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Prayer

Why Pray



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To briefly explain the main reasons why we pray.
- To show how we can partner with God in establishing His Kingdom.
- To teach the importance of prayer in Overcoming Temptation.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Luke 22:31-62; 1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:18



MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 26:41: Stay awake and pray that you won't be tested. You want to do what is right, but you are weak.



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.

Note to the Facilitator

There are **at least five reasons** why we pray. This lesson discusses **only two in detail**:

We pray:

- To present our requests before God
(Not discussed in this lesson)
- To get to know God and hear from Him
(Briefly mentioned after the Attention-getter)
- **To partner with God in establishing His kingdom in our families, our schools, our neighborhoods, etc.**
(Explained in the Attention-getter)
- **To both Avoid and Overcome Temptation**
(Illustrated by the Story of Peter's denial. Also explained in the Discussion Section)

[The first two points are taught in detail at the Primary level (Standards 2-4)].



INTRODUCTION

From early childhood, we have been taught that we should pray to God daily. Have you ever wondered why our parents and teachers ask us to do this? Today, we will learn why it is important for us to pray.



ATTENTION GETTER

Ask:

Have you ever wondered ...

... **what Noah did every time the male and female mosquitoes in the ark bit him? Did he swat at them?**

(Ask the children to actually try answering this question).

Have you ever wondered ...

... **why sweaters shrink when washed, but a sheep doesn't shrink in the rain? (Ask the children for their ideas).**

Have you ever wondered ...

...**why 'apart-ments' are called 'apart' when in fact they're all stuck together? What do you think they should be really called? (Ask for creative ideas).**

Have you ever wondered ...

... **why church-going people talk so much about prayer ... but actually do so little of it?**

(Use this as a discussion question, to introduce your topic).

Explain:

REASON 1:

Some people pray so little **because they don't love God.** They're not interested in spending time with Him. So they only pray if they have some personal need. The rest of the time, they just ignore Him.

REASON 2:

Some people pray so little **because they don't understand how important it is**. They don't realize that God uses our prayers to build up His Kingdom on the earth. For instance, if you sincerely pray for the establishment of God's Kingdom in your school, God will use your prayers to start changing things in your school:

- If the staff and management have been uninterested in the students, that will begin to change slowly.
- If there is a lot of copying, lying, and backbiting going on in the classes and staff room, slowly these things will begin to come under control.
- If the school is completely closed to the sharing of the Gospel, slowly openings will be created where the students and teachers can get to hear about Jesus.

When we pray for the establishment of God's Kingdom, the Lord takes our prayers very seriously.

Challenge:

- How many of you chat with God ... the same way you would with a friend?
Show God you love Him and enjoy His presence, by doing this in future.
- How many of you pray for God's Kingdom to be established in your schools, families and neighborhoods?

Show God that you're interested in partnering with Him, by doing this in future. Don't be a disinterested partner any longer.



TEACHING CONTENT

Bible Story: Prayer and Temptation

After the Passover meal, Jesus and the disciples went to a garden called Gethsemane. It was getting to be quite late in the evening, so everyone was whispering.

Jesus was especially quiet and walked a little ahead of the rest of the group. He looked as if He was sad and upset about something. He stopped and whispered to some of the disciples, "Sit here, while I pray."

Then with Peter, James and John, He walked just a little bit further and told them, "My heart feels heavy and I feel very sad. Please stay here and pray with me. And pray for yourselves too." The disciples looked at each other for they had never seen Jesus like this before.

Then Jesus walked a bit further by Himself; next to a big tree He knelt down with His face to the ground and began to talk to God. He prayed, "My Father, I know that I am about to go through some horrible things, I wish I wouldn't have to. But it doesn't matter what I want, I will do whatever you want."

When He had finished praying, He went back to where the disciples were and they had fallen asleep on the ground. Jesus woke them and said to them, "Couldn't you have stayed awake for Me, for just a little while? You should also pray that you would continue to do what God wants."

The disciples felt bad, and tried to keep their eyes open. But when they started praying, they fell asleep. Two more times Jesus went off to pray the same prayer as before, and when He was finished He came back to His friends disappointed. They had fallen asleep again.

The third time Jesus woke them saying, “Are you sleeping again? Enough! It is time to go, here comes the man who is about to give Me up to the people who want to hurt Me.”

While He was still speaking, Judas, one of Jesus’ disciples was coming towards them. He was followed by a large crowd of people who were carrying swords and clubs. Judas walked right up to Jesus and gave Him a kiss on the cheek. This was a sign to the chief priests that this was Jesus, and that He was the man that they wanted to arrest.

Jesus let them take Him. He spoke to all those around Him saying, “If I wanted I could pray to My Father for help, and He would send angels to protect Me and stop this. But I know this needs to happen to finish what it says in the Bible.”

The disciples didn’t know what to do. They were afraid that they might be arrested for being with Jesus and so they quickly left, leaving Jesus to be arrested alone. Peter was the only disciple that followed Jesus. He was careful to follow at a distance, because he was afraid. He wanted to see what would happen to Jesus.

They took Jesus to a man named Caiaphas who was the high priest (he made a lot of decisions). This is where all the other ‘important’ people had gathered. They were trying to find a reason to arrest Jesus but He had never done anything wrong.

Meanwhile, Peter was just outside the building where they had taken Jesus. A servant girl saw Peter, recognized him and asked, “Weren’t you with that man named Jesus?” But Peter lied and said, “You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Peter started to walk away but the girl spoke louder, so the other people who were around could hear, “I’m sure you are one of the men that is friends with Jesus.” Again Peter said, “No, I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

After a while more people asked Peter the same thing, and Peter started to get upset by this and he said in a loud voice, “I don’t know the man you are talking about; I’ve never talked to Him.”

Right after Peter said this, a rooster crowed and Peter remembered something Jesus had said to him. “Before the rooster crows, you will turn your back on Me three times.” When Peter remembered this, he was very sad. Peter was one of Jesus’ closest friends and now he had lied and said he didn’t even know Him.

Peter started to cry because he had yielded to temptation and denied Jesus.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

We Pray to Establish God's Kingdom

Can the prayers of a third standard child really bring change in an entire neighborhood? Can one person's prayers establish God's Kingdom in an entire school? Is this realistic?

For more than 60 years, Christians have been praying that God's Kingdom be established in India. And now, we are beginning to see a lot of corruption and evil being exposed and punished. We see strong Spirit-filled churches being established in remote villages. This is God establishing His Kingdom in India, **in answer to our prayers!**

We may not see results immediately. But God takes our prayers very seriously. So don't hesitate to pray for your school or neighborhood. Through your prayers, **opportunities will open up** for God's kingdom to be established in these places.

We Pray to Avoid/Overcome Temptation

After a long tiring day of travel and celebration of the Passover, the disciples were very tired. Why did Jesus ask Peter, James and John to pray when they needed rest so badly?

Jesus was also equally tired. He too wanted to rest. But He knew that He would face temptation soon. He knew that the soldiers would come to arrest Him, and He would feel tempted to stop them from arresting Him. So He decided to

spend time in prayer, asking God for the strength to resist this temptation.

Jesus also knew that His disciples would face a different kind of temptation. They would be tempted to betray Him and run away. So they too needed to pray for strength to resist temptation. Therefore, Jesus advised them saying, “Stay awake and pray that you won’t be [tempted]. You want to do what is right, but you are weak”(Matthew 26:41).

However, the disciples fell asleep instead of praying. As a result, they all gave in to temptation and betrayed Jesus. If they had prayed instead, they could have resisted the temptation.

If I want to overcome temptation, what exactly should I pray?

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Keep us from being tempted” (Matthew 6:13). So every morning, pray specifically against the things that tempt you the most.

For instance, if you are tempted to lie a lot, then pray specifically that the Lord will keep you from this temptation. He will then help you to avoid situations where you’d be tempted to lie.

Also, pray for the strength to resist your temptations. We can never overcome temptation on our own. We need God’s divine power to resist it, and He will supply it to us generously if we pray to Him.



APPLICATION

Today, we have looked at three reasons why we pray:

- To get to know God personally and hear from Him.
- To partner with God in establishing His Kingdom in our families, our schools, our neighborhoods, etc.
- To both Avoid and Overcome Temptation.

Challenge:

- Make a commitment to pray for the establishment of God's Kingdom in your family (so that your whole family starts living the way God wants them to, and they begin to enjoy all the blessings that God has planned for them).
- Every morning, ask the Lord to keep you from temptation. Specifically name the temptations that trouble you the most and pray for the strength to overcome them.

Next week, make sure that you come with a testimony of how you overcame Satan through daily prayer and spiritual warfare.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





Prayer

The Lord's Prayer



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize children with the pattern of the Lord's Prayer.
- To teach the importance of establishing God's Kingdom through Prayer and Action.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Matthew 6:9,10



MEMORY VERSE

Luke 11:11: As bad as you are, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. But your heavenly Father is even more ready to give good things to people who ask.

Materials Needed:

- Naphthalene balls / or Colorful round pills/ or White rectangular pills
- White Mentos / or Cadburys Gems / or Rectangular white chewing gum

Note to the Facilitator

In Lesson 2, we briefly dwell on the first half of the Lord's Prayer:

- Our Father in heaven
(explained in the Attention-Getter Section)
- Help us to honor your name
(explained in the Teaching Content)
- Come and set up your Kingdom
(explained in the Discussion Section)
- So that everyone on earth will obey you, as you are obeyed in heaven
(explained in the Discussion Section)

[The Second Half of the Lord's Prayer is covered in detail at the Senior Level (Std 8-10)].



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- This week did you ask the Lord to keep you from being tempted? How did this help you? Give examples.

- What are the three steps in Spiritual Warfare Prayer?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Matthew 26:41).



INTRODUCTION

Last week, we discussed the four main reasons for prayer. Today, we will take a closer look at the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray.

The 12 disciples lived with Jesus for three years. In His life, they saw a power that they had never seen in anyone else. And they realized that the answer lay in Jesus' prayer life, in His communion with God the Father. So one day, when Jesus finished praying, the disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray."



ATTENTION GETTER

Prepare beforehand:

Prepare a mixture of good and harmful objects:

- If you can get white mentos, you can mix these with naphthalene balls.
- If you have access to colorful round pills, mix them up with Cadburys gems (Erythrocin pills are usually round and colorful).
- If you're using white rectangular pills instead, then mix them up with rectangular white chewing gum.

Prepare one of these mixtures, and take it to class.

Activity: Dangerous Mentos**Read aloud:**

Luke 11:8-11: Everyone who asks will receive. Everyone who searches will find. And the door will be opened for everyone who knocks. Would any of you give your hungry child a stone, if the child asked for some bread? Would you give your child a snake, if the child asked for a fish? As bad as you are, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. But your heavenly Father is even more ready to give good things to people who ask.

Ask: What do you think Jesus is teaching in these verses? (Allow the children to express their opinions).

Show and Explain:

Show the mixture that you've prepared, and explain:

Can you see how similar the mentos and the naphthalene balls appear? What if you asked your parents for a mentos, and they gave you a naphthalene ball instead?

That would be such a dangerous trick to play! Your parents would never do that to you!

Similarly, during Jesus' time on earth, the Jews ate baked buns that looked like rounded stones. And they ate long fried fish that looked similar to a snake.

When a hungry little child asked his dad for fried fish, do you think his loving father gave him a fried snake? No! The father loved the child too much to do a wicked thing like that!

Compare with the Heavenly Father

Therefore Jesus said, “Would you give your child a snake if the child asked for a fish? As bad as you are, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. But your heavenly Father is even more ready to give good things to people who ask.”

Conclude:

This is why Jesus taught His disciples to begin praying with the words, “Our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9).

When we pray to the Lord, He will answer like a ‘Perfect Father’—because He is more loving than any human father could ever be.

So pray with the confidence that God will NOT give you something ‘substandard’ or ‘harmful’ when you cry out to Him in prayer.



TEACHING CONTENT

Begin Your Prayer by Honoring God

Usually, when we think of the word ‘PRAYER,’ we think of a ‘shopping list’ of personal needs. But Jesus taught His disciples to pray very differently. He asked them to begin their prayer by saying, “Help us to honor your name” (Matthew 6:9).

Why do you think Jesus asked us to start this way?

(Ask the children for their opinions).

Explain:

The way in which we begin a conversation usually determines what our attitude will be during the rest of the conversation.

- For instance if I wish to speak with you and I begin with the angry words, “This is the tenth time you have disobeyed me ... ” what do you think I’ll say next? Do you expect to hear words of praise from me as the conversation continues?
- On the other hand, what if I begin with the words, “You have been such a blessing to me ...?” Will you expect words of criticism from me as the conversation continues?

Jesus wanted us to start praying with the right attitude—an attitude of wanting to honor God. Usually the attitude with which we begin a prayer **sets the tone** for the rest of the prayer.

- For instance, if I come to God with a self-centered attitude and start with the words, “Lord give me this ... this ... this ... and that ...” I’ll continue to have this attitude for the rest of the prayer.
- However, if I come saying, “Lord help me to honor You today,” then I cannot ask Him for something dishonorable in the next sentence. My whole prayer—every request that I place before Him—will focus on honoring God.

So always begin by praising and worshipping God. And ask Him to help you honor Him throughout the coming day.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Come and Set Up Your Kingdom

**What do we mean when we pray, “Thy kingdom come?”
Are we saying “Let your Second Coming happen soon?” Or
are we saying something more?**

We don't have to wait until the Second Coming for God's Kingdom to be established. It is already happening today.

God uses our prayers to build up His Kingdom on the earth. For instance, if you sincerely pray for the establishment of God's kingdom in your school, God will use your prayers to start changing things in your school:

- If the staff and management have been uninterested in the students, that will begin to change slowly.
- If there is a lot of copying, lying and backbiting going on in the classes and staffroom, slowly these things will begin to come under control.
- If the school is completely closed to the sharing of the Gospel, slowly openings will be created where the students and teachers can get to hear about Jesus.

When we pray for the establishment of God's Kingdom, the Lord takes our prayers very seriously.

If I pray every day for God’s Kingdom to be established in India, will the whole country submit to Jesus?

Billy Graham once said:

“Don’t simply pray for someone; ask God what you can do for that person and what He would have you to do.”

If your prayers are sincere ... if you truly want God’s Kingdom to be established in your school, neighborhood, etc. ... you will **not only pray but also witness**.

Colossians 4:5,6: When you are with unbelievers, always make good use of the time. Be pleasant and hold their interest when you speak the message. Choose your words carefully and be ready to give answers to anyone who asks questions.

So Yes! All of India can truly be saved if **all believers** pray for their neighborhoods and then actively witness in their neighborhoods.

Prayer without Action is Empty Prayer!

May Everyone on Earth Obey You, As You Are Obeyed in Heaven.

If we are Christians, does this mean God’s Kingdom is established in our hearts?

A kingdom is established in a place only when the king receives submission from its residents. For example, I can say that Indiranagar Colony is my kingdom only if the people of Indiranagar submit to my kingship.

This is the same with God. If you submit to God, and ask Him to rule over your life, He will establish His Kingdom in your life.

So God's kingdom is NOT established in the hearts of many 'Christians' who haven't submitted to Him.

Why should I ask God to establish His Kingdom in my heart?

I cannot enjoy the benefits of God's Kingdom, if I have not allowed God to rule over my life and establish His Kingdom in my life. Some of the amazing benefits include:

- Total forgiveness for even the worst sins I have committed
- Eternal life in heaven with God
- Power to live a holy life (and not live like a sinful loser)
- God's protection
- Healing from every sickness in my life
- Abundant blessings of every kind (in studies, finances, friendships, etc.), and countless other benefits

Jesus says, "...unless you are willing to take up your cross and come with Me, you are not fit to be my disciples" (Matthew 10:38). And if we are not His disciples, then we won't enjoy any of the benefits that His disciples enjoy.

How can I make sure that God's Kingdom is established in my heart?

Don't just pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." Rather, pray specifically for each area of your life.

- Ask God to become King over your studies and submit to Him entirely in this area.
- Ask God to become King over your TV-viewing and submit to Him entirely in this area as well.
- Ask God to become King over your role as son/daughter at home; submit to God entirely in your obedience to your parents, etc.

When you pray to God, inviting Him to rule over each specific area of your life, His kingdom will be firmly established in your life. Then you will begin to enjoy the Kingdom-benefits more fully in your life.



APPLICATION

Today, we have studied the first four lines of the Lord's Prayer in some detail. Apply these truths to your life and practice them.

Line 1: Our Father in heaven

Pray with the confidence that your "Perfect Heavenly Father" will not throw a snake at you when you request Him for a fish to satisfy your hunger.

(God will never cheat you when you pray to Him for your deep-felt needs).

Line 2: Help us to honor Your name

Always begin your prayer with an attitude of praise and worship, wanting to honor the Lord in your prayer, as well as your life.

Line 3: Come and set up Your Kingdom

Pray for God's Kingdom to be established in your school, neighborhood, etc. Also, back up your prayer with practical witnessing.

Line 4: May everyone on earth obey you, as you are obeyed in heaven

The angels in heaven obey the Lord totally, in every area of their lives. We must obey God to the same extent. Specifically submit each area of your life to the Lord, doing what pleases Him (not what pleases you alone).

Next week, make sure that you come with a testimony of the changes in your prayer life and changes in your over-all attitude towards God.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





Prayer

How to Pray



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To teach the right balance between aggressiveness and humility in prayer.
- To show the importance of praying “others-centered” prayers.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Genesis 18:17-33; James 4:3



MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 8:4,5: And I wonder, “Why are people so important to you? Why do you even think about them ... ” But you made them almost like gods and crowned them with glory and honor.

Materials Needed:

Nicely wrapped gift; few balloons

Note to the Facilitator

There are **at least six right attitudes** to observe when praying. This lesson mentions **two attitudes only**.

The right attitudes include:

- Attitudes of Thankfulness
- Attitude of Respect towards God
- **Attitude of Humility**
- **Attitude of Selflessness and 'others-centered' prayer**

[The first two points are taught in detail at the Primary level (Standards 2-4)].

**RECAP**

- What did we learn about last week?
- This week, did you make the Lord King over any new areas of your life? Give examples.
- This week, did any of you pray for the establishment of God's Kingdom? What exactly did you pray for?
(For establishment of God's Kingdom: in my heart, in my family, in my school, etc.).
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

Last week, we studied the first half of the Lord's Prayer. This week we will look at the right attitude to have when we pray.

The Israelites prayed a lot in the wilderness. But they almost always prayed with the wrong attitude. So, few of their prayers received the abundant answers that God wanted for them.

Therefore, it is very important for us to have the right attitude when we pray.



ATTENTION GETTER

Prepare beforehand: Purchase an inexpensive gift and gift wrap it. Also take a few balloons to the class.

Activity: Nosy Balloon

Challenge one child to blow a balloon, blowing only through the nose. Promise him/her the attractively wrapped prize if they succeed.

The child will find it almost impossible to blow the balloon.

Explain:

If X (name of the child) had blown the balloon, he/she would have won a lovely prize. But because he/she failed to do so, they don't "deserve" the prize any longer.

If I now give the prize to X, we would call it 'grace.'

Hand over the Gift and Explain:

I have gifted X something that he/she doesn't deserve. This is called 'grace.' When God gives us something that we don't deserve, we call it 'grace.'

Grace of God:

Because all of us have committed at least one sin in our lives, we **don't deserve** to become God's children. However, when we invited Jesus into our lives, He forgave us our sins even though we don't deserve this. By giving us what we don't deserve and by making us His children, He showed us 'grace.'

- X should be grateful to me because I gave him/her the gift even though he/she didn't deserve it.
- In the same way, we too must be grateful to God for making us His children, when we don't deserve it.

Conclude:

As we can clearly see, we don't deserve any goodness from God. Because we have done sinful things, we deserve only punishment in hell.

- So we must be grateful that everyday God answers our prayers—even though we don't deserve it!

However, sometimes, we are so rude and demanding in our prayers. We say, "Lord, you better give me the video game that I have been praying for." We forget that we don't deserve absolutely anything **except hell!**

When we realize this fundamental truth, it changes our attitude in prayer:

- We pray with a humble attitude, knowing that we don't deserve anything.
- We pray with confidence, because God loves us so deeply—even though we don't deserve it.



TEACHING CONTENT

Bible Story: Abraham prays with Boldness and Humility

One day the Lord said to Himself, “I will tell Abraham what I’m going to do in the future, because he is my chosen one.” Then, God explained to Abraham, “Sodom and Gomorrah and all the areas around them are very, very wicked. I am going to destroy all these cities and everything in them because they won’t repent.”

Abraham became quite concerned because his nephew, Lot, lived in the city of Sodom. He loved Lot very much and didn’t want to see anything bad happen to him. So Abraham began talking to the Lord and asking that his nephew, Lot, not be harmed.

“Lord, are you going to destroy the righteous people along with the wicked?” Abraham asked. “If there are fifty righteous people, will you please save the city?”

The Lord agreed with Abraham that if there were *fifty* godly people, the city would not be destroyed.

Abraham thought about that for a moment. He knew the people in the city of Sodom, and he wasn't sure that there were fifty righteous people there. He spoke to the Lord again. "Lord, I know you are a just God and will do what's right. What if there are only forty-five godly people? Will you destroy the city if there are five less?"

The Lord saw Abraham's distress and lowered the number even more. He said He would not destroy the city if He could find *forty* righteous people.

Abraham thought about the situation and wasn't quite sure there were even forty people in the city that loved God. "Lord, please don't be angry with me," Abraham said humbly. "What if there are only thirty? Could you save the city for thirty godly people?"

The Lord was not at all angry with Abraham. He saw Abraham's deep compassion for Lot and the other people. The Lord didn't really *want* to destroy the city either because He is loving and compassionate; but He had given them many chances and they wouldn't repent. They had to be punished to keep the wickedness from spreading. "If there are *thirty* righteous people, the city will not be destroyed," the Lord told Abraham.

"But Lord, what if there are only twenty people who are godly? I know you are a just God. You wouldn't destroy the twenty godly people along with the wicked, would you?"

"No, Abraham. I will not destroy the godly with the wicked. If there are *twenty* righteous people, the city will be saved," the Lord said.

Abraham talked to the Lord one more time as he was thinking of Lot and his family. “Oh Lord, please, please don’t be angry with me. Would you allow me to speak once more?” The Lord gave Him permission to speak. “Surely there must be ten righteous people in the city of Sodom. Will you please save the city if there are ten?”

The Lord agreed with Abraham’s request that He would not destroy the city if He could find *ten* godly people. Abraham was satisfied with that arrangement and his prayer was finished. The Lord went on His way and Abraham returned home.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

Attitude of Humility

People say we must demand our ‘rights’ from God. We must say, “Lord it’s my birthright to have enough money. So you better give me the money I need.” Is this the correct way to pray?

God himself said about Abraham, “He is my chosen one.” Abraham knew that he could pray to God boldly because the Lord treated him like a favored family member.

But Abraham also knew that God had shown him “undeserved grace” in treating him this way. Abraham knew that in reality he was “nothing more than the dust of the earth” (Genesis 18:27). He said, “I **don’t have any right**

to ask you, Lord, but what would you do if you find only twenty?" (Genesis 18:31).

Abraham admitted that he had no right to ask God anything. He was only asking because the Lord gave him permission to pour out his heart. So with deep humility and gratitude, Abraham presented his requests before the Lord.

Just like Abraham, we too don't have a right to demand anything from God. We can pray to Him boldly and confidently only because He showed us "undeserved grace" when He forgave us of all our sins and made us His children.

So, as His children, we do have "the birthright" to ask Him for all our needs. But we must also be humble and grateful because this birthright was given as "undeserved grace." Jesus had to sacrifice His life so that He can answer our prayers! So we must not be rude and demanding in our prayers.

Attitude of Selflessness

Abraham poured out his heart in prayer for Lot. What attitude of prayer does this verse teach?

When we pray only for our own needs, ignoring others, these are called selfish prayers. Abraham prayed not only for himself, but also for others.

Matthew 6:33 teaches, "... more than anything else, put God's work first and do what He wants. Then the other things will be yours as well." James 4:3 says, "Yet even when you do pray, your prayers are not answered, because you pray just for selfish reasons."

So we must always put God's Kingdom first. There is nothing wrong in praying for new shoes. But have you ever prayed that God's Kingdom should be established in your neighborhood—that the old beggar near your house should at least receive three meals everyday? Have you ever given your pocket money to the beggar, to start the process of bringing God's Kingdom into his life?

Do not pray for only things that will benefit you personally. Pray for things that will benefit other people as well and bring them into God's Kingdom.

If you are praying with a Kingdom-focused attitude, not only will you receive your new shoes, but that old beggar may start receiving God's love through you. You will have the privilege of introducing him to the love of God.

So never pray with a selfish attitude. Learn to pray for others—pray that God's Kingdom will enter even their lives and change them. And **take action** to do whatever you can, so that it really happens.



APPLICATION

This week, practice Humility and Selflessness in your prayer life:

- Pray boldly, expecting your Heavenly Father to answer your prayers. But humbly remember that He had to sacrifice His innocent Son on the Cross, to give you the privilege of praying to Him. So pray with gratitude, not pride.

- Also, don't think only of your own needs. Pray for the needs of others—so that they too can experience God's love.

Next week, make sure that you come with a testimony of how you changed your prayer time, to accommodate these new attitudes.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





Prayer

What to Pray



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To show children the different aspects of prayer.
- To teach the importance of praising God during our Prayer Time.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Matthew 6:9-15



MEMORY VERSE

1 Chronicles 16:34: Praise the Lord because He is good to us, and His love never fails.

Materials Needed:

Play dough; aluminium foil; outer cardboard wrap of a chocolate bar



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Did you make any changes in your prayer life this week? Give examples.
- Did you pray for any person outside your family and friend circle? Name them.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

Last week, we learnt about the right attitude to have when we pray. This week we will look at the different things that God wants us to pray for.

Prayer involves more than asking God for things. It involves acknowledging God as the Lord of our lives; it involves confessing sins; it involves asking for power and strength to live a godly life; and it involves praising God for who He is.

Today, we will learn how to do some of these things in greater detail.



ATTENTION GETTER

Prepare beforehand:

Prepare a fake chocolate bar using play dough. Usually, *chocolate bars* are *wrapped* in aluminum foil, with a colorful cardboard *wrap on the outside*.

Mould a slab of play dough into the shape of a chocolate bar and wrap it with aluminum foil. Place the fake bar in the original cardboard wrap of a real bar (Example: Cadburys Dairy Milk comes in a colorful cardboard wrap).

Activity: Fake Chocolate

Display the chocolate bar and state, “I have a surprise for you this morning.” Ask one of the children to open the cardboard wrap and distribute the chocolate. The children will soon realize that the surprise is an “unpleasant surprise.” A few may even be quite disappointed!

Explain:

When you looked at the cardboard wrap of this very popular chocolate bar, you thought you’d receive a tasty treat. You felt excited.

But when you looked inside, all you found was some tasteless odorless clay. And you felt disappointed.

Did you know that Jesus feels the same about our Prayer Time? When we close the bedroom door and kneel down to pray, the Lord feels very excited. He thinks that we are now going to spend time with Him, talking to Him.

But when He looks inside our hearts, He sees only a “shopping list,” and He realizes that we aren’t interested in spending time with Him... We just want to ask Him for a list of things, and then rush off to our friends and work.

Jesus wants prayer to be a time of fellowship, where we talk to Him and show Him our love; and where He can talk to us and show us His love.

Let your prayer time be like a sumptuous Chocolate Treat to the Lord. Don't offer Him tasteless clay.



TEACHING CONTENT

For our personal Prayer Time to be meaningful and effective, we need to include the following aspects. We will look at each briefly.

First: Begin with Thanksgiving and Praise

We must begin by expressing our love and gratitude to the Lord.

Second: Ask the Lord for a submissive heart

When we go to the Lord in prayer, we need to ask Him, "Lord, in my life, am I doing what you want me to do? Are you displeased about something?" Accept correction from Him.

Third: Seek His forgiveness and strength

- Ask the Lord to forgive you in the areas where you have displeased Him.
- Promise Him that you will not repeat those things again. Truly mean it when you make this promise.
- And ask Him for the divine strength that you need to keep your promise, so that you don't repeat those sinful things.

Fourth: Forgive in the same way that you have been forgiven

Because the Lord forgives us so completely, He expects us to forgive in the same way. I can't continue to hold a grudge against someone who has wronged me.

Fifth: Pray for every single need in your life

No prayer request is too small in God's eyes. Look upon God as your own Heavenly Daddy and confidently place all your needs before Him.

Sixth: Pray against temptation

What temptations trouble you the most? Pray specifically about these temptations.

Include these six aspects in your personal prayer time, so that your prayer brings honor to God, and blessings to you. We will now look at how we can make our Praise time more meaningful.

How to include Praise and Worship in your Personal Prayer Time

- Use a Praise and Worship CD. As you listen, either join in by singing, or join in with the thoughts and sentiments expressed in the song.
- Use the Psalms or Praise passages such as Isaiah 12, to speak out praise to God. Spend some time meditating on these verses, allowing your heart to be freed to become aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit with you and for your spirit to become in tune with God's Spirit.
- Sometimes you won't need a CD or Psalm to praise God. Simple thoughts and sentences that express our inner feelings are cherished by our Father God. So simply speak out your deep love and gratitude to Him.
- Jot down a list of things that you are particularly thankful for and then thank God for each of them.

- Thank God specifically for each answered prayer over the past few days.
- Write down the things that are troubling you the most. Then look for signs of God at work in these situations and thank Him for this.

When you praise and worship God in these ways, your prayer time will not taste like clay to the Lord. He will look forward to your Prayer Time as though awaiting a Chocolate Treat!



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

What are some of the special qualities of God that we can praise Him for?

Some of the more common qualities of God are as follows:

1. He is holy—there is no impurity in Him.
2. He is unchanging—He never stops being good to me.
3. He is all-powerful—He uses His great power to help me.
4. He is all-wise—He makes beautiful plans for my life.
5. He is good—He never does bad things to me.
6. He is loving—He loves me so much that He was willing to die for me.
7. He is gracious—He gives me wonderful things that I don't even deserve.

8. He is merciful—He doesn't punish me, like I deserve to be punished, for my wrongdoings.
9. He is just—He treats me fairly always, and never gives me a raw deal.
10. He is sovereign—nothing and nobody can stop Him from helping me.
11. He is jealous—He loves me so much that He doesn't want to share me with satan.
12. He is faithful—He never lets me down.
13. He is impartial—He treats all of us equally.

Praise God for these qualities, personalizing them. (Eg., I praise You Lord for Your holiness. Because there is absolutely nothing unclean in You, You will never ever fail me or betray me. Thank You for being my God).

**What if I don't feel like praising God on a really bad day?
Does God expect me to praise Him even then?**

Psalm 36:7 says, "How priceless is Your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of Your wings." This means: Even if everything has gone wrong in your life, God's love and care for you still hasn't failed.

So you can kneel down in prayer and picture the invisible shadow of His wings spread out protectively over you. Knowing that He will never forsake you, quietly begin to thank Him for His "unfailing love." Then start thanking Him for the miraculous way He is going to solve your problems and help you.

Even as you praise and thank God in this way, His peace will begin to control your heart. Philippians 4:6,7 says, “Don’t worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.”

So it is extra important to praise and worship God when you are feeling low. It will help you by increasing your faith.

Some people say that we should pray only for our basic needs. We mustn’t pray for luxuries. Is this true?

Matthew 7:11 says, “As bad as you are, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. But your heavenly Father is even more ready to give good things to people who ask.”

Children don’t ask parents for just the basic needs. In fact they place all of their heart’s desires before the parents. In the same way, the Lord wants us to come to Him with all our desires.

The only two conditions that our Heavenly Father lays down are:

- Not to be greedy when you already have more than enough;
- Not to be selfish, ignoring the needs of others.



APPLICATION

This week onwards, make a commitment to spend at least some of your prayer time in praising God. This will help you remember always how wonderful God is.

Next week, make sure that you come with a testimony of how regular praise and worship brought you closer to God



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





Pray for Others



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To teach children whom to pray for.
- To encourage a commitment to regularly pray for at least some specific people.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 6:18-20; Matthew 19:13; Luke 6:28



MEMORY VERSE

1 Timothy 2:1: First of all, I ask you to pray for everyone. Ask God to help and bless them all, and tell God how thankful you are for each of them.

Materials Needed:

Paper chits; bowl

Note to the Facilitator

There are at least **eight categories of people** that we should pray for. This lesson mentions **four categories only**.

We must pray for:

- the Sick and Suffering
- the Unsaved
- the Government (Politicians and Officials)
- Persecuted Believers
- **all Christians**
- **for family/relatives**
- **for ministry people**
- **for your enemies**

[The first three categories are covered in detail at the Primary Level (Std 2-4). The fourth category is discussed at the Senior Level (Std 8-10)].



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- This week, did any of you add a Praise Time to your personal prayers? What are some of the things that you praised God for?
- What are the six aspects of prayer that we covered last week?

- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

Last week, we looked at some of the important aspects of prayer. Today, we will look at one last aspect of prayer—prayer for others.

Have you ever found yourself frightened and alone? Have you ever felt pain and sorrow? In times like these, you hope there is someone praying for you.

During these hard times you need someone to pray for you because your problem can only be solved by God. Likewise, you need to be praying for others who are going through difficult times. Today, we are going to talk about how we can do that.



ATTENTION GETTER

Prepare beforehand: Prepare paper chits with the names of all the children in your group. Place the pieces of paper in a bowl. Then pass the bowl around the group and ask each young person to take out a piece of paper. Encourage them to pray for that person during the coming week.

Next, ask each person in the group to mention one prayer request that they'd like prayer for (the person who has picked their name must remember to pray for this specific request over the next one week).



TEACHING CONTENT

Why we pray for others

- At the most basic level, we pray for others because we love them. We desire their good, we desire their growth; we desire their conversion and conformity to Christ.
- We also pray for others because this is the example that Jesus set for us in John, Chapter 17. He prayed for all of us and we must do likewise.
- Another reason why we pray for others is to glorify God. Paul said, “Please help us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks for the blessings we receive in answer to all these prayers” (2 Corinthians 1:11). Many will praise God when they are blessed through our prayers.

Whom to pray for

Read aloud:

Ephesians 6:18: Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying **for God’s people**.

Ask: According to this verse, whom should we pray for? (Pray for all Christians).

Read aloud:

Matthew 19:13: Some people **brought their children** to Jesus, so that He could place His hands on them and pray for them.

Ask: According to this verse, whom should we pray for?
(Pray for your family, relatives, etc.)

Read aloud:

Ephesians 6:19,20: Pray that I will be given the message to speak and that I may fearlessly explain the mystery about the good news. I was **sent to do this work**, and that's the reason I am in jail. So pray that I will be brave and will speak as I should.

Ask: According to this verse, whom should we pray for?
(Pray for pastors, Sunday school teachers, missionaries, etc.)

Read aloud:

Luke 6:28: Ask God to bless anyone who curses you, and pray for **everyone who is cruel to you**.

Ask: According to this verse, whom should we pray for?
(Pray for your enemies and for those who ill-treat you)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Do I have to pray for others even if I don't have any special gift of intercession?

Ephesians 6:18 says, "Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying for God's people."

Paul wrote this instruction to **ALL** the believers in the Ephesian church. He didn't write it to only people with a gift of intercession. So all of us must pray for others.

In fact 1 Samuel 12:23 indicates that it is "disobedience" to refuse to pray for others. Don't disobey God by refusing to pray for people.

The Bible says that a righteous person's prayer is powerful. But what if I'm not very righteous and my faith is limited? Will my prayers be useful to anyone?

We must not give up praying for others simply because we feel we aren't righteous enough, or because our faith isn't great.

If God has been convicting you of a specific sin again and again, and if you still refuse to repent of it, then your prayer may not be answered. But if you're not harboring any deliberate sins, then you needn't worry. God sees you as 'righteous' because Jesus washed you clean with His blood. And your prayers for others will be answered.

Similarly, you don't have to be a giant in the faith to pray for others. In Acts 12, when Peter was imprisoned, the whole church prayed for him. But when Peter was miraculously rescued from prison, they refused to believe that their prayer had been answered. So, God answers our prayers for people even when we have limited faith.

Our parents pray for our protection every day. In spite of this, we have accidents sometimes. Does this mean God doesn't answer our prayers for the protection of others?

Jesus Himself taught us to pray, " ... protect us from evil"

(Matthew 6:13). So God wants to answer our prayers and protect us.

However, sometimes accidents happen in spite of our prayers.

- This may be due to a mistake on the part of the person. They might have deliberately chosen to step outside of God's protection, through some foolish decision or sinful attitude.
- Sometimes, it's not the person's fault. It may be the fault of other people who decided to do something wrong or foolish, thereby harming the person you were praying for. God doesn't forcefully stop them from doing wrong, because He respects their freedom to choose right or wrong. (But because of your prayers, something good will come out of the painful situation, and the person you've been praying for, will be blessed).
- In some cases, it's nobody's fault. Painful things happen because we live in a sinful world controlled by satan. Again, because of your prayers, something good will come out of the painful situation, and the person you've been praying for will be blessed.

So never ever doubt the effectiveness of your prayers for others.



APPLICATION

This week, make sure that you pray for other people:

- Pray God's blessings on three people who have hurt you (or whom you dislike).
- Pray for three specific people who are doing God's work.
- Pray for three believers outside your family and friends circle.
- Pray for your family members and relatives.

Also, pray for the person whose name you picked up from the bowl (during the Attention-Getter Activity).

Next week, come with testimonies of the people you prayed for and how they were blessed.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





How God Answers Prayer



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To show that God answers prayer with ‘Yes,’ ‘No’ and ‘Wait.’
- To teach the importance of trusting God when the answer is ‘No’ or ‘Wait.’



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Habakkuk 1-3; 1 John 5:14,15; Genesis 19:27-29



MEMORY VERSE

1 John 5:14,15: “We are certain that God will hear our prayers when we ask for what pleases Him. And if we know that God listens when we pray, we are sure that our prayers have already been answered.”

Materials Needed:

- Printout of Indian Flag Coloring Page
- Bowl with dozens of color pencils/crayons

**RECAP**

- What did we learn about last week?
- This week, did you pray for the people that you committed to keep in prayer? What things did you pray for them?
- Name the four categories of people that we should pray for.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.

**INTRODUCTION**

Last week, we looked at the importance of praying for others. Today, we will look at the four ways in which God usually answers our prayers.

It is frustrating to have to wait for God to answer prayer. At times it seems that He moves so slowly. Sometimes it appears that His answers to our prayers will even come late. But God knows the right time for everything and He knows the right time to answer our prayers.

Today, we are going to discover how God answers prayer.

- Sometimes He says ‘Yes’ and the answer comes quickly.

- Sometimes He says ‘Yes,’ but not in the way we expected.
- Sometimes He says ‘Wait’ and the answer comes slowly.
- Sometimes He says ‘No.’

That is why we must pray according to God’s will to receive answers to our prayers.



ATTENTION GETTER

Explain to the group:

- I will give you a Coloring Sheet, and you must use the right colors to finish it.
- However, the colors will be chosen by a volunteer who doesn’t know what picture is printed on the coloring sheet.

Pick a volunteer, and give the following instructions:

- You will step outside while I show the picture to the rest of the group. So you will not know what is in the coloring sheet.
- After you return inside, you must guess the three color pencils/crayons that you think will suit the picture.
- Every time you hold up a pencil from the bowl, the rest of the group will tell you whether or not it’s the right color.
- If it’s the right color, the group will say ‘Yes’ and you can keep the pencil/crayon.

- If it's the wrong color, the group will say 'No' and you have to return the color to the bowl.
- The challenge is to find all the three correct colors **within one minute.**

Once the volunteer leaves the room, show the coloring page to the rest of the group (It is a coloring sheet of the Indian Flag). The group must NOT tell the volunteer which picture is printed on the coloring sheet. They are only allowed to guide the person with a 'Yes' or 'No.'

If the person is able to pick the right colors within the assigned minute, reward him/her with a chocolate.

After the activity, ask the volunteer:

While picking colors, why do you think the group said 'No' to so many of your choices?
(Allow the person to express his/her opinions).

Explain:

All of you in the group, except for 'X' (name of the volunteer), knew what was in the coloring sheet. So you knew exactly what colors were needed to complete the picture—saffron, indigo and green.

However, X had no idea as to which picture was printed on the Coloring Sheet. As a result, he/she had no idea which colors to choose to complete the picture.

It is the same in real life. God has a 'Complete Picture' of you and me. He knows exactly what career I should take up in future, what good works I must do for the Kingdom of God, what places I must travel to and so on.

Different things must be added to my life to complete this picture.

- I must choose the correct line of study to reach the career goal that God has in mind.
- I must develop specific talents to serve His Kingdom.
- I must come in contact with specific people, who will make it possible for me to travel to certain places and so on.

If I choose the wrong line of studies, then the picture will be left incomplete (For instance, if God wanted me to become a doctor but I study business management instead, my picture will be left incomplete).

But we don't know yet, how the complete picture should look. God hasn't shown it to us. So, we are a bit like X. We pick up different things, assuming they are the right things for us, and we sincerely pray that God grants them to us.

However, God says 'No' again and again. Every time we pray for something that will spoil the 'Complete Picture,' He says 'No.'

What if X had insisted that Red was a very attractive color, and it would suit the picture best? What if he/she had ignored the advice that the group gave? The Indian flag wouldn't have looked like the Indian flag anymore!

Remember this 'Object Lesson' every time the Lord says 'No' to your prayer request!

Only He knows how to complete the 'Picture' of your Life. Every time you pray for something that will spoil the 'Picture,' He says 'No.'

So, the next time the Lord says ‘No’ to your prayer request, thank Him with deep gratitude. He said ‘No’ so that the beautiful Picture of your Life would not get spoilt by the wrong colors.



TEACHING CONTENT

Story of Habakkuk

Habakkuk was a prophet who lived at the end of the seventh century B.C., at a time when the people of Judah had become extremely sinful and evil. He was deeply disturbed by the violence of these cruel people and asked the Lord to punish them.

He said, “Our LORD, how long must I beg for your help before you listen? How long before you save us from all this violence? Why do you make me watch such terrible injustice? Why do you allow violence, lawlessness, crime, and cruelty to spread every where? Laws cannot be enforced; justice is always the loser; criminals crowd out honest people and twist the laws around” (Habakkuk 1:2-4).

What do you think God said? God told Habakkuk that He would take care of their sin **in His time**. He knew that the people were doing wrong and He was going to punish them for it. But He was **NOT going to do it RIGHT NOW**.

However, God promised to protect Habakkuk and the other godly people until the time of punishment came. He promised, “The punishment of the wicked may seem slow in coming, but wait for it; it will certainly take place, and it will not be delayed. Those who are evil will not survive, but

those who are righteous will live because they are faithful to God” (Habakkuk 2:4).

So Habakkuk decided to remain faithful to God by trusting Him and living a righteous life.

He declared, “Even if my fig trees stop blooming, and God doesn’t answer my prayer to make them bloom, I’ll continue to trust him. Even if my vineyards stop producing grapes, and there’s no money left to feed my family, I’ll continue to believe that God will help me. I will continue to rejoice **because the Lord God always saves me.**”



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Habakkuk was not upset with God even when the Lord refused to answer his prayer immediately. Is it possible for us to be as cheerful as Habakkuk? Isn’t this a very difficult thing for ordinary Christians like us?

When we pray sincerely for something special, and God says ‘NO’ or ‘WAIT,’ it is very painful.

- It makes some people stop trusting God.
- It makes some people very angry with God.
- And it makes some people sin against God, just to take revenge against Him.

However, Habakkuk didn’t react in this way because the Lord made him strong. Habakkuk said, “The Lord gives me

strength. He makes my feet as sure as those of a deer, and He helps me stand on the mountains” (Habakkuk 3:19).

When we are desperately praying for help in difficult situations, and God answers ‘Wait,’ we feel like a helpless animal stuck on a steep mountain. It looks like we will slip off the mountain and crash to the rocks below if God doesn’t answer immediately.

At such a time, the Lord gives us the strength to ‘WAIT’ **if we ask Him.**

So, YES! Even ordinary Christians like us can have the strength to stay cheerful when God doesn’t answer our prayers.

But most Christians prefer not to be strong. They prefer to sulk and grumble against God. **It makes them feel good in a negative way!** They like having a pity party and feeling sorry for themselves. So **they choose not to** ask for strength.

On the other hand, those who ask God for strength are able to stay cheerful even when He says ‘No.’ God gives them a deep faith, to know that He is saying ‘No’ for their own good, and they feel a deep peace inside their hearts.

Will God say ‘No’ to our prayers most of the time? Should this be our expectation from Him when we pray?

It is usually the Christians who’re living in sinful disobedience **on a daily basis** who find that God keeps saying ‘No.’ This happens to them a lot because their heart is still very worldly. They pray most of the time with a selfish attitude, bothered only about themselves and their families. The things of God and the desires of God don’t interest them at all. So James

4:3 keeps happening to them again and again (James 4:3: Yet even when you do pray, your prayers are not answered, because you pray just for selfish reasons).

But those who are sincerely trying to follow God **on a daily basis**, experience a very different story. They notice that almost every single prayer gets answered with a big YES! God enjoys answering their prayers, because they pray with the right attitude.

1 John 5:14,15 says, “We are certain that God will hear our prayers when we ask for what pleases him. And if we know that God listens when we pray, we are sure that our prayers have already been answered.”

So if we are living daily with a desire to please the Lord, we will find ourselves asking for the right things, with the right attitude. And we will discover that God wants to answer almost every single prayer with a big YES!

Sometimes God says ‘Yes,’ but not in the way we expected. What should be our response when the Lord does this?

Some Christians respond very negatively when God doesn’t answer in the exact way that they expected. They feel upset with God.

But this is not a healthy response. This response seems to suggest that God can’t be trusted. It seems to suggest that God has given us ‘second-best’ when we prayed for the best.

However, we need to remember that God’s plans are higher than our plans. We see an example of this in the Bible:

Abraham prayed to the Lord to spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. But when he woke up the next morning, he saw the two cities totally burnt down, with thick smoke rising up from the ruins (Genesis 19:27, 28).

What do you think were Abraham's feelings when he saw this horrible sight? Did anger against God burn in his heart? Or did he humbly submit to the situation, trusting that God knows best? The Bible doesn't say what his response was.

But Genesis 19:29 clearly says, "... when God destroyed the cities of the plain, **he remembered Abraham**, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe ..." God did not give Abraham a "different 'Yes'" because He had forgotten him temporarily. God just did what He thought was best.

Abraham's immediate thought must have been that God said 'No' to his prayer. When you don't get exactly what you wanted, you too might feel as if God has said a blunt 'No.'

However, later on, Abraham must have found out that Lot was safe. He must have found out that God said 'Yes' to his prayer—He just gave a different 'Yes' than the one expected.

So never judge God hastily. Within a few years, you will discover that by giving you a different 'Yes' (different from the one you wanted), the Lord has in fact given you something much better.

Usually it takes time to discover this. So we must wait trustingly until God reveals the complete picture to us.



APPLICATION

This week, make a commitment to respond positively, trusting God, no matter what His answer is: Yes, No or Wait.

- If God says ‘Yes,’ don’t forget to thank Him for the answered prayer.
- If He gives you something different from what you expected, even then go ahead and thank Him. Trust Him, knowing that He will only give you what is best.
- If He says ‘WAIT,’ ask Him for the strength to wait patiently without growing bitter. And ask for strength to face the difficult situation until the answer finally comes.
- If He says ‘No,’ thank Him with deep gratitude, knowing that He will reject every prayer that spoils the Complete Picture of your Life.
- Finally, commit yourself each day to pleasing God. Then, you will discover most of your prayers being answered.

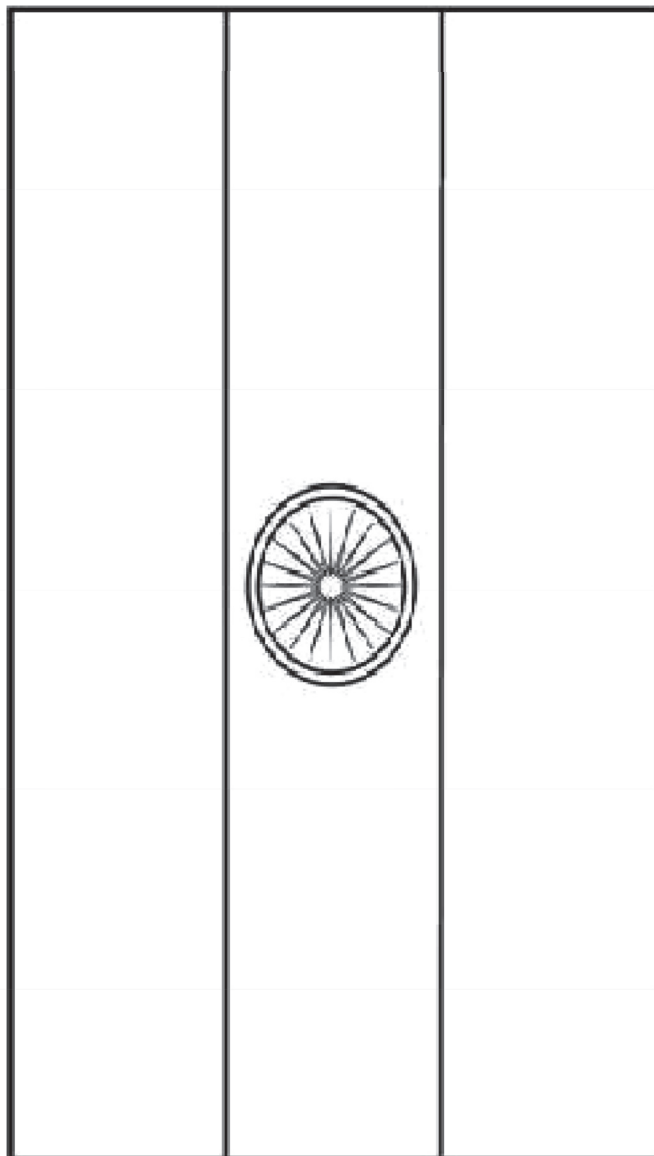
Next week, make sure that you come with testimonies of how God helped you rejoice even when the answers were not what you expected.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



India



www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy



What Blocks Prayer



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To teach about the three obstacles to prayer.
- To reveal the dangers of Ingratitude and Unforgiveness.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Philippians 4:6; Mark 11:25,26; 1 John 5:14



MEMORY VERSE

Mark 11:25,26: Whenever you stand up to pray, you must forgive what others have done to you. Then your Father in heaven will forgive your sins.

Materials Needed:

- Small magnet (not a powerful magnet)
- Sheet of paper
- Iron nail

Note to the Facilitator

There are **at least nine obstacles** to prayer. This lesson mentions **three obstacles only**:

- Interference by demonic forces
- Giving up
- Praying with selfish motives
- **Ingratitude**
- **Unforgiveness**
- **Wanting my own way**

[The first three obstacles were covered in detail at the Primary Level (Std.2-4)].



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- How did you respond when God said 'No' to some prayer this week? Give examples.
- What are the some common reasons why God says 'No' to our prayers sometimes?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

Last week, we looked at the four ways in which God usually answers our prayers. Today, we will look at the main obstacles which may prevent our prayers from getting answered.

Of course, the worst obstacle would be in not having a personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus is not obligated to answer the prayers of unbelievers, as they haven't entered into a Covenant agreement with Him.

However, believers too face certain obstacles, and we will now look at these.



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity: What's blocking the Power?

Ask the children to **find out how many folds of paper** the magnetic force is able to penetrate.

Step 1:

Take a sheet of paper and fold it in half, as many times as possible, until it becomes a thick wad.

Place an iron nail under this thick wad of paper.

Bring a small magnet close to the wad of paper. Observe if the magnet is able to lift the nail off the table (The small magnet may lack the magnetic force to penetrate the thick wad and lift up the iron nail).

Step 2:

Unfold the paper by a few folds and try again. This time, the magnet may be able to attract the nail to some extent.

Step 3:

Unfold the sheet completely and place it on top of the nail. This time the magnet may be able to lift the nail off the table, even though the sheet is in-between.

Ask:

- What was stopping the magnet from lifting up the iron nail?
(The thick wad of paper).
- **Why did it become easier to lift the nail after unfolding the sheet?**
(There was much less blockage between the magnet and the nail).

Observe:

The lesser the blockage, the more the nail feels the force of the magnet. In fact, if the nail wants to experience the full force of the magnet, it must get rid of all the blockages between itself and the magnet.

We see the same thing happening with our prayers. We place thick blockages between God and us, and then we wonder why we are not experiencing the power of God.

Today, we will look at three blockages (three obstacles) that prevent us from enjoying the power of God through answered prayers.



TEACHING CONTENT

Blockage 1: Ingratitude**Read Aloud:**

Philippians 4:6: ...With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God.

Ask: In this verse, prayer is linked with what other thing?
(Prayer is linked with thankful hearts).

Read Aloud:

Colossians 4:2: Never give up praying. And when you pray, keep alert and be thankful.

Ask: In this verse, prayer is linked with what other thing?
(Prayer is linked with being thankful).

Read Aloud:

1 Thessalonians 5:17,18: ... never stop praying. Whatever happens, keep thanking God because of Jesus Christ. This is what God wants you to do.

Ask: In this verse, prayer is linked with what other thing?
(Prayer is linked with thanking God).

Again and again, we see that prayer and thankfulness are linked together. When we cover our hearts with bitterness or ingratitude towards God, this thanklessness acts like a thick wad of paper. It stops the power of God from reaching us and lifting us out of our problems. We must get rid of the Blockage of Ingratitude and Bitterness towards God, if we want to see powerful answers to our prayers.

Blockage 2: Unforgiveness

Read Aloud:

Mark 11:25,26: Whenever you stand up to pray, you must forgive what others have done to you. Then your Father in Heaven will forgive your sins.

Ask: In this verse, what does Jesus specifically teach us to do while praying?

(You must forgive what others have done to you).

Explain:

When we have relationship-problems with our parents, our brothers and sisters, and our friends, our relationship with God gets affected. This will delay the answers to our prayers.

So before you start praying, ask for forgiveness. Ask for restoration from God (admit that we are angry and full of hatred, having an urge for revenge) and let go of your right to judge people. Then, ask God to restore and heal you; and even as His love heals you, take a step to forgive and love the person who hurt you.

Blockage 3: Self-Will

Read Aloud:

1 John 5:14: We are certain that God will hear our prayers when we ask for what pleases him.

Ask: According to this verse, when can we be hundred percent sure that God will answer our prayers?

(When we ask for something that pleases God, and it is according to His perfect will).

Explain:

The purpose of prayer is not to just give us whatever we want. It is to make us the kind of people God wants us to be.

So the Lord says, “As you pray, I’m listening very carefully. If you ask for something that is not good for you, then I may not answer—because I want you to have only whatever will benefit you. So trust me!”

And so, when our prayers focus more on our own self-will, rather than God’s will, then the answer to the prayer may not come at all.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Blockage 1: Ingratitude

When the Israelites expressed a desire for meat, the Lord provided them with quails (Numbers 11). But after supplying them, He also killed many of them with a plague. Why did God do this? Does it irritate Him when we ask Him for our material needs?

The Lord loves to provide us with material gifts. Matthew 6:26 says, “Look at the birds in the sky! They don’t plant or harvest. They don’t even store grain in barns. Yet your Father in heaven takes care of them. Aren’t you worth more than birds?”

So the Lord was not upset with the Israelites because they asked for meat. Rather, He was upset because they were not grateful for what He had already provided—the manna.

The people said, "...we're starving out here, and the only food we have is this manna" (Numbers 11:6). But the truth is that they were not starving. God provided them with enough manna to eat their fill. It was mere ingratitude that made them speak this way. So even though God answered their prayers and provided quail, He also punished them for their ingratitude.

We need to keep this in mind when we pray. Are we grateful to the Lord for all the things that He has provided? If we are not ... if we are grumbling like the Israelites ... then the Lord may choose not to provide us with more things. Ingratitude can block prayers to a great extent.

Blockage 2: Unforgiveness

If I don't forgive someone, will God automatically stop answering my prayers? What's the connection between unforgiveness and answer to prayer?

God doesn't block the answer to prayer. Sin blocks it!

Sin blocks answers to prayer. When there's sin in my life, the answer to my prayer request doesn't reach me, because the sin inside me "blocks out" the answer.

I can get rid of the sin inside, only when the Lord forgives me and cleans it up. But He says that He will not forgive my sin and clean it **'IF'** I refuse to forgive someone else. (And if the Lord doesn't forgive and clean up the sin inside me, then this sin will continue to block the answer to my prayers).

So God doesn't block the answer to prayer. Sin blocks it!

Therefore, I must forgive the sins that people have committed against me; then God will forgive the sins I have committed against Him. He will clean up all the sins I have confessed to Him, and there won't be any dirt left inside to block my prayers.

In this sense, forgiving people and the answer to my personal prayers are directly connected.

Blockage 3: Self-Will

How can I know whether my prayer is according to God's will or not?

2 Corinthians 1:20 says, "Christ says 'Yes' to all of God's promises. That's why we have Christ to say 'Amen' for us to the glory of God."

So, if my prayer is directly related to a promise in the Bible, then I can confidently expect a 'Yes' from God.

- God will say 'Yes' if I ask for victory over temptation (1 Corinthians 15:57,58).
- God will say 'Yes' if I pray for the salvation of family members (1 Corinthians 7:14).
- God will say 'Yes' if I pray for healing (Isaiah 53:4-6).
- God will say 'Yes' if I pray for safety in times of danger (Matthew 10:29-31).
- God will say 'Yes' if I pray for basic needs like food, money for school fees, good friends, etc. (Philippians 4:19).

- God will say ‘Yes’ if I pray for a good future (Jeremiah 29:11).
- God will say ‘Yes’ if I pray for wisdom (James 1:5).
- God will say ‘Yes’ if I pray for unity (John 17:23).
- God will say ‘Yes’ if I pray for spiritual growth (Matthew 5:6).
- God will say ‘Yes’ if I pray for forgiveness for my sins (1 John 1:9).

When it comes to material possessions, first rank in school, etc., these prayers will be answered with a ‘Yes’ if your attitude is not selfish or greedy. If there is greed, then God may say ‘No’ or delay answering until your motive changes.



APPLICATION

Today, we have learnt about three things that could block our prayers:

- Ingratitude
- Unforgiveness
- Self-will

Challenge:

- This week, pray with a grateful and thankful heart (focusing on all that God has done so far and all that God will do in future). Don’t dwell on things that you don’t have and grumble about them.

What Blocks Prayer

- Forgive those who have wronged you, so that God can forgive your sins as well and remove the blockages to prayer.
- Pray according to God's will, not according to your own selfish desires.

Next week, make sure that you come with testimonies of how the changes you made resulted in answered prayers.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER

