



LESSON 1 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Teaches Us How to Pray

SCRIPTURE: [Matthew 6](#)

WORD OF WONDER: [From Psalm 66:19–20](#)

Take a moment to read [Matthew 6:5–13](#).

It's clear that the disciples knew about prayer. As Jewish men, they prayed often. Prayer was woven into their daily lives. But Jesus taught them to pray differently. He prayed with intimacy and confidence.

Jesus' prayers went way beyond rote repetition of familiar phrases. It was as though Jesus was talking with God, not at Him, and the disciples sensed the love that fueled Jesus' prayers.

That is what they wanted in their prayers. Not duty, but devotion. Not performance, but passion.

We still need Jesus to teach us to pray. If you're unsure that's true, ask yourself this: If someone was eavesdropping while you pray, how would they describe your relationship with whoever's on the other end of your words? Do you sound as though you're speaking with someone you know? Someone you love? Are you reciting or communicating?

I ask not to shame you (or myself—we're in this together!) but because in this lesson you have a choice: You can present the Lord's Prayer as a formula for prayer or as an invitation to intimacy with God.

Doing the first gives kids useful, straight-from-Jesus information—and that's great. But also doing the second gives them permission to open their hearts to God.

And that's when prayer really begins.

—**Mikal Keefer**

Children's Ministry Volunteer

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Matthew is the first of the Gospels in the New Testament. While Mark emphasizes Jesus' miracles and Luke highlights Jesus' care for the poor and oppressed, Matthew focuses most on Jesus' practical teaching ministry

WHAT?

[Matthew 6](#) is part of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5–7](#)), one of the five major speeches that Jesus gives in this Gospel. In this speech, Jesus helps His disciples understand what true fulfillment of God's law looks like.

WHERE?

Matthew's Gospel does not tell us exactly what "mountain" Jesus gave the sermon on. An elevated location was ideal for giving speeches to large crowds, as it allowed everyone to see Jesus and hear Him speak.

WHEN?

The Gospel of Matthew places the Sermon on the Mount immediately after describing Jesus' miraculous ministry in Galilee ([Matthew 4:23–25](#)).

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

Matthew's Gospel portrays Jesus as the prophet like Moses who was promised in Deuteronomy: "He will be one of their own people. I will put my words in his mouth" ([18:18](#)). Like Moses, Jesus instructs God's people on how to obey God and communicate with Him ([Matthew 5–7](#)).



Curiosity

LESSON 1 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

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Play Stations

SUPPLIES: stickers with various images on them (e.g., houses, animals, people, sun, moon, stars, toys, food, hearts), or similar images cut from a magazine, white cardstock (1 per child), marker, bin; rice (enough to fill the bin); scissors (prep only), coloring utensils

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Praying Hands Sheet](#), [The Lord's Prayer Coloring Sheet](#) (1 per kid)

Greet kids warmly as they arrive and briefly explain the play stations. Invite them to play at any of the play stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas of what we'll be learning about today?

Play Station: Sticky Prayers

Set-up: Set out stickers with images on them (e.g., houses, animals, people, sun, moon, stars, food, etc.) and write "Things I Can Pray For" on the white cardstock. You can also cut out images from a magazine instead of using stickers.

Play: Read the words on the cardstock to kids: Things I Can Pray For. Let the kids add stickers to their paper to show things they can pray for. As they work, encourage them to share ways they can pray for each of the things they add.

9:00 Service

Leader Tip: Stickers can be difficult for preschoolers to remove from the backing. Be available to help them if needed.

Play Station: Praying Hand Search

Set-up: Fill a bin with sand or rice. Print one copy of the [Praying Hands Sheet](#) and cut apart the pictures. Hide the pictures of praying hands in the rice or sand

Play: Have kids search and find all the pictures of praying hands. Once they have found all 10 of them, they can hide them for another friend to find.



Play Station: The Lord's Prayer Coloring Sheet

Set-up: Print one copy per kid of the [Coloring Sheet](#). Set out the [Coloring Sheets](#) and coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw someone they talk with often.



Belief

LESSON 1 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Guide kids into knowing God more deeply, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.

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Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, we are so glad we can talk to You! Thank You for being there to listen to us. Help us learn how to talk to You. We invite Your Holy Spirit to be with us. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

God's Big Story

Pull out the Bible.

Ask: What is this called? *The Bible*

Ask: Why is the Bible important? *Because it is God's word. Everything in it is true. It really happened.*

TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Read from the Big Picture Bible p 323

The Lord's Prayer

9:00 Service

Word of Wonder

WORD OF WONDER

**But God has surely listened. He has heard
my prayer. Give praise to God.**

— Psalm 66:19–20a

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **What does our Word of Wonder say God does?** (*He listens and hears our prayers.*)
- **How does it make you feel to know that God listens to you and hears your prayers?**



Faith

LESSON 1 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

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Game: Jesus Says

Have kids play a game that is similar to “Simon Says,” but with a twist. You will call out things Jesus did or didn’t tell us to do from today’s story. If Jesus didn’t say it, have kids give a thumbs down. If He did say it, have kids give a thumbs up and jump up.

Examples:

- Jesus said ... pray super-loud and in front of everyone. (thumbs down)
- Jesus said ... pray for God to help others. (thumbs up)
- Jesus said ... to ask for forgiveness when we make a bad choice. (thumbs up)
- Jesus said ... to ask God to give us lots of toys. (thumbs down)
- Jesus said ... praise God and tell Him how much we love Him. (thumbs up)
- Jesus said ... ask God for things we need, such as a home, clothes, and food. (thumbs up)
- Jesus said ... complain to God when we don’t get chocolate cake for dessert. (thumbs down)
- Jesus said ... we can ask God to help us obey and do the right thing. (thumbs up)
- Jesus said ... we can pray for someone who is sick. (thumbs up)
- Jesus said ... God always hears our prayers. (thumbs up)

Wow, that was a lot of fun! Jesus said some important things in God’s big story today, and you did a great job remembering the things Jesus said and the things Jesus didn’t say!



Identity

LESSON 1 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Create space for God to remind kids they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.

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Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them and thank God for always listening to us.

God, thank You for teaching us how to pray. Help us remember that you always listen to us, and we can come to you. Help us remember to praise you and ask for what we need. We love you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands were open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: May God help you love the things He loves. May He provide for your needs each day. May you forgive others and be forgiven. May He always remind you how Jesus teaches us to pray.

9:00 Service

Closing Activity: Can You Hear Me?

Have kids sit in a circle.

I'm going to whisper something in *(say the name of a child)*'s ear. Then he is going to whisper it in the ear of the person next to him. You are going to keep whispering it to the person next to you until it gets back to me, and the last person will say it out loud. Ready?

Whisper a phrase from the list below into a child's ear and encourage the kids to pass the phrase around the circle by whispering it until the phrase has reached the end. Encourage the last child to say it aloud. Play several rounds, starting with a different child each time.

Here are some things you can whisper in the child's ear:

"I can talk to God any time."

"God always hears my prayers."

"Jesus teaches us how to pray."

"Prayer is talking to God."

After each phrase, ask the child who said the phrase aloud to answer one of the questions below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Was it hard to hear the phrase that was whispered to you?
- In God's big story, what did people do to make themselves look better? *(pray loudly in front of others)*
- Do you think it's hard for God to hear us if we are whispering or praying silently in our heads? Why or why not?
- What is something you think Jesus wants us to pray about?
- What have you prayed for?
- When do you pray?
- Why do you think it's important to pray?

Sometimes it's hard for us to listen and hear, like we may have experienced in this activity, but God always hears us! That's why Jesus teaches us to pray to God. We can always talk to Him, and He is always listening! Whether we whisper our prayers or shout them, God hears all of them. Let's talk to God now in prayer!

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and to thank God for teaching us how to pray.

9:00 Service

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