

Make Prayer a Practice

Purpose:

We learn about God and His character as we spend time praying and studying the Bible. It takes discipline to grow closer to God. Children can learn that an attitude of prayer helps them know God and how He wants them to live.

Bible Material:

Prayer in the Garden (Mark 14:32-42)

Warm-up

Get-involved Activity
(10 minutes)

As children enter, ask them to write a prayer request on each poster. Younger children may draw pictures to represent the things about which they wish to pray. Encourage the children to list a prayer concern for each of the headings.

When the children finish ask them to move to **WORKOUT** to learn more about what Jesus thought about prayer and how they can get to know God through prayer. Leave the papers on the wall to use in **WORKOUT**.

Workout

Group Study
(30 minutes)

1. Pantomime the Bible Story. Assign the children parts to act out as you tell the story for this meeting. Choose children to represent Jesus, Peter, James, and John. If you have more children who want to participate, let them represent the remaining eight disciples.

Tell the volunteers: "As I tell the story, you will act out what I am saying. You do not have to say anything. When Jesus says to you, 'I need you to wait here,' you pretend that you are sleeping by lying down, yawning, and resting your head on your arms. Be

Bible Verse:

Colossians 4:2

Extra Bible Verse:

Philippians 4:6

Provide:

- Art paper
- Markers or crayons
- Masking tape

To Do:

- Tape 5 pieces of art paper in different areas around the room.
- Write one of the following headings on top of each piece of paper: *Home, School, Church, Country, World.*
- Place markers beside each sheet of art paper.

Provide:

- Name tags
- Marker

To Do:

- Ask 4 children to be actors.
- On the name tags write *Jesus, Peter, James, and John.* If you have more actors, make 8 *disciple* name tags.

very quiet so everyone else can hear the story.” Tell the story, speaking slowly and pausing so the children can follow along with you.

Prayer in the Garden

Jesus and the disciples had just eaten dinner together. They got up and went out to a mountain called the Mount of Olives where olive trees grow in the rocky soil. Jesus had been very serious that night. He asked Peter, James, and John to come with Him. He asked the other disciples to stay where they were and pray.

Peter, James, and John followed Jesus a little further. Jesus stopped them and said: “I am very sad. I need you to wait here. Please pray and keep watch for Me.” Jesus went a little farther without them. He was so sad that He fell to the rocky ground and prayed: “Father, everything is possible for You. I am so sad. Please take this pain away from Me, but do what You know is best.”

Then Jesus got up and went back to where the three disciples should have been praying and keeping watch. When He found them, they were all asleep. Jesus woke Peter and asked: “Peter, are you sleeping? Could you not watch for one hour? You need to watch and pray to stay out of trouble. I know you mean well, Peter. It’s just hard when your body is sleepy. This time, be devoted to watching and praying while you wait for Me.”

Again, Jesus left to pray by Himself. When Jesus made His way back to Peter, James, and John, they were all asleep again. They did not know what to say to Jesus the second time. Jesus said, “Please, try again to be devoted.” Jesus left and came back a third time, and they were sound asleep. This time it was too late. Jesus said, “Are you still sleeping and resting? The hour has come. Look, I have been betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

—based on Mark 14:32-42

2. Review the Bible story. Tell the children: “Let’s see what you learned from the story. What did Jesus want His disciples to do? (*pray*) What did the men do instead of praying? (*sleep*) Why do you think it was so important to Jesus that the men pray? Who remembers what things Jesus prayed?” (*He told God He felt sad, asked God to get rid of something painful, told God the reason He was asking was because He knows God can do everything, told God He knew God would know what is best.*)

Ask the children: “Have you ever been sick and had to get a shot? Did you feel better afterwards? Sometimes things have to hurt for a time before God makes everything really good. That is what happened to Jesus. If Jesus prayed and told God His feelings, do you think it is OK for you to tell God how you feel? (*Yes, you are to imitate Him.*) You can pray about the same kind of things that Jesus prayed about. What kinds of things do you

think God wants to hear from you?” (*How you feel about things, what causes you pain, that you know He knows what is best for you, that you know He can do anything.*)

Apply this information about prayer to the children’s everyday lives by asking: “Can you tell God how you feel about your day? (*Yes*) Can you ask God to take away pain? (*Yes*) You can tell God how you feel about things. You can ask God to take away pain. God really does know better than you do what is best for you. You can trust God enough to pray, ‘God do it Your way and not mine.’ ”

3. Perform a skit. Direct the children’s attention to the coaches. Let the coaches begin the skit.

Coach: _____ (*other coach’s name*), my friend, I have been meaning to tell you this verse.

Friend: Oh, really. What is it?

Coach: Well, it’s James 4:8

Friend: What does it say?

Coach: It says, (*read aloud James 4:8 from a Bible.*)

Friend: Oh, yeah? I have been wanting to do that. (*Quickly, go lean against the wall that is closest to your worship center.*)

Coach: _____, what are you doing?

Friend: I am getting as close to the worship center as I can so I can be close to God.

Coach: _____, God is not just in the worship center. He is everywhere. You don’t have to lean against the wall to draw close to God.

Friend: Oh, OK. (*Walks away from the wall and quickly sits down at a table and begins drawing with crayons.*)

Coach: (*As the friend walks away from the wall, go the opposite direction so as not to see him. Get a chair so you can sit down at the table to explain the verse to him.*) Here let me explain this verse to you. (*Flabbergasted*) Now what are you doing?

Friend: I am drawing. You said I could draw near to God.

Coach: No, that is not what the verse means. It is not drawing pictures that brings you close to God.

Friend: Well, I wish you would make up your mind.

Coach: Let me explain it. We cannot see God like we can see each other, right?

Friend: Right (*Nods in understanding as Coach talks.*)

Coach: If I want to be close to you, I can just pull up a chair and we can be close. We can talk and that will make us feel close to each other. But we cannot see God. We get close to God by praying and learning about the Bible. That is how we get close to God.

Friend: So I read my Bible to get close to God?

Coach: Yes, that’s one way.

Friend: And I pray.

Provide:

- Paper
- Crayons
- Markers
- Table
- 2 chairs
- 2 copies of the script

To Do:

- Put the paper and markers on the table. Put 1 chair at the table and the other chair off to the side.
- Enlist 2 coaches to perform the skit. Give each a copy of the script.
- Ask 1 coach to dress normally and 1 to dress like he does not know the first thing about style. Make sure his clothes do not match in color. Maybe wear a crooked tie and tennis shoes.

Coach: Exactly!

Friend: And when I do that, God comes close to me, too.

Coach: Right again. When I spend time with people, I grow closer to them. When I spend time with God in prayer and Bible study, I grow closer to Him.

Friend: Well, why didn't you tell me that in the first place.

Coach: Oh, I thought I had. (*Read aloud James 4:8 from a Bible.*)

Thank the coaches for their performance. Ask: "What does it mean to be near to God? What are ways you can get close to God?" Encourage the kids to use prayer and Bible study to get to know God better.

4. Discover the attitude of prayer. Distribute the following story strips to four volunteers. Explain: "Part of the joy of having Jesus with you everywhere you go is to realize you can talk to Him wherever you are, any time of day. You have four case studies about children who knew they could pray wherever they were and whenever they wanted. Listen and see what they did."

At school one day, Sarah, a second grader, knew she did something wrong. While she was in her classroom, she prayed silently, asking God to forgive her. She knew God would forgive her because she learned that from the Bible.

Cody, a fourth grader, prayed silently while sitting at his desk to become a Christian. God heard him right there in school.

Alison was getting ready for bed when she told her mother she wanted to become a Christian. Her mother prayed with her and Alison became a Christian.

Alicia, a fifth grader, has a little brother who got hurt at camp. She prayed that God would help him. The next day she had great news. God helped her brother and the doctors. Her little brother got three stitches and was back having fun at camp.

Conclude: "Where were these children when they prayed? When did they pray? What did they tell or ask God? Where can you pray? What can you tell or ask God?"

5. Pray. Ask the children to form five groups. Assign a coach to each group. Send each group to stand in front of a different piece of art paper that you used in WARM-UP.

Ask the children to pray together in small groups. Encourage the coaches to lead their groups in a prayer for some of the requests the children have written. The coaches may want to ask volunteers to pray sentence prayers.

To Do:

- Make photocopies of the case studies.

Provide:

- A whistle

Allow each group to pray for two or three minutes at the first station. Then quietly blow the whistle. Ask each group to move to the station to their right. Allow for a few minutes of prayer. Continue until each group has prayed at each station.

6. Act out symbols to remember the verse. Read the poster with the children. Tell them: “You are going to do three things to help you remember this verse. Watch my motions and do them with me as I say the verse. Read the first phrase (*Kneel with hands folded in prayer.*). Read the second phrase (*Cup hand over eyes as if looking far off.*). Read the third phrase (*Raise hands as a sign of praise or thanks.*). *Colossians 4:2*”

Ask: “What will happen when you pray, watch, and thank God? (*You will see that God listens and answers prayer.*) You learn about God and His character as you spend time praying and studying the Bible. It takes devotion to prayer and learning the Bible to grow closer to God.”

7. Prepare for stretching. Direct your kids to move to their STRETCHING groups. Encourage them to begin work immediately.

Stretching

Activity Page Time
(20 minutes)

Answers for the activity pages are on the last page of this meeting. You may choose to provide photocopies of this page to the STRETCHING coaches.

The Tournament

Games and Activities
(20 Minutes)

Blow the whistle to begin THE TOURNAMENT time. Choose from the following games and activities.

Balance Box

Form two equal teams. Each team lines up single file at the starting line. Hand the first player on each team the detergent size box. On your signal the player with the box holds the box on the palm of one hand and races to the finish line, crosses over the line, and returns to the starting line and her team. She hands the box to the next player, who repeats the action. Continue until every player has a chance to run.

When everyone finishes the first round, give the first players

Provide:

- Poster board
- Markers
- Tape or tacks

To Do:

- On a poster write the words and reference of Colossians 4:2.

Provide:

- A whistle

Provide:

- 3 boxes for every team: 1 the size of a jewelry box, 1 the size of a brick, and 1 the size of a detergent box
- Masking tape

To Do:

- Use the masking tape to mark two lines at opposite ends of the playing area.

two boxes: the detergent size box and the brick size box. She carries both boxes stacked one on top of the other in the same hand, runs to the finish line and back, handing the second player in line the two boxes. Continue until every player has carried two boxes on the palm of his hand.

For the third round, stack a jewelry box on top of the other two boxes.

If a player drops one or more of the boxes, she picks up the boxes and continues from that spot.

For younger children, use three smaller boxes. For older children, place obstacles around the playing area. Ask players to maneuver around the objects while carrying the boxes.

Say: “Just as you have used your hands in this game use your hands to remember the memory verse one more time.” Read the verse poster with the children. Read the first phrase (*Kneel with hands folded in prayer.*). Read the second phrase (*Cup hand over eyes as if looking far off.*). Read the third phrase (*Raise hands as a sign of praise or thanks.*). *Colossians 4:2*

Partner Tag

Group children in pairs. Ask pairs to stand side-by-side, hook arms at the elbow, and hold out their outside arms.

Choose two players to be the runner and the chaser. On your signal, the chaser begins chasing the runner. The runner can get away from the chaser by hooking onto a pair. He does this by hooking arms with the outstretched arm of any player. When he hooks onto a player, the player’s partner must leave the pair and becomes the runner. Pairs consist of two hooked players. When the runner joins a pair, the original partner must leave and becomes the runner.

When the chaser catches the runner, they change roles. The new chaser must count to five before chasing the new runner.

Play until the children get tired. Then ask the children to stay with their partners. Ask each child to say a brief silent prayer for her partner.

Bombardment

Play a form of Dodge Ball. Group the players in two teams. Ask the teams to stand on opposite sides of the playing area.

Give a player on Team A the ball. The player throws the ball into Team B’s area. If he does not hit a player before the ball bounces, a player on Team B has a chance to throw the ball. If a player on Team A hits a member of Team B, that player joins Team A. Once he joins Team A, he tries to catch the ball as it is thrown. If he catches a ball before it bounces, he can rejoin Team B.

Players try to rebuild their team by throwing the ball to their teammates on the other side. Players try to keep their opponent’s team small by intercepting balls that are thrown.

Provide:

- Playground ball
- Masking tape

To Do:

- Use the masking tape to divide the playing area in half.

Say: “It doesn’t matter where you are when you pray. God hears you pray when you are with a group or when you are by yourself. He hears you pray when you are at school, at home, at church, or while you are playing a game. Bow your head and thank God for hearing your prayers.”

Cool Down

Refreshment and Conclusion
(10 minutes)

Tell the children: “The story you heard earlier took place after Jesus and the disciples had what we call The Last Supper. This was Jesus’ last meal before He died. The disciples probably had fruit, bread, and cheese. Let’s eat a meal like theirs.”

Encourage the children to get to know God by praying this week.

Provide:

- Grape juice
- Pita bread
- Cheese
- Dried apricots or fresh figs
- Cups
- Plates

To Do:

- Pour the juice in cups and set aside.

