

Why Pray?

Teacher Pep Talk:

Prayer is a crucial and integral part of being a Christian. It is one of the most important things we can teach our children. Teens, in particular, need to know that even if all the world seems busy and no one else is listening, God is always there to hear their words and care about their lives. This lesson will help them discover several reasons why we pray. The most compelling answer is that we have a loving God with whom we may communicate. Why NOT pray?

Major Points:

- God is really there (and so He can really hear you.)
- Prayer is one way we communicate with God.
- We pray because:
 - God is the Creator and we owe Him thanks
 - We are instructed to pray in every situation
 - It a way to present our requests before God
 - Prayer gets things done
- Jesus calls us His friends, and He wants to hear from us.

Scripture References:

Romans 1:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:16; Philippians 4:6-7; John 15:12-16; Revelation 3:20; Hebrews 4:14-16; Romans 8:26-27; and Nehemiah 1:1-11.

NOTE: Most of the scripture references are found written out where applicable in the lesson plan. The Nehemiah 1:1-11 reference is used in one of the optional activities.

Lesson Plan:

- Begin class with Prayer
- Opening Statement read aloud
- Distribution of Q&A Sheet to each student
- Students write down their thoughts on each question
- Group discussion of each of the three questions
 - Scripture references are given for biblical answers
 - Summation statement for each question is read
- Close discussion with Prayer
- Activities as selected by teacher

You will Need:

One copy of the Q&A sheet for each student
Pens or pencils
Optional materials listed with the suggested activities

LESSON PLAN

Begin class with Prayer:

Pray with and for the students at the beginning of every class.

Opening Statement: *(To be read at the beginning of the class.)*

If you have a friend, you want to talk to him, and you want to hear what he has to say in return. Friends talk. They talk about all sorts of things; important things and non-important things. In our world of advanced communication technology, we now have many ways to keep up with people. From Skype to Twitter we can poke, prod, and communicate with all kinds of people all over the world. We may think that we have plenty of people to keep up with and to talk to. So the question we ask is “Why Pray?” The answer is that God is really there, He is our friend, and He wants to hear from us.

(Distribute Q&A Sheets and allow students time to write down their own answers to the following three questions prior to discussion. Make your own notes here on this paper.)

Questions We May Ask Ourselves:

- 1.) Why try and talk to God when we can't see Him, we can't hear Him, and we sometimes wonder if He's really there at all?

- 2.) The Bible says that we are to “pray without ceasing” and that the “effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”. *(I don't even know what all those words mean!)* When and Why am I supposed to I pray?!?

- 3.) If God had a “Facebook” page, would He “friend” me? (OR... Does God really want to be my friend?)

God's Answers to Our Questions:

(For each question on the Q&A Sheet, pose each question out loud to the group. Allow time for discussion. Read the accompanying Bible verses. Then sum up.)

Question #1: Why try and talk to God when we can't see Him, we can't hear Him, and we sometimes wonder if He's really there at all?

Romans 1:19-21: *...what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

Sum Up for #1: God is really there. When we look around us and see all that has been created, we know that there is a Creator. In the past, (and sadly also in the present) others have (foolishly) pretended that God did not exist. They would not acknowledge Him as Creator or give thanks to Him for all that He created. As a result, the Bible says, "their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." We certainly don't want anything like that to happen to us! This is an excellent reason to pray. We are to pray and give thanks to God for who He is and for all that He has done. If you don't pray already, perhaps a good way to start would be to pray and thank God when you notice something in nature that reminds you of who He is and what He has created.

Question #2: The Bible says that we are to "pray without ceasing" and that the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much". *(I don't even know what all those words mean!)* When and Why am I supposed to I pray?!?

1 Thessalonians 5:17: NIV – *pray continually* (KJV – *pray without ceasing*)

James 5:16: NIV – *The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*
(KJV – *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*)

Philippians 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

John 15:16 *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."*

Sum Up for #2: As Christians, we are instructed to pray continually and to pray in every situation (especially if we feel anxious about it.) The reason for this is that prayer accomplishes things. Jesus said “...whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” This means if we ask something, which is in God’s will for us (*or as the Bible says ‘in Jesus’ name’*) that the Father will give it to us. [NOTE: This doesn’t necessarily mean that we automatically get everything on our Wish List (like a new pony), but it means that when we have need of something, which is in God’s will for us, He will provide it!] We are also told if we pray with thanksgiving and present our requests to God that the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. This is a very great promise, and it gives us a good reason to begin praying in every situation. What would the world give for peace of mind?

Question #3: If God had a “Facebook” page, would He “friend” me? (OR...Does God really want to be my friend?)

John 15:12-16 Jesus said: *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you...”*

Revelation 3:20 Jesus said: *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”*

Sum Up for #3: The nagging question in all of our minds is: “Does God love me?” The devil tries to tell us “No,” but it isn’t true. God DOES love us. Jesus said that no one had greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends. That is what Jesus did. The Bible says that Jesus called us His friends, and that He chose us, we did not choose Him. So, yes, Jesus would “friend” you if He had a Facebook page... at least He would send you a “Friend Request.” The real question is... “Would you accept his Friend Request?” Jesus says that He stands at the door and knocks, and that if anyone hears His voice and opens the door, He will come in! The Bible says that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. If you have not been saved (given your heart to Jesus as the Savior) then that is the first prayer for you to say! He ALWAYS hears that prayer! Those of us who believe in Jesus as Savior are called His friends and are instructed to pray in all situations. Jesus, our Friend, wants to hear from us!

Additional Questions Worthy of Discussion: *(Discuss these if you have extra time, or if the questions come up during your conversations with the class.)*

What if I'm worried that God won't hear my prayer?

Hebrews 4:14-16 *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Sum Up: The Bible says that we may approach God's throne of Grace with confidence, since Jesus is our Savior. We can receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. [NOTE: Mercy is when we DO NOT get the punishment we DO deserve. Grace is when we DO get something wonderful which we DO NOT deserve.] These are more excellent reasons to pray. And it is marvelous to know that we can come to God in prayer anytime and that, because of all Jesus has done for us, God will listen to us!

What if I don't know what to pray for?

Romans 8:26-27 *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

Sum Up: Often we do not know what to pray for. God knows this and had made provision for us. The Holy Spirit, who lives in all believers, intercedes for us in accordance with the will of God. This is of great comfort to us and reassures us.

Close Discussion with Prayer:

Always pray at the end of each class. This time you may wish to ask the students if any of them would like to offer part of the prayer!

ACTIVITIES: *(Choose the activity which seems to fit the needs of your class best.)*

Building Nehemiah's Wall

- Read the following to the class:
Nehemiah was a Jewish man who lived many years ago. He was an important man who was in just the right place at just the right time. The Jews had lived in exile for many years after they had been taken away from their homeland by a mighty king and his army. Finally a new king decreed that they could return home again, but their capital city, Jerusalem, was still in ruins. The walls were broken down and the city gates were burned. Nehemiah knew about this and was very sad and frustrated by it all. So, Nehemiah sat down and prayed to God.
- Read the beginning of Nehemiah's story and his prayer in Nehemiah 1:1-11.
- Sum Up what happened after Nehemiah prayed:
After Nehemiah prayed, things began to change very quickly. The king sent him to fix the walls and gates of Jerusalem. He gave him all the authority he needed, as well as all the money and supplies he would need! And the wall got built! God fixed things! This is a great example to us of how God answers prayer!
- Separate the students into various teams and have them stand in separate areas of the room.
- Tell each team: "Use items here in the room to build the best wall you can. You have 5 minutes. Go!"
- Judge the best wall.
- Return the room to its original condition!!
- **For Fun:** Provide extra "building materials" like boxes, chairs, or tables.
- **Alternatively:** If you don't want them moving the furniture, offer the students rolls of paper streamers (or toilet paper) to unroll and make "walls" by stringing them between objects (or willing team-members!)

ACTIVITIES: *(Choose the activity which seems to fit the needs of your class best.)*

Salty Psalms

- Share these thoughts with your class:
Many of the Psalms were written by King David. The Psalms consist of both prayers and poems, and many of them were originally set to music so that they could be sung. They are very poignant and run the gamut of human emotion from near despair to overwhelming joy. **(You can almost taste the salt in David's tears!)** David's openness to God in prayer helps us to understand that we can talk to God about anything on our minds.

- Write these words or others like them on the board or on pieces of paper:
 - Frustration
 - Anger
 - Joy
 - Sadness
 - Shame
 - Feeling Safe
 - Feeling Threatened
 - Hope
 - Assurance in God

- Instruct the class:
 - Read through some of David's Psalms.
 - Can you find any verses that express one of these emotions?
 - Write a few of the verses down.
 - Share the verses with your friends.

- Ask the class:
 - Do you ever have some of the emotions David did?
 - Do you think you could ever tell God about them like David did?
 - Do you think it's ok to say the words of the Psalms to God in a prayer, if you feel the same way David did?

Optional: If there is extra time available, the students might like to write a special verse or two down on pieces of paper and decorate them with markers or crayons. When they are finished, they may wish to take them home to display. Alternatively, display the papers in the classroom or on a nearby bulletin board.

