

# 2

# Pray

LUKE 5:1-6:16; PSALM 136:1-6, 25-26



## GOAL

After hearing how Jesus incorporated prayer in his life, children experience various forms of prayer they can use at home to draw near to God.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Lord, thank you for desiring a relationship with your creation. May I hold tightly to this truth today. Amen.

## THIS SESSION

There is much overlap among the various spiritual disciplines, and prayer is no exception! In fact, prayer is woven into most spiritual practices because it is an essential component of time with God. Drawing closer to God doesn't just happen with an occasional conversation. It requires consistent conversation, expressing all sorts of feelings, and listening as well. Prayer is the foundation of a deepening relationship with God.

## THE BIBLE STORY

Scripture is full of prayers: psalms, an entire book of lament, Jesus' prayers, and many other examples of individuals and communities praying. The Gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus spent the night praying on a mountainside before selecting his twelve disciples. We are not told what he specifically prayed, but throughout his ministry, Jesus quoted the Psalms, often called the *prayerbook* of the Bible. Children will hear part of Psalm 136, a prayer of thanksgiving and God's love.

## CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Many young children participate in established prayer routines such as table grace before a meal, bedtime prayers, or prayers woven throughout a church worship service. Learning that Jesus prayed before an important decision models for children that prayer can happen anytime outside the routines already set for them. Flexing their verbal communication muscles, children will create their own psalm to communicate with God.

## SESSION PREPARATION

- "Post Office" (p. 18): Create a mailbox by decorating a cardboard box and cutting a slot in the top.  
  
Depending on the options you choose:
  - "Prayer Bead Bracelet" (p. 19): Obtain purple, blue, yellow, orange, and red pony beads and pipe cleaners. Use the supplies to make a prayer bracelet as a demonstration. Cut apart cards from copies of Resource Page 3. Highlight the colors on each card with the corresponding crayon.
  - "Breath Prayers" (p. 20): Obtain a Hoberman sphere, also known as an expandable ball, or use the YouTube video "Hoberman Sphere Breathing" ([bit.ly/FMBreathing](https://bit.ly/FMBreathing), 0:40).



## GETTING STARTED

- Paper
- Envelopes
- Markers, crayons, and colored pencils
- Stickers
- Prepared cardboard mailbox
- Reusable cloth bag(s)

### POST OFFICE

A D AM

Prayer is a form of communication. It provides us an opportunity to voice our thoughts, joys, and concerns. Young children (even if preliterate) can engage in this concept by writing letters and/or sending drawings to their friends.

Invite children to create letters, place them in an envelope, and deliver them to the mailbox. Children can use the reusable bag as a mailbag to collect, sort, and deliver the mail. After some time playing, set aside supplies for “Prayer Mail” (see below).

### DRAWING NEAR TO GOD

AM

The opening ritual in this unit includes a responsive litany with one line changing to correspond to the spiritual discipline in each session. There are motions to help children learn their responses. The children’s response is printed in the bold text and remains the same throughout this unit.

Draw near to God

**and God** (*raise both arms to the sky*)

**will draw near to us.** (*bring hands toward heart, crossing them over your heart*)

When we pray, we are changed by being with God.

**Let us** (*extend arms forward, palms facing upward*)

**keep company** (*bend elbows and bring together hands in prayer*)

**with Jesus.** (*sign “Jesus” with hands using right middle finger to touch the middle of left palm and repeat with left middle finger to touch the middle of right palm*)



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Supplies from “Post Office” (above)

### PRAYER MAIL

A C

Talk together about how prayer is a form of communication. Invite the children to share what they know about prayer as well as any connections they might make between praying and sending a letter. Ask the children to think of a message they want to share with God. Using the post office supplies, invite the children to create their own prayer letter by drawing pictures and/or writing words. Allow time for children to share their prayer mail with the group.



## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

### MOUNTAINSIDE STORYTIME

C D

Tell the children that many people in the Bible prayed, including Jesus. Explain that, in today's Bible story, Jesus went to a mountainside to pray. Ask the children to imagine they're on a mountainside. Wonder what they see, hear, smell, and feel. Invite the children to set up a tent by draping a bedsheet over a table. Read the adapted Bible story from verses from Luke 5:1–6:16 on Resource Page 1. Wonder together what Jesus might have said in his prayer.

- Resource Page 1
- Bedsheet

### BUILDING PRAYER ROCK CAIRNS

D C QC

Remind the children that Jesus prayed the night before he had an important decision to make. Explain that they can pray anytime they want to communicate something to God. Show photos of rock cairns on Resource Page 2. Ask the children if they would know what these mean if they saw them on a mountain. Describe how rock cairns are built for hikers to let them know they have not wandered off the path. Share that, sometimes, people also stack rocks to show that something special or important happened in that spot.

Work together to build a prayer cairn. Have the children either share something they would want to tell God or give an example of what someone could share with God. After each idea, affirm that they can talk to God about that and invite a child to add a brick/block to the cairn. Close with a short prayer, expressing gratitude that we can always go to God in prayer about anything and anywhere.

- Wooden building blocks or large plastic building bricks
- Resource Page 2



The word *cairn* derives from a Gaelic term meaning “heap of stones.” Stacked rock sculptures are found across the globe and throughout many time periods. Cairns can function differently in various cultures. In addition to navigational purposes, cairns can be burial site markers or used in meditative practices.



## FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

### PRAYER BEAD BRACELET

A QC

Explain to the children that there are many types of prayers they can try. Show them your prayer bead bracelet and explain that it is a tool to help pray. Share how the colors on your bracelet represent some different types of prayers. Hand out prepared cards from copies of Resource Page 3. Point to each bead on your bracelet and invite the children to share ideas of what they could pray, such as “God is great!” for purple, or “I’m sorry I was mean to my sister” for blue, and so forth. Invite the children to make their own prayer bead bracelet by placing beads on a pipe cleaner. The order of the beads does not matter.

- Prepared cards from copies of Resource Page 3
- Prepared prayer bead bracelet
- Purple, blue, yellow, orange, and red pony beads
- Pipe cleaners

- 
- Resource Page 1
  - Bible
  - Newsprint
  - Marker

## PSALM WRITING

C

Show the children the Bible and open it to where the book of Psalms is located. Share with the children how the book of Psalms is like a hymn book, a collection of songs, and a prayer book with prayers of thanksgiving, praise, and help. Explain how the Psalms express a variety of feelings: joy, anger, sadness. Ask the children to listen for what feelings are expressed in the psalm you are going to read. Read the adapted verses from Psalm 136:1–6, 25–26 on Resource Page 1. Discuss what feelings are expressed. Read the psalm again, inviting the children to shout, “Thank you, God!” and “God always loves! Your love will never stop!” as prompted.

Create a group psalm together. On top of the newsprint, write “Thank you, God, for . . .” Invite children to share ideas on how to complete the sentence and write down their responses. Read the group psalm together, prompting the children to say “Thank you, God” at the beginning of each sentence with the children’s suggestions and then to respond “God always loves! Your love will never stop!” at the end.



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

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- Smartphone
  - Copies of Resource Page 4
  - Scissors
  - Glue sticks

## PRAYER EMOJI TEXTS

C A

Hold up a smartphone and ask the children if they have ever sent a text message. Explain that praying can be like sending a text message to God. Provide copies of Resource Page 4, scissors, and glue sticks. Have the children think of a text message they want to send to God using the emoji icons. Invite the children to cut and glue emoji icons on their phone screen. Invite the children to share their emoji text message to God with the group. Send children home with extra copies of Resource Page 4 so that they can write more prayer emoji texts throughout the week.

- 
- Internet-connected device
  - Hoberman sphere, also known as an expandable ball (optional)

## BREATH PRAYERS

AM QC T

Introduce children to breathing with a Hoberman sphere. Show the YouTube video “Hoberman Sphere Breathing” ([bit.ly/FMBreathing](https://bit.ly/FMBreathing), 0:40). Invite the children to sit cross legged and imagine they are holding a Hoberman sphere in front of their body. Have them mimic the arm motions of the person in the video as you play it again. As they inhale, arms move apart. When exhaling, arms move closer together. If you have a sphere or expandable ball, have the children take turns trying it with their breathing.

After the video, explain to the children that prayers can be long or short. Share how breath prayers are short prayers that can be repeated over and over as they breathe. Lead the children in some breath prayers as they continue to imagine they are holding a Hoberman sphere as they breathe. Brainstorm together other breath prayers (they do not need to be based on a specific Bible verse) and practice praying those. Use some of the following examples:

- Speak, Lord (*inhale*), I’m listening (*exhale*). (based on 1 Samuel 3:9)
- Protect me, God (*inhale*), make me brave (*exhale*). (based on Psalm 46)
- Because I breathe (*inhale*), I will praise (*exhale*). (based on Psalm 150:6)
- Jesus, I’m happy (*inhale*), I’m happy with you (*exhale*). (based on Philippians 4:4)

## PLUSH TOY BREATH PRAYER



This activity offers a contemporary connection to praying the Psalms. Remind the children that psalms were songs that often acted as prayers. Share that music can be a form of prayer. Have children lie on their back and place a plush toy on their chest. Practice taking deep breaths together so the children notice how the plush toys move as they inhale and exhale.

Invite the children to take deep breaths on their own as they listen to music. Show the YouTube video “Jonny Diaz - ‘Breathe’ (Official Lyric Video)” ([bit.ly/FMBreathe](https://bit.ly/FMBreathe), 3:33), beginning at the 1:57 mark.

After the song, talk together about the experience using the following questions:

- What did you like about this experience or not like about it?
- How does your body feel?
- How could you do this exercise at home?
  - What toy at home could you use?
  - Who in your home do you want to teach this type of prayer?
  - When could you do this type of prayer?

- 
- Plush toys
  - Internet-connected device



This activity pairs well with the previous one and children can easily practice both at home. Feel free to introduce variations of these activities, such as replacing the music in this exercise with a verbal breath prayer from the previous exercise.



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### COME AND SEE



Introduce the song you will sing to close each session of this unit. It is sung to the tune of “London Bridge Is Falling Down.” Teach the chorus by singing one line at a time. Then have the children sing the chorus with you. Teach the verse of the song in the same way. Invite the children to sing the chorus and the verse using rhythm instruments, if you choose.

Chorus:

Jesus says to come and see, come and see, come and see.

Jesus wants to be with me.

I love Jesus!

Verse:

Praying draws us near to God, near to God, near to God.

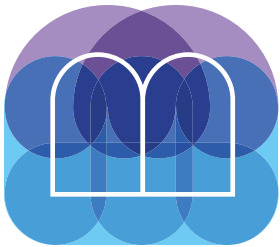
Practice praying as a way

to be near God.

- 
- Rhythm instruments (optional)



The chorus of the song is repeated in each session of this unit. The verse changes to reflect the spiritual practice highlighted in that session.



## BIBLE STORY

### BASED ON VERSES FROM LUKE 5:1–6:16

Wherever Jesus went, happy people called out, “Jesus! Come here!” They wanted to talk and spend time with him. “Woow!” others would gasp around him as Jesus miraculously made the painful skin disease on a man disappear. “Amazing!” people shouted as Jesus cured the man born with broken legs. “Praise God!” others loudly exclaimed as Jesus healed the man with the withered hand. But there were also unhappy people around Jesus who murmured, “No! Do not praise God!” They seemed to always want to argue with Jesus. “You should stop! Why are you breaking God’s laws? Who do you think you are?!”

To get away from all the people and noise, Jesus went to a mountain. Finally, Jesus had a quiet place to pray. He began praying and kept on praying and praying. Jesus prayed all night! When the sun came up, he returned to the people. There were many waiting for him. Out of all those people, Jesus chose twelve of them to be part of a special team to be his disciples, or students. The disciples were: Simon (whom Jesus named Peter), Simon’s brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who would one day betray Jesus. The disciples’ job was to stick close to Jesus and learn what he said and did.

After Jesus made his important decision about choosing disciples, he continued to teach and heal people. And throughout it all, he continued to pray—sometimes with people and sometimes alone.

### BASED ON PSALM 136

**Thank you, God**—for being good!  
**God always loves! Your love will never stop!**  
**Thank you, God!** You’re the God of all gods—  
**God always loves! Your love will never stop!**  
**Thank you, God!** You’re the Lord of all Lords.  
**God always loves! Your love will never stop!**  
**Thank you, God**—for being the only one who makes great wonders.  
**God always loves! Your love will never stop!**  
**Thank you, God**—for making the skies with skill—  
**God always loves! Your love will never stop!**  
**Thank you, God**—for shaping the earth on the water—  
**God always loves! Your love will never stop!**  
**Thank you, God**—for providing food for all living things—  
**God always loves! Your love will never stop!**  
**Thank you, God!** You’re the God of heaven—  
**God always loves! Your love will never stop!**







## Prayer Bead Bracelet

Color	Represents	Memory device
Purple	Praising God	purple = praise
Blue	Saying sorry	blue = sadness
Yellow	Being joyful	yellow = happy face or sun
Orange	Giving thanks	orange = Thanksgiving color
Red	Asking for help	red = first-aid kit or fire truck

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# Prayer Emoji Texts

