LESSON 1: WHY PRAY?

AIM: To show that God has chosen the simple act of speaking words as the highest form of communication with Him. And God’s power is released when we actually get down to business and talk to Him.

MEMORY VERSE: Pray at all times (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

OPENING IDEA: Get the children’s attention by asking them what they think prayer is. Their suggestions could be written on an overhead transparency or paper. The important point in this is to ensure that the children understand that prayer is just talking, as we would to a friend, about everything that concerns our lives.

TEACHING SESSION:
Now that we know what prayer is, we need also to know what prayer is NOT.

Prayer is not:
- twisting God’s arm to make Him do something He really doesn’t want to do.
- blackmailing God by promising to do something if He will give us what we want.
- using big words or religious sayings to impress God (or others).
- a painful duty like eating Brussels sprouts, or washing dishes or doing homework just because you have been told to do so.

But prayer is…… (repeat the children’s suggestions written on OHT or paper earlier).

Now ask the children to close their eyes and imagine a most terrifying experience like:
- diving into a river and finding it filled with man-eating crocodiles, or
- paddling down the river in a canoe and suddenly finding that you are heading for a huge waterfall, or
- flying overseas in a plane when the pilot announces that the plane has run out of fuel.

If time permits, ask for one or two suggestions from the children. Now ask them what they would do in such a life and death situation. The Christian’s immediate response would be to PRAY—loud and strong—immediately calling on God for help. We wouldn’t think, “I’ll wait until Sunday and ask God to help then”, or “I’ll ask Mum or Dad to pray for me”; we would call out to God for immediate help.
TEACHING SESSION (cont):
The Bible gives us guidelines for when we should pray:

- In the morning (Mark 1:35)
- At night (Luke 6:12)
- Before making decisions (James 1:5)
- When we are very busy (Luke 5:15)
- When we are worried (Psalm 18:6)
- In times of trouble (Psalm 34:17)
- When concerned for others (Matthew 5:44)
- In church (Psalm 35:18)
- When tempted (Luke 22:40)
- When in pain (James 5:15)
- At the moment of death (Luke 23:46)
- When we have sinned (Psalm 32:5)
- When afraid (Psalm 34:4)
- Any time (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

So, why should we pray? Because prayer is our lifeline to God.

PRESENTATION SUGGESTION:
Make a poster (see page 3). Cut some pictures of children from magazines and glue them in the centre. Draw 14 clocks and arrows from centre to clocks. Write the Bible guidelines on strips of paper. As you mention each time for prayer, attach a strip to a clock. The children could help to read the verses and attach them to the clocks.
WHEN SHOULD I PRAY?

- Anytime
- In the morning
- At night
- When very busy
- When worried
- In times of trouble
- When concerned for others
- In church
- When in pain
- When we have sinned
- At death
- When afraid
- When in pain
- When tempted
- Before making decisions
- When worried
To find the hidden message, start at the arrow and go clockwise around the clock twice. Write every other letter on the blanks below.

E ____________, __________

_________ ____________, __________

_________ ____________, __________

_________, __________

_________. Psalm 55:17
WHAT YOU WILL NEED:
Bible, five medium-sized cardboard boxes, white paper, scissors, tape, markers.

WHAT TO DO:
Ask children what’s the best way to learn something. Lead children to suggest that
showing or demonstrating how to do something is the best way to learn. Tell children
that Jesus wanted us to learn how to pray, so he showed us how. Ask for a volunteer
to read aloud Matthew 6:9-13. Then ask:

• Why do you think Jesus taught us to pray?
• Why is it good to model our prayers after the way Jesus prayed?

Explain that Jesus’ prayer is almost like a love letter to God. He
begins with a greeting (“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your
name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in
heaven”). Next Jesus gives the body of the prayer, which
includes needs and repentance (“Give us this day our daily
bread. Forgive us out debts, as we also have forgiven our
debtors”). Jesus also prays for God’s strength (“And lead us
not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”). Tell the children
that we often say a closing (praise) to God as well (“For yours is
the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.”)

Have children form five groups. Hand each group a box. Direct
children to cover their box with white paper, then have one group
write the word ‘Greetings’ on its box, another group write the word
‘Needs’, another group the word ‘Forgiveness’, another group
the word ‘Strength’, and the last group the word ‘Closing’.

Have group members copy on the boxes the corresponding words
from the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, then decorate the boxes
(eg Greeting: Our Father in heaven..., Needs: Give us this day...)

Stack the boxes in order as a volunteer reads aloud the above
passage of Scripture.

Keep the boxes stacked for the next few weeks
to guide children
in saying their own prayers to God.