



Jesus Teaches Us to Pray

Goal: To practice the prayer that Jesus taught.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 6:9–15

The most famous prayer in the Bible is the Lord’s Prayer. We know it by heart. We utter its familiar words in many times, at many places. The phrases in the prayer are deeply meaningful to us. They express thoughts and themes that should mark all our prayers, whenever and wherever we pray them.

But do we stop to think about the great grace we receive simply by being able to pray—this prayer and all others? Without the invitation to prayer, we would be silent. But Jesus gave his disciples a model prayer, marking for us what true prayer embraces. Jesus also opened for us the way to pray. He showed us that prayer can be, as John Calvin said, an “intimate conversation” with God.

We praise God, petition God, and express to God the deepest desires of our hearts. We communicate with God. God always answers our prayers. God’s grace enables us to pray.

The opportunity to pray, to share our intimate thoughts and desires with God, makes us grateful. What a wonderful blessing! What can give us a stronger sense of trust and faith? We are deeply grateful that Jesus taught us to pray!

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

We teach children to pray by offering blessings, spoken or sung at our tables at home, and by helping them say their own prayers at bedtime. When children are present in worship, they will hear and begin to learn the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. Children’s spiritual lives grow and deepen as we provide experiences for them with prayer. Notice the four requests in the Lord’s Prayer. We pray for the bread we need for today. We pray that God forgives us when we do something bad. We pray that we won’t be tempted to do wrong things, or that if we do, God will be with us, helping us. Children can understand and appreciate each of these. And remember in the story, Jesus says to keep it simple and that fancy words and long prayers aren’t needed.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This is the First Sunday in Lent. You have an excellent opportunity to invite children to think about the season of Lent as a time of personal reflection to consider how Jesus wants us to live. This session offers a time to engage children in a conversation about prayer and when and where they do it, or the kinds of prayers they pray. Children know about how to say thanks to God, how to pray for things they want, and how to pray for others. Help them see how, in this prayer, Jesus also says it’s important to tell God about the mistakes we have made. When we pray, God hears and remembers.

*O God, give me a heart for prayer and for your children.
In Jesus’ name. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 1, 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

purple cloth

candle

Responding

Claiming

Grace Notes (GN) 1,
GN 2

Praying

copies of GN 3

Extra

copies of GN 4

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Before the session, tape together **SCM 1c** and **SCM 1d** to make a poster of the Lord’s Prayer for use in “Reflecting on God’s Grace.”

Welcoming and Preparing



Play “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven”—**SCM 23**—as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the response, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help set the scene. On a table, place a purple cloth, a Bible, and a candle to signify the light of Christ. Tell the children that this is the First Sunday in Lent, a time to think about how Jesus wants us to live. Explain that today you will be learning about a special prayer Jesus taught us to pray.

Post **SCM 1a** and **SCM 1b** near the worship table. Ask for volunteers to practice the Lord’s Prayer motions and be prepared to lead the group later in the session.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for a volunteer to practice today’s Scripture passage.

Mix with the group and encourage conversation.

Singing

Play “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven”—**SCM 23**—as the children listen. Sing the song together.

Praying



Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus, the light of the world. Take time to show gratitude for God’s gifts. After each line, have the children respond, “We thank you, God.”

For shining light into the world,

we thank you, God.

For the gifts you give us,

we thank you, God.

For grace and peace,

we thank you, God.

For showing us how to live in your way,

we thank you, God.

Amen.



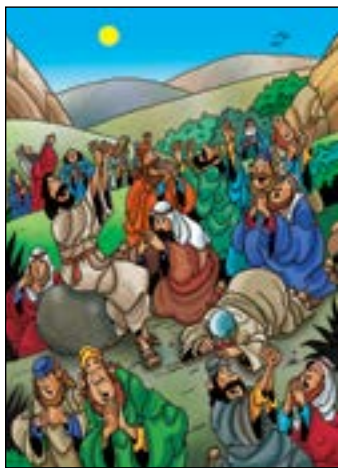
- C** Give children time to respond and to share; for some children, listening and speaking may take longer.

Preparing to Hear the Story

MS

Tell the children that Jesus gave us a prayer to use to talk with God. Invite the children to name what they know about the Lord's Prayer. Some children may have it memorized.

Comment that Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer so we have words when we don't know what to say to God.



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Substitute the version of the Lord's Prayer your congregation uses if it differs from the one in the story.

Hearing the Story

L MS

Invite a child to find Matthew 6 in the Bible. Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 6:9–15. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible on the worship center.

Draw the children's attention to the Lord's Prayer motions. Invite the volunteers who practiced the motions to lead the children in the prayer. Then read a retelling of the story using **SCM 1** or listen to the story audio. Prompt the children to say the Lord's Prayer with motions during the story.

Reflecting on God's Grace

C

Display the prepared Lord's Prayer poster. Invite the children to consider the key words of the Lord's Prayer. Point to each bolded word and ask the children what they think it means or makes them think about. Write their suggestions on the poster. If the children get stuck, use some of the following ideas:

- ▼ **Our**: not just mine, we think of others who join us in prayer whether they are there or not, we are all God's children
- ▼ **Father**: God is like a parent who cares for, protects, scolds, and loves. Is God also like a mother? Yes!
- ▼ **heaven**: where God is, with God, beautiful, peace-filled
- ▼ **hallowed**: holy, special, honored
- ▼ **name**: God's name is one of the ways we know God, God gave Moses God's name: I AM, what are other names of God?
- ▼ **Thy kingdom**: (thy = your or God's) God's place, the place where God rules
- ▼ **thy will be done** (on earth as it is in heaven): (thy = your or God's) the way God wants things, loving God and loving others, God's way of living
- ▼ **this day**: today, now
- ▼ **daily**: everyday, not just once in awhile
- ▼ **bread**: food, what we need to eat, things that keep us alive
- ▼ **forgive us**: pardon, excuse
- ▼ **debts**: what we owe, what we have done

- ▼ as we forgive: we have some forgiving to do too
- ▼ debtors: people who owe others, people who borrowed from us
- ▼ lead us not: do not take us somewhere, keep us from
- ▼ temptation: something that draws us away from good
- ▼ deliver us: take us to a different place
- ▼ evil: bad, scary

Singing

Give God an offering of music. Sing “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven”—**SCM 23**. Encourage the children to incorporate the motions they learned.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace

M

*Before the session, cut apart the cards on **GN 1** and **GN 2**. Place the cards in a paper bag. Make extra copies for children to take home.*

To help the children understand the words in the Lord’s Prayer, invite them to draw cards out of the bag. There are eighteen cards. Have the children draw as many as needed to use up all the cards. Then have the children take turns showing a card and explaining what it means. Children may use their own words or refer back to the ideas from “Reflecting on God’s Grace.”

After all the cards have been shared, invite the children to put them in order on a sheet of newsprint. Encourage children to fill in the missing words, writing them on the newsprint as well. For example, after the “Our” and “Father” cards, a child would write, “who art in,” and then the “heaven” card would be placed. Once the cards are in place, have the children glue them to the newsprint.

Send home copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2**. Encourage the children to cut apart the cards and do the activity with their family.

M *Some children need to move more than others, which makes sitting still difficult. Set clear expectations for appropriate movement to meet the needs of the child while not disrupting the rest of the group.*

Celebrating God’s Grace

B LD

Play a game to help children remember the Lord’s Prayer. Form a circle. Tell the children they will hold a ball of yarn, say five words of the Lord’s Prayer, and toss the yarn to another child while holding on to a piece of it. Make sure to include all children. To begin, the first child says, “Our Father, who art in . . .” The next child continues with, “heaven, hallowed be thy name . . .” The play continues with children



saying the words of the Lord's Prayer in order. If a child gets stuck, they may turn to a neighbor and ask, "Can you pray with me?" They may continue to ask until someone can supply the necessary words and pray with them. When the prayer is finished, the yarn will form a web among the children, connecting all together just like the Lord's Prayer connects us all as Christians.

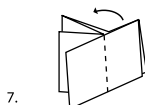
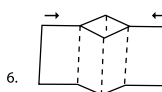
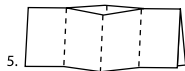
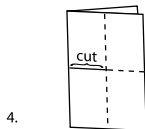
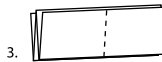
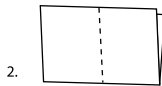
Say the prayer again, five words per child, passing the yarn in reverse order and winding it up. For a silly challenge, say the words in reverse order: "Amen forever glory the and!"

Praying God's Grace

LD M

Tell the children that, when we pray, we are having a conversation with God. Sometimes it's easier to write down what we are thinking about than to talk about it. Explain that a journal is one way of thinking through things to say. Hand out copies of **GN 3** and colored pencils. Read the prompts aloud and tell the children that they reflect parts of the Lord's Prayer.

Play quiet music while the children fill out the journal page. Encourage them to draw or write what they are thinking about in each of the prompt areas. Tell the children that God hears their prayers whether they speak them aloud, write them down, or color pictures. Consider having additional copies of the prayer journal page for children who would like to write additional prayers at home.



Extra Activity

L

Help the children make a booklet to remember the Lord's Prayer. Provide scissors and a copy of **GN 4**. Have them cut the rectangle from **GN 4**. Lead the children in these steps, waiting until each one is finished before going to the next step:

1. Fold in half lengthwise along the line, then open it.
2. Fold the paper in half widthwise, then open it.
3. Fold each short end to the center fold, then open it.
4. Fold the paper in half widthwise again. Use scissors to cut along the solid line, stopping when you reach the dashed line.
5. Open, then fold in half again along the length.
6. Holding each end of the fold, gently move toward the middle until the center sections move away from each other to form two separate paper folds.
7. Bring the cover around the center sections to form a booklet.

Read the prayer book with the children and discuss the symbols. If you have time, they can decorate their books with markers or colored pencils. Talk with them about ways they can share their books and Jesus' words with others.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather in a circle and wonder together how praying the Lord's Prayer would be a helpful practice during Lent. Pray the Lord's Prayer together using the motions on **SCM 1a** and **SCM 1b**.

Encourage the children to pray the Lord's Prayer each day this week, emphasizing a different word in the prayer each time they pray it. For example, "**Our** Father, who art in heaven . . ." one day, "Hallowed be thy **name** . . ." another day, "Give us **this day** our daily bread . . ." another time, and so forth.

Invite the children to repeat your words and actions as a blessing:

- ▼ Touch your head, and say: "May God bless my thoughts";
- ▼ touch your lips, and say: "May God bless my words";
- ▼ place your hands over your heart, and say: "May God give me a desire to do God's will."

Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to read the story during the week.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

Our

Father

heaven

hallowed

name

Thy kingdom

**thy will be done
(on earth as it
is in heaven)**

this day

daily

bread

forgive us

debts

as we forgive

debtors

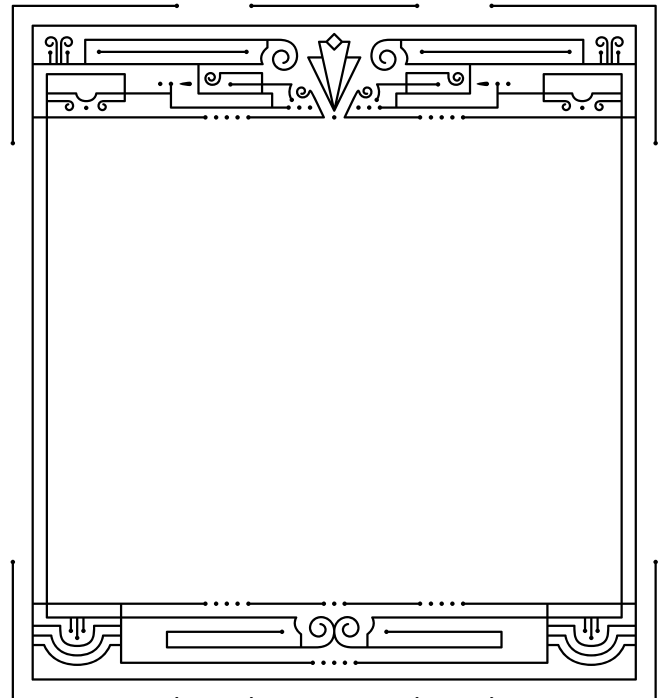
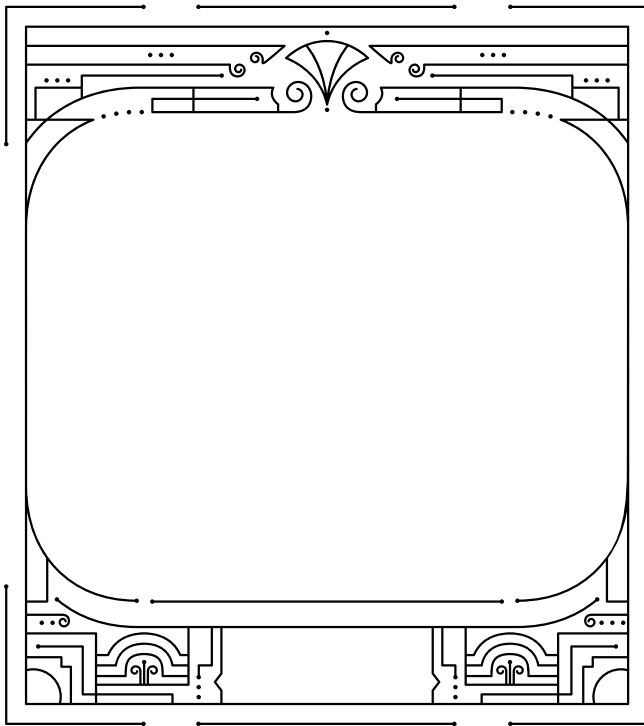
lead us not

temptation

deliver us

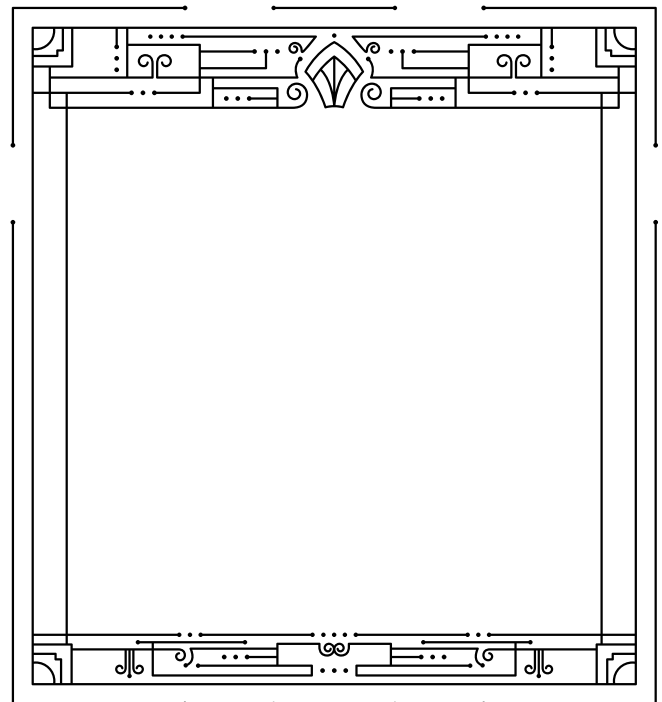
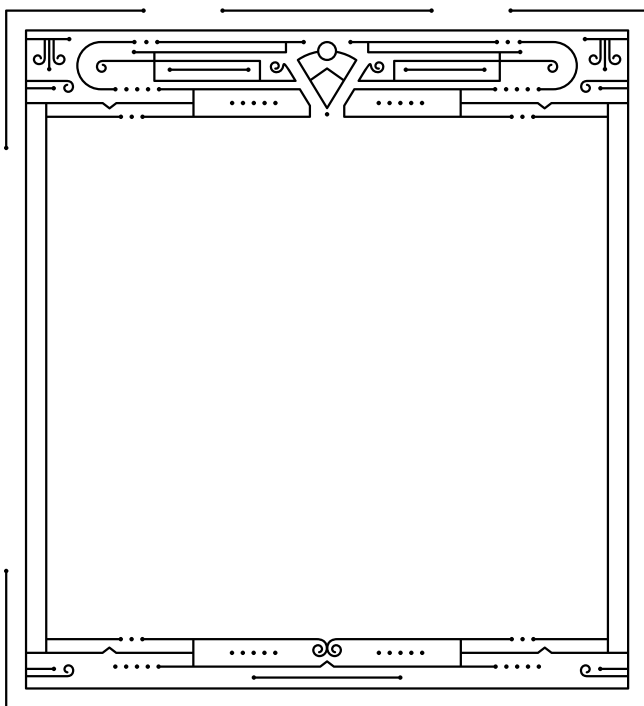
evil

God, I praise you for . . .



What I need today is . . .

Please forgive me for . . .



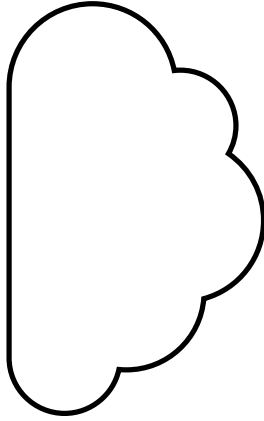
and help me forgive . . .

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Amen.

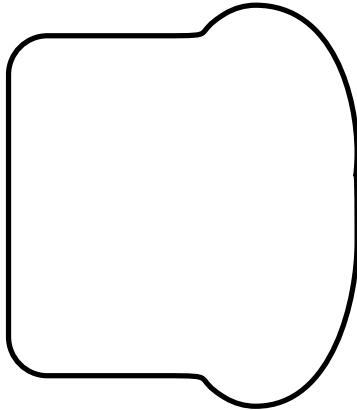
Our Father, who art
in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.



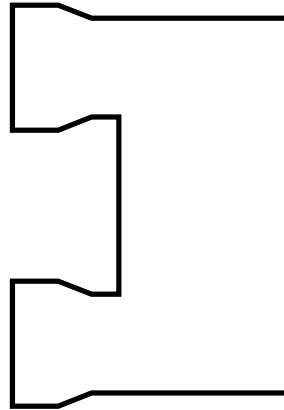
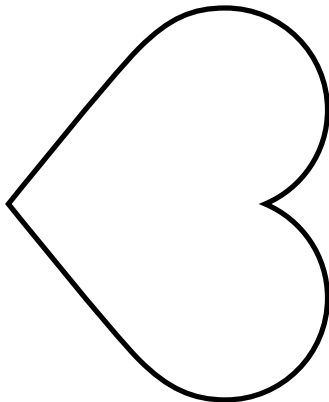
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is
in heaven.



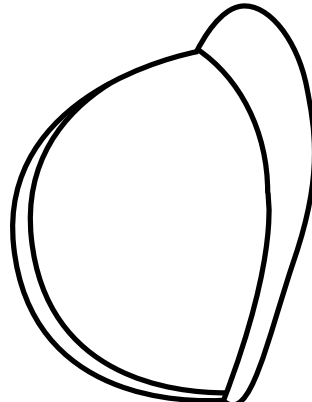
Give us this day our
daily bread;



and forgive us
our debts,
as we forgive
our debtors;



For thine is the
kingdom, and the
power, and the
glory forever.



and lead us not
into temptation,
but deliver us
from evil.

