

Children's Lessons for Life Groups

All-In-One lessons for kids ages 4-12

from

All-In-One Sunday School, Volumes 2 & 3

Lesson 14



Prayer Power

14

LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ God hears and answers our prayers.

OBJECTIVES

Kids or families will

- ✓ play a listening game,
- ✓ learn that God answered prayers for Peter's release,
- ✓ experience different ways to pray, and
- ✓ make a commitment to pray for each other.

YOU'LL NEED

- wrapped treats such as Hershey's Kisses or sugarless gum*
- a photocopy of the "Peter's Escape" Bible story (pp. 67-68)
- Bibles
- modeling clay
- scissors
- markers
- photocopies of the "Praying Hands" handout (p. 71)

* Always check for food allergies before serving snacks.

Teacher Tip

This lesson works well with an intergenerational class. You may wish to invite whole families to join you for this session.



BIBLE BASIS

Acts 12:1-18

When King Herod had Peter arrested and thrown in prison, the situation looked grave indeed. Stephen's stoning had signaled the beginning of intense persecution in Jerusalem, causing Christians to flee and scatter across the Roman world. The Jerusalem Church was forced to meet covertly. Imagine the Church's horror when Herod arrested and executed the Apostle James, who was one of the two sons of Zebedee and one of Jesus' three closest companions. This brutality against Christians pleased the Jewish people, so Herod decided to boost his popularity by giving the same treatment to Peter. But God had other plans. In the dark of night, as earnest,

all-in-one
SUNDAY
SCHOOL

frightened Christians prayed for God to deliver Peter from Herod's clutches, God sent an angel who freed Peter from his chains and led him past 16 sleeping guards and through the prison gate, which opened by itself. Peter himself could hardly believe what had happened—nor could the astonished prayer warriors who at first denied him entrance to the home where they were praying.

We are often surprised when God intervenes on our behalf. From our measly human perspective, the problems we face loom impossibly large; God seems quite distant, if not totally unreachable. Stories like Peter's deliverance from prison help correct our misapprehensions. God is GRRRRREAT! And he loves us. And he wants only the very best for us. Dare to pray boldly. Dare to believe that God, in his immeasurable power and love, can—and will—do unimaginably wonderful things to bring about his kingdom on earth.

Luke 11:1-4, 9-12

In these passages, Jesus depicts God as a caring Father who loves to do good things for his children. God is neither selfish, stingy, nor begrudging—he *wants* us to come to him with our needs. And he *wants* us to keep asking, to be as persistent as a child. Society teaches us to be self-sufficient. God teaches us to be lovingly dependent.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

No one has this business of prayer completely figured out, especially children. Most kids begin with rote prayers at meals and bedtime. Depending on denominational traditions, kids may or may not learn to pray extemporaneously until they're quite a bit older. They may be intimidated by prayers full of *thees*, *thous*, and other unfamiliar religious vocabulary. As teachers, it's important for us to model simple prayers, not only so kids can understand them, but also because speaking to God in everyday language makes God seem more real, more present, and more accessible. There's nothing more heartwarming than a child's unaffected prayer. This is what we should encourage.

We want kids to learn that God is always happy to listen to them and that God wants our prayers to be a natural part of our daily lives. Use this lesson to teach kids that there are many different ways to experience meaningful prayer.

ATTENTION GRABBER

All Ears

As kids arrive, have them help you arrange chairs in a circle. If space is limited, make the circle two rows deep.

Say: **We're going to start off today with a really fun game called All Ears. I'm going to ask several questions. As soon as you think you know the answer, pop up. If you pop up before I finish the question, you'll have to finish the question correctly before you can give me an answer. If the first person to pop up answers incorrectly, the second person will get a chance, and so on. The first person to answer the question correctly will get a treat. Hold up a bag of treats. If no one answers correctly, I get to keep all the treats! Ready to pop up? Here we go.**

Read the following questions clearly and at a deliberate pace.

◆ **What is the 10th letter of the alphabet?** (J)

◆ **How many dwarfs became friends of Snow White?**

(Seven)

◆ **When is Valentine's Day?** (February 14)

◆ **Who was the first president of the United States?**

(George Washington)

◆ **How many letters are in the word *scribble*?** (Eight)

◆ **What's the opposite of upside down?** (Right side up)

◆ **How many bears lived in the house Goldilocks visited?**

(Three)

◆ **Whose red slippers helped her return from Oz?**

(Dorothy's)

◆ **What's the sixth word of the "Star-Spangled Banner"?**

(By)

Say: **I think everyone will know the answer to this last question, so I'd like you all to pop up and say it together.**

◆ **Who loves you so much that he died for you and wants you to live in heaven with him forever?** (Jesus!)

Toss treats to all parts of the room so everyone has at least one.

Then say: **Let's set up a scale of 1 to 10. One means that you weren't listening at all. Ten means that you were all ears.**

◆ **How would you rate how well you were listening?** Let several kids reply. Most will name numbers near the top of the scale.

◆ **What made you listen so well?** (I wanted to be first; I wanted to win a treat.)

◆ **How well do you listen when Mom says to clean your room?** (I'd give myself a 2 or 3.)

◆ **How well do you listen when you're starving and some-**

Teacher Tip

Depending on the ages of your students, you may want to add easier or harder questions. Since young children are easily discouraged, you'll want to keep the majority of the questions on their level. You might also give young children the benefit of the doubt if they're nearly as fast as someone who's already answered a question correctly.



one calls out, "Dinner is ready"? (A 9 or 10.)

Say: Sometimes we listen well, and sometimes we don't. It usually depends on whether we think we'll hear something we want to hear. But there's someone who always listens well. Someone who never misses a word we say. Someone who listens just because he loves us.

Today we're going to learn that ★ God hears and answers our prayers. Not because he gets a treat. Not because we're going to do him a big favor. Not because we're good at praying and we always go to church. Nope—God *loves* us, and that's why he hears and answers our prayers. Many times, God answers our prayers in ways we hadn't dreamed of. That's exactly what happens in the Bible story we're going to hear today.

BIBLE STUDY

Peter's Escape (Acts 12:1-18)

Photocopy the story "Peter's Escape" and cut apart the verses. Have kids form pairs or trios, and have the groups all sit together in one large circle. Distribute the 20 verses of the Bible story among the pairs or trios as evenly as possible. Make sure you keep the verses in order as you distribute them around the circle.

Have kids decide which person in each group will read the verse as the other one or two people lead the actions. Encourage kids to read their sections with a lively rap beat.

Allow a couple of minutes for kids to prepare their sections; then give the cue to begin the story.

It's a good idea to go through the story twice to let kids polish their performances a bit and to make sure they understand the plot of this exciting story. After the second time through, collect the verses and have kids give themselves a round of applause.

Ask:

◆ **Why were Peter's friends surprised when he came to the door?** (It seemed impossible for him to escape from prison; they never thought about God sending an angel to set Peter free.)

◆ **Tell about a time an answer to prayer really surprised you.** Let several kids share their experiences. You may want to "prime the pump" by sharing an answer to prayer you've received.

After kids have shared, say: **As you can see, ★ God hears and answers our prayers today just as he did long ago. Let's look at what Jesus said about prayer; then let's discover some special ways we can pray.**

Teacher Tip

If you have adults in your class, encourage them to share their life-changing answers to prayer. This is a perfect time for generations to interact and learn from each other.



PETER'S ESCAPE

(based on Acts 12:1-18)

Mean King Herod was on Peter's tail
(*make a mean face, hands on hips*)
And had him locked up tight in jail.
(*Cross arms over chest.*)

2
Sixteen soldiers—that's eight plus eight
(*flash eight fingers twice*)—
Stood guard in the cell and around the
gate. (*Stand at attention.*)

3
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.
(*Hold up fingers as you count.*)
Peter's friends prayed to God in heaven.
(*Fold hands and look up.*)

4
Seven, six, five, four, three, and two.
(*Count backward on fingers.*)
I see an angel here (*clap*)—don't you?
(*Shield eyes; then clap.*)

5
The angel woke Peter and said, "Time to
hurry. (*Pretend to shake someone.*)
I'll help you escape King Herod's fury."
(*Make a beckoning motion.*)

6
Peter's chains fell off with a clink, clank,
DWING! (*Look at open hands.*)
Said the angel, "Get dressed—that's the
next thing." (*Hold up a make-believe
shirt.*)

7
So Peter got dressed in his coat and shoes
(*pretend to put on shoes*)
While those big, scary guards just took a
little snooze. (*Tilt head to the side and
snore.*)

8
Peter followed the angel right out of the
cell (*walk in place*)
And thought, "Is this a dream? I really can't
tell." (*Point to head; then shrug.*)

9
Then the gate swung open with a big old
CREAK (*swing arm like a gate opening*),
And none of the guards even took a peek.
(*Snore.*)

10
Peter and the angel walked straight ahead
(*walk in place*)
While most of the town was asleep in bed.
(*Rest cheek on folded hands.*)

11
They walked in the light of the moon that
shone (*walk in place*),
Then suddenly Peter was all alone.
(*Look around, surprised.*)

12
He scratched his head, and he looked
around (*scratch head*)
And said, "Here I am in the middle of
town." (*Put hands on hips and look
around.*)

13
"An amazing thing just happened to me.
(*Put hands to cheeks.*)
The Lord sent an angel to set me free!"
(*Spread open arms.*)

14
Peter knew that all his friends were praying
(*fold hands*),
So he went right over to where they were
staying. (*Walk in place.*)

15
He pounded on the door with a knock,
knock, knock (*pretend to knock*),
And when Rhoda answered, she had quite
a shock. (*Gasp.*)

16
For she knew very well it was Peter's voice
(*put hand to ear*),
So she ran and told the others, "It's Peter—
rejoice!" (*Run in place and point.*)

17
Peter waited outside impatiently
(*cross arms and tap foot*)
'Til the others came running to the door
to see. (*Run in place.*)

18
They pushed the front door open wide
(*pretend to open a door*),
And there was Peter, standing outside.
(*Smile and wave.*)

19
"Shh!" Peter said. "Let me tell my tale."
(*Bring finger to lips.*)
An angel just set me free from jail."
(*Pretend to pull doors open.*)

20
That's what happens when people pray.
(*Fold hands.*)
So pray for the people you love each day!
(*Cross hands over heart.*)

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LIFE APPLICATION

Ways to Pray

Have kids remain in the pairs or trios they formed for the Bible story. Give each group a Bible.

Say: **The Bible tells us that Jesus often went away by himself to pray. Once when he returned from praying, the disciples asked him to teach them something. You can discover their request and Jesus' answer in Luke 11:1-4. Choose a reader to read that passage aloud for your group.**

Give groups a couple of minutes to find and read Luke 11:1-4. Then ask:

◆ **Why do you think the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray?** (Because they saw that prayer was important to Jesus; because Jesus prayed a lot; because there's a lot to learn about prayer.)

◆ **Why is it important to praise God when we pray?** (It reminds us of all God has done for us; it helps us think about God instead of just thinking about what we want.)

◆ **What things did Jesus ask for?** (Food; forgiveness of sins; help in avoiding temptation.)

Say: **Jesus encouraged his followers to ask God for what they needed. Look a little further to verses 9 through 12.**

Have a volunteer read that passage to the class. Then ask:

Say: ★ **God hears and answers our prayers because he loves us and he loves to do good things for us. There are many, many ways to pray. Jesus gave this prayer as an example. Let's experience this prayer a different way right now. In just a moment I'll ask you to close your eyes. As I read the Lord's Prayer aloud, I'd like you to make up motions for it. Don't worry about how you look or what you do, because everyone's eyes will be closed. Just make up actions that show what the prayer means. Ready? Close your eyes.**

Read Luke 11:2-4 aloud as kids act out the prayer.

Then say: **That's just one way you can experience prayer. Now let's explore some other exciting ways to pray.**

◆ **Walking Prayer**—Take a silent walk around the halls of your church. Pause outside each classroom to pray for the people inside. Gather around the pulpit where the pastor or priest will speak and pray for that day's message. At each location you may want to pray silently or ask a volunteer to briefly pray aloud.

◆ **One-Word Prayers**—Gather everyone in a circle and hold hands. Explain that you're going to pray one-word prayers. The one word might express a feeling, a concern, or a thanks, or it might be the name of a person. Encourage kids to pray as many times as they wish but to make each prayer only one word. The discipline of using only one word helps kids focus on what's most important to communicate to God.

◆ **Potters' Prayers**—Have kids form pairs or trios. Give each child a small amount of modeling clay or dough. You may wish to play quiet praise songs as each child forms an object that represents an important prayer concern. Encourage kids to pray as they form the clay. When most people have finished modeling their objects, give a 30-second warning and then call time. Invite volunteers to share their prayer concerns with their group members and to show what they modeled. Make sure no one feels pressured to share.

After your prayer experiences, have kids re-form their pairs or trios to discuss the following questions:

◆ **What did these experiences teach you about prayer that you didn't know before?** (That there are different ways to pray; that I can pray creatively.)

◆ **How will what we did today affect the way you pray in the future?** (I'll try different kinds of prayers; I'll be open to new ways of praying.)

◆ **Tell about another unique way of praying that you've experienced.**

Allow two or three minutes for discussion. Then call everyone

Teacher Tip

You'll find suggestions on this page for three other creative prayer experiences. Use any or all of them, depending on their compatibility with your church's traditions and on the amount of remaining class time.



together and invite volunteers to share what they discussed in their groups.

Say: ★ **God hears and answers our prayers, no matter how or where we pray. Now let's make reminders of the kinds of prayers we've experienced today.**

COMMITMENT

Praying-Hands Autographs

Distribute scissors, markers, and photocopies of the "Praying Hands" handout. Ask a volunteer to read the verse at the bottom of the handout aloud. Ask other kids to rephrase the verse in their own words. Have kids fold the paper in half, cut out the praying hands, and then open the paper and leave it flat.

Then say: **I hope you've learned today that God enjoys hearing from us! God encourages us again and again in his Word to come to him with our needs, with our praise, and with our concerns for others. ★ God hears and answers our prayers! You'll see that this handout reminds you of different ways you can pray. But I also want it to be a reminder to pray for each other.**

On the blank side of your handout, write your name and draw a heart around it. The heart is to remind you that God loves you. Then we'll start trading our handouts and signing our names on each other's. The names will serve two purposes: They'll remind you to pray for those people, and they'll remind you that all those people are praying for you!

Allow time for kids to sign each other's handout. Then gather everyone in a circle. Show kids how to fold back the tabs on their handouts and hook the slits together so the praying hands stand up. Have kids place their praying hands on the floor in front of them.

CLOSING

Prayers All Around

Pray: **Dear Lord, thank you for loving us enough to hear and answer our prayers. Help us get into the good habit of talking to you several times a day. And help us support each other in our prayers. In Jesus' name, amen.**

As you close, have each child shake hands with every other child and say, "I'll be praying for you."

PRAYING HANDS

Fold this paper in half on the dotted line; then cut out the praying hands on the heavy, solid line. Carefully fold back the tabs on each side at the bottom and cut the slits. Hook the slits together to make your praying hands stand up.

Personalize the

Lord's Prayer

Read the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13. As you read, substitute the word / for we, me for us, and my for our.

One-Word Prayers

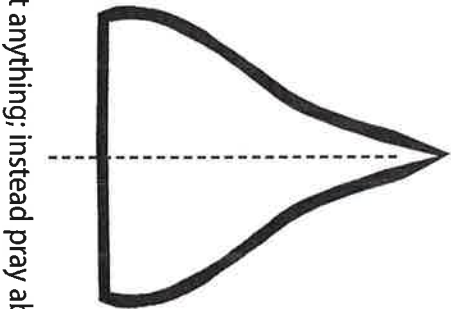
Before a meal, take turns saying one-word prayers. The word might be *thanks* or *help* or the name of a person you're concerned about. Each person may want to say several one-word prayers.

Walking Prayer

Take a walk anywhere. As you walk, pray silently for the people you pass and the people who live in the houses or stores you pass.

Potters' Prayers

Make a clay model to represent something you're concerned about. Pray as you model the clay. Let the clay model remind you to trust God.



"Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done" (Philippians 4:6).