers.

Instruction Sheet

Choose a book to read. Read the faith review sheet that goes with the book. Think of someone you like to pray for. Imagine that person. Take a paper bag and cut it in half. Throw the top part of the paper bag into a recycling bin. Take a construction paper strip and staple it on either side of your remaining paper bag to form a basket. Decorate your basket. Use the markers, crayons, scissors and large construction paper to make a card—sympathy, get well, I'm thinking of you, etc.... Decorate a cookie and put it in a zip lock baggie. While you are making your care-package prayer—basket, cookie, and card—sing together or listen to the hymn *When a Poor One*.

Table #3. Prayers for Supplication

This table will have two boxes with lids. One box will say, "I would like to have..." The other box will say, "I need..." There will be paper, colored pencils, markers, glue, scissors, catalogs, magazines, a hole punch, strips of yarn, paint and brushes. Parents will paint, draw, cut and glue, or write the things they want and the things they need. Pictures, stories, words, and/or collages will go into either the "Wants" box or the "Needs" box. Parents will make a wish-list book containing all the things they would like to have. They will make prayer journal for all the things they need.

Instruction Sheet

Draw, paint, cut and glue, or write all the things you want. You can write a story about something you would really like to have; paint a picture of something you would like to have; find pictures in a catalog of some things you would like to have and make a collage; or cut out words or write words of things you would like to have. Place your picture, story, collage, or words in the "Want" box. Draw, paint, cut and glue, or write about all the things you need. You can write a story about something you really need help with; paint a picture of something you need; find pictures in a catalog of things you need and make a collage; or cut out words or write words of things you need. Place your picture, story, collage, or words in the "Need" box. When your group is all through, take all the pictures, stories, collages, and words out of the "Want" box, punch holes along one side, tie together with yard to make a wish-list book. Take all the pictures, stories, collages, and words out of the "Need" box, punch holes along one side, tie together with yarn to make a prayer journal.

Table #4. Prayers of Confession

This table will be in a room by itself. Handel's Messiah will be softly playing. The table will be covered in a tablecloth and have the book *Down the Road* standing in the center. Each place at the table will have a small cafeteria tray filled with damp sand. Each tray of sand will have a small-wooden cross, a little plastic lamb, and a piece of a palm branch in it. One adult at the table will read aloud the story *Down the Road*. After the story, parents will sit quietly for a 5 minutes, contemplating his or her sorrows of the day. Next the parents will draw or write in the sand the things for which he or she would like to be forgiven.

Instruction Sheet

Pick one person to read aloud *Down the Road*. After the story, all sit quietly for a minute, contemplating the sorrows of this day. Look closely at the cross, lamb, palm branch. Listen to the music. Write, draw, or make symbols in the sand representing the things for which you would like to be forgiven, following the rhythm of the music. Look at your words, pictures, and/or symbols. Close your eyes and quietly ask God to forgive you. Erase your words, pictures, symbols. Leave this room in silence.

Table #5. Prayers of Praise

This table will have one large piece of poster board on it. There will be Psalms of Praise placed around the table; cut fragrant flowers; cut soft lambs ears; bright green magnolia leaves; stuffed song birds that sing when you squeeze them; small bowls of apple slices, raisins, orange segments, cinnamon granola; and markers, colored pencils, scissors, glue, and magazines. The piece of poster board will say, "The magnolia shines her praise to God by...The bird sings his praise to God by...The apples, raisins, oranges, and granola call their praises to God by...The lambs ear feels her praise to God by...The flower sends her praise to God by...I sing my praise to God by...You sing your praise to God by...We sing our praises to God by..."

Instruction Sheet

Choose one or two psalms of praise to read. Smell the flowers, taste the fruit and granola, feel the lambs ears, hear the song birds, see the bright green of the magnolia leaf. Consider for a moment the ways in which creation joins with us to praise God. Write, draw, or cut and paste all the ways the earth sings praise to God.

Responding Out Of (5-10 minutes)

Come back together in one large group. Stress that these are only **SOME** of the ways to practice prayer with children.

In groups of two, have parents discuss their experiences, thoughts, critiques of the different centers. Then have them brainstorm other types of prayers and ways of praying with children.

We will come back together as one large group and share our new ideas.

Closing

Read Ina Hughes' *A Prayer for Children*

This series of lessons was prepared by Union-PSCE student Kim Lee, MACE, Fall 2009.

Books referenced in this session are:

Fox, Mem. Tough Boris. Sandpiper, 1998. ISBN: 978-0152018917.

Graham, Bob. How to Heal a Broken Wing. Candlewick, 2008. ISBN: 0763639036.

Gray, Libba Moore. Miss Tizzy. Aladdin, 1998. ISBN: 978-0689818974.

Fox, Mem. Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge. Kane/Miller Book Publishers, 1989. ISBN: 978-0916291266.

Schertle, Alice. Down the Road. Sandpiper, 2000. ISBN: 978-0152024710.