



LESSON 4 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Hears Our Prayers

SCRIPTURE: James 5; 1 Thessalonians 5

WORD OF WONDER: From Psalm 66:19–20

Pause now to read [James 5:13–18](#).

When I first heard the term, divine expectation, I immediately fell in love with it.

The friend who used it was describing a tough situation. His wife was seriously ill and slowly growing weaker. And though he was juggling kids, a career, and serving as a part-time caregiver, he never left home without pausing to kiss his wife and then checking to see that her jogging shoes were by the door.

“We used to run every day,” he said. “I’m praying she recovers, and when that happens, I want to be sure her jogging shoes are where she can find them.”

That’s a guy who prayed with faith. He had faith that God is, that God was listening, and that God loved his wife. He trusted God wanted the best for his wife, and, as far as my friend was concerned, that best would include one day again lacing up those shoes.

This isn’t a miraculous healing story. His wife eventually died, and my friend eventually placed her shoes in a box he carried to a secondhand store so someone else could use them.

Praying with faith doesn’t necessarily mean God will say “yes” to your every request. But it does mean you trust He hears you and will respond. And it means you look for and praise Him in whatever response He gives you.

How will you faithfully pray with divine expectation today?

—Mikal Keefer

Children’s Ministry Volunteer

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

First Thessalonians was written by Paul to the church in Thessalonica, and from early Christian history, James, the brother of Jesus, has been understood to be the author of the letter of James ([Galatians 1:19](#)). Both authors emphasize the need for faithful, consistent prayer.

WHAT?

These letters are very different in structure and purpose. First Thessalonians addresses the specific situation of believers who were concerned that Jesus would not return. James is a letter of general wisdom meant to circulate among different churches.

WHERE?

The letter of James is addressed to the “12 tribes scattered among the nations” ([James 1:1](#)), which may refer to all the Gentiles who believe in Jesus. Thessalonica, however, is located in northern Greece.

WHEN?

Some people think that [1 Thessalonians](#) is the earliest written document in the New Testament, perhaps written in the late 40s or early 50s. James died around the year 62, and many scholars think his letter was written a few years earlier.

CONNECTING TO GOD’S BIG STORY

Jesus first taught His disciples to “always pray and not give up” ([Luke 18:1](#)). Both Paul and James thus draw upon the teachings of Jesus in their statements about prayer.



Curiosity

LESSON 4 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

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

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Curiosity Activity: Feeling Prayers

SUPPLIES: disposable plastic plate, googly eyes (2), dry-erase marker, tissue, glue (prep only)

Before kids arrive, glue two googly eyes on a plastic plate. Use the dry-erase marker to draw a smiling mouth on the plate.

Hold up the plate with the smiley face. **Here's a face that is happy and smiling! Can you show me your happy face?** Allow kids to respond. **I love your happy faces. We can pray and talk to God when we are happy!**

Use the tissue to erase the smile from the plate and draw a frown. **Uh-oh. Now our friend is sad. Can you show me your sad face?** Allow kids to respond. **We can pray and talk to God when we are sad!**

Use the tissue to erase the frown from the plate and draw a circle for the mouth to represent a scared face. **Now our friend is scared. Can we pray and talk to God when we are scared? Yes, we can!**

We can pray and talk to God when we're happy, sad, or scared! We can talk to God all the time. God hears our prayers!





Belief

LESSON 4 **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: **Father God, we know that You always hear our prayers. Help us hear from You today. As we worship You and hear Your Word today, help us remember that You hear us and want to spend time with us. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

God's Big Story

****Note to leaders:** This story is not in our picture Bibles. You can use the prayer strips and the script in your Belief bag to aid in telling the 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 James 5:13-18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NiRV from the text below:

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Then that person should pray. Is anyone among you happy? Then that person should sing songs of praise. **¹⁴** Is anyone among you sick? Then that person should send for the elders of the church to pray over them. They should ask the elders to anoint them with olive oil in the name of the Lord. **¹⁵** The prayer offered by those who have faith will make the sick person well. The Lord will heal them. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. **¹⁶** So confess your sins to one another. Pray for one another so that you might be healed. The prayer of a

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godly person is powerful. Things happen because of it.

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, just as we are. He prayed hard that it wouldn't rain. And it didn't rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again. That time it rained. And the earth produced its crops.

¹⁶ Always be joyful. ¹⁷ Never stop praying. ¹⁸ Give thanks no matter what happens. God wants you to thank him because you believe in Christ Jesus.

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 have you prayed and asked God about?**
- **What does it mean to praise God?**



Faith

LESSON 4 EARLY CHILDHOOD

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

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Circle Time: Sticky Review

SUPPLIES: sticky hand (or a piece of painter's tape rolled into an inside-out circle, taped to the end of a piece of yarn), scissors (prep only)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Prayer Story Chain Sheet](#) (2 copies)

Ahead of time, print two copies of the Prayer Story Chain Sheet (also used in God's Big Story) and cut apart the pictures. Gather kids in a circle and place two copies of the Prayer Story Chain Sheet in the middle of the circle, face down. If you don't have a sticky hand, cut a piece of yarn about 12 inches long and roll a small piece of painter's tape into an inside-out circle so the sticky side is facing out. Stick the tape to one end of the yarn and let the kids toss the sticky end onto the papers instead of using the sticky hand.



In God's big story today, we made prayer story chains that will help us remember how to pray. Let's use some papers from our prayer chain to help us remember what we learned about prayer. Sticky hands are fun to play with! They remind me that when we pray, God hears our prayers, and our prayers stick! We are going to use this sticky hand (or sticky tape) to grab a piece of paper with a picture reminding us of prayer.

Give a sticky hand to one child and let him use it to "grab" one of the pieces of paper from the middle of the circle. Ask him if he knows what that paper reminds us of, then ask one of the corresponding questions from below. Repeat with the other kids and remaining pieces of paper. You can reuse some pieces of paper if you have a large group of kids. Prepare some backup sticky hands in case the hand loses its sticky quality. If you have enough, you can give each kid a sticky hand to take home as a reminder that our prayers stick

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with God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

We can pray to God!

- **What is prayer?** (*talking to and listening to God*)
- **What did Jesus' early followers think about prayer?** (*that it was important and powerful*)

We can pray about everything!

- **What is something we can pray for?**
- **Does God always give us everything we pray for? Why do you think this is?**

We can pray any time!

- **When can we pray?** (*We can pray day or night. We can pray all the time!*)
- **Should we only pray when we are sad?** (*No, we can pray when we are happy or sad. We can pray all the time!*)

God hears our prayers!

- **How do you talk with God?**
- **Which of our prayers do you think God hears?** (*All of them! God hears our prayers!*)

We can pray to God anytime, about anything. He hears our prayers! 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 hearing our prayers.



Identity

LESSON 4 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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Responding in Worship: Colorful Prayers

SUPPLIES: circular plate; cup of water; hard-shelled, chewy fruit candies (at least 1 per kid)

Set out a plate and a cup of water. Give each child a hard-shelled, chewy fruit candy.

I am going to give each of you a candy, and you can place it along the edge of the plate and say a prayer. Your prayer could be as short as “I love You, God!” I’ll go first. Demonstrate how to place the candy in a circular pattern along the inside edge of the plate, and then say a prayer. Give a candy to the kids one at a time. Allow the kids to place the candies in a circular pattern on the plate and say prayers. If you have a large group of kids, you may need more than one plate. Creating a pattern with the colors of candy will create a pretty design.



Once everyone has had a turn to pray and the plate has a circle of candy on it, say: **God loves to hear our prayers! The Bible tells us our prayers come together in a beautiful way for God. Let’s see what happens when we add water to this plate.** Gently add water to the plate, starting pouring in the middle of the plate, until the candies are covered in water. The candy coloring will begin to spread toward the center of the plate, creating a beautiful design! **Our candies created a beautiful picture, like our prayers are beautiful and special to God!**



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Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them, thanking God for hearing our prayers.

God, thank You for hearing our prayers. Help us to always remember to pray and talk with 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 you always remember that you can pray anywhere, anytime. May you remember that you can pray no matter how you are feeling or what is going on. May you always remember that God hears our prayers.