



Young Believer's Discipleship Series

Resource List

Bible

This Leader's Guide

So . . . You Want to Talk with God? Student Booklet (one per child)

So . . . You Want to Talk with God? Parent Guide (included with this Leader's Guide. Copy and distribute one per family)

Pencils or pens

White board or poster board and marker

Play-Doh

Various colored pony beads

Leather bracelet cording (key rings, opt.)

Scissors

Dictionary

Computer and online access

Copier, printer, paper

Bucket, water, and glass marbles

Outdoors or creation items

Favorite hymn or praise chorus

Favorite Psalm

Various art supplies and collage materials


So...You Want to Talk with God? Leaders' Guide




Scripture: “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17).

Purpose: The purpose of this *Leader’s Guide* is to provide you with the basic resources to teach children about prayer through the use of the booklet, *So... You Want to Talk with God?*

What Is Prayer?

Prayer  is a conversation with God. It is one of the ways in which we connect with our heavenly Father in a personal relationship. Through prayer, we have the ability to listen to God’s voice and to speak to Him about anything and everything. From the very beginning, God desired a dynamic relationship with humanity. In Genesis 1:26-28, God created people in His own image; He breathed life into humans, and established a new pattern of communication. From this moment, we have been invited to partake in this intimate relationship through the gift of prayer or ongoing conversation, talking with our Creator God.

Although prayer  was created to be an easily accessible way to communicate with God, it seems that we struggle with this discipline. We have become fearful of prayer because we feel alienated or alone, and we can even have doubts, wondering if God is really listening. We worry about our ability to pray in the right way to God that would be pleasing and acceptable to Him. Besides these fears, many people have defined prayer as a narrow, ritualized discipline rather than viewing prayer as something that can happen anytime, anywhere and about anything.

How to use this guide:

Prepare by first praying about the direction of this prayer class, reading this leader's guide, and then doing the suggested activities and prayer stations. This will help prepare you for the teaching experience and prepare for any questions that may arise as you lead children through this prayer class.

Make any copies that you will need (for children and families). Look up any definitions, and then find and learn any American Sign Language (ASL) signs to teach children.

Create an open environment. Allow children to ask any questions they may have about the process and experience of prayer.

If you (teacher) are not the pastor, invite the pastor to participate, talking with children about prayer and its application.

Have fun! This should be something that you enjoy and are passionate about experiencing with children. You are part of an important spiritual event in the lives of the children in your prayer class.

Prayer includes a greeting, praise and thanks to God, requests for others and for ourselves, and a closing. And while it does include these elements, prayer isn't something that happens only when we are content or happy. Authentic prayer encompasses all emotions and feelings. Prayer should be both inward and outward. We should pray outward toward God and others but we should also be affirmed that it is OK to pray for our needs as well. The essential element is to find balance in praying between these various conversational elements.

As you teach children about prayer, you have an awesome responsibility to model, and then to help children discover that prayer can happen anywhere and through a variety of mediums. Our goal is to help children discover prayer as more than a structured thing "to do" but rather that their entire life can be an expression of prayer. As our key Scripture verse points out, we desire to have children, "pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Through this series you will discover that prayer can happen through a variety of ways, such as engaging the senses, the emotions, and the actions.

Finally, it is our conviction that prayer is best learned not through formal instruction but through participating in prayerful practices. Because of this vision, you will find that this leader's guide, along with the student booklet provides a variety of ideas, suggestions, and optional activities that help model the scope and depth of a full prayer life. Therefore, when teaching this class, we encourage you to plan lessons that allow adequate time for children to participate through the sensory prayer stations as they experience new and meaningful ways to connect with God in intimate conversation.

The Lesson

Introduction

This may be the first time you have met together. Complete any introductions as needed. Begin this class and any activities with prayer.

Say, **We are going to see how prayer can change our lives as we learn how to listen to God's voice and share with Him anything that is on our minds or hearts. The fun part is that we are going to discover that prayer isn't something we will just sit down and learn about but will be something that we will be doing and experiencing.**



Faith Words are words that help you and the children that you teach grow in understanding and your Christian faith. The definition for *prayer* is on page 2 of the student booklet. The definition for *intercession* is on page 5 of the student booklet.

Here are some additional Faith Words that you may want to use as you teach the concept of *prayer* to children:

Forgive is to pardon someone who has done wrong and stop being angry with him or her.

Forgiveness is an act that frees a person from the guilt and blame for doing wrong.

Praise is to glorify God for who He is and all He does.

Can You Hear Me Now?

Page 2 in *So... You Want to Talk with God?*

If you have not done so before, distribute copies of *So... You Want to Talk with God?* to each child.

Review page 2. Look at page 3 and discuss the following things that God gives us. Each item includes ideas for discussion and learning. Choose those activities which best fit your situation and group.

Ask, **What is prayer?** Allow children time to process and struggle with this question before moving into the definition for *prayer*. If you would like to do so, have a child read aloud the first paragraph from page 2 of the student booklet.

Say, **Prayer is a way we connect with God as we speak with Him, and then listen for His voice. As we pray, we are helping build a strong relationship with our heavenly Father through daily and consistent conversation. What do you think I mean when I say connect with God?** (Give children time to think. Listen for a response. Point out the *prayer* definition on page 2 of the student booklet. Encourage children to read it following the class time or have a volunteer read it for the class.)

Say, **Sometimes we might find it difficult to pray. It can be easy to worry that we are speaking to ourselves and that God can't hear us.**

Ask, **What are some other reasons prayer might seem to be too difficult?**

List the worries or expressed concerns on a white board or poster board for visual organization.

Read and add (as needed) the list of worries from page 2 in the booklet:

- Is God really listening?
- I don't know what to say.
- I can't sit still or be quiet long enough.
- Will God really answer my prayers?

Say, **Look at these reasons. From this list, which reason best fits you for finding prayer difficult? Write it somewhere on page 2 of your booklet. What do you think causes you to worry about this?** Give children a few minutes to quietly reflect. Say, **It is OK not to be worried too!**



Notes:

Say, **While we may have worries, we can be assured that God is ALWAYS listening to our prayers. He values each prayer and desires for us to talk with Him continually. Let's see how Jesus helped people by teaching a simple prayer that we can follow. This is called a model. It just means that Jesus teaches us how to talk with God.**

Have the children turn to page 3 of the prayer booklet.

Jesus' Prayer

Page 3 in *So . . . You Want to Talk with God?*

Say, **Throughout history, people have struggled with the same worries about prayer that we still have today. Jesus understood this and provided this easy model for us to use when praying. This prayer is often called the Lord's Prayer and is still being prayed today.**

Distribute Bibles or have students turn to their Bibles. Encourage the entire group to find Matthew 6:9-13. Invite the children to read the passage together. This prevents any child feeling uncomfortable about reading ability. If you are working with younger children, you may read aloud as they follow along. Encourage them to touch each word as you read it. You can also find a similar prayer in Luke 11:2-4.

Ask, **What does Jesus begin this prayer by saying?** (Our Father). Allow children to fill in the letters for (1) on booklet page 3. O U R F A T H E R.

Ask, **Why do you think Jesus started the prayer this way?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **Our Father is another way to say "Dear God." Basically, Jesus is telling us that we should always begin our prayers focused on addressing God.**

It is just like when we start a conversation with an important friend or someone from our family. We might say, "Hello, Uncle John" or "Good morning, Jason."

Then we should pray to God thanking and praising Him for being our God. Hallowed means "holy" and this is one way that Jesus showed us how to pray thanksgiving and praise to honor God.

Have the students turn to Matthew 6:11. Read verse 11 aloud or have a volunteer do so.

Ask, **What comes next after we have greeted God and given Him our praise?**

Notes:

There are three important words in this verse. Let's figure out the words together. (Allow children to fill in the letters for (2) on booklet page 3. O U R D A I L Y B R E A D

Ask, **What does it mean to pray for bread? Do we need to ask for the real bread we eat in our prayers?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **When Jesus taught this prayer to His disciples or followers, people did not have grocery stores like we go to today. Food didn't just come out of the refrigerator when they were hungry. Sometimes food was not around at all. Jesus is teaching the people that it is OK to ask for things that they may need. In this time, people worried about having enough food to eat or bread for each day. We may worry about needing help with a math test or with making friends at school. Jesus is teaching us that it is OK to ask for things that we need, even bread to eat when we need it!**

Have children share possible prayer needs to list on the white board or poster board. Include your needs as appropriate for the children to hear. Pause to pray together for this listing.

Ask, **But does this mean that we can think of God as Someone who has to give us whatever we want?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **No, of course not! Just because we can ask for what we need doesn't mean that God will give us anything and everything. God does listen and He does care about us and what we need. But there can be a difference in what we want and what we really need.**

Ask, **What is the difference between a want and a need?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **A want is something that we may want but isn't a necessary thing. It would be nice to have, but we can live without it. What is something that you want?**

A need is something that is needed for our safety and survival such as food, clothing or shelter. What is something that you need?

Ask, **After we pray for our daily bread, Jesus tells us we are to ask God to do what for us?** (Forgive)

(Allow children to fill in the letters for (3) on booklet page 3. F O R G I V E

Ask, **Can you describe what forgive looks like?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Notes:

*Share a forgiveness example from your life experience.

*Print out the six steps. Give these steps to each child.

Say, **Forgive means to pardon someone who has done wrong and to treat that person as though he or she had not done wrong.**

If we have sinned and done wrong (doing something God teaches us not to do, or not doing something we know God wants us to do), then we need to ask God to forgive us. We need to promise God not to disobey Him in this way.

Say, **Next, Jesus teaches us to look outside ourselves. We are not to only seek God's forgiveness. What do we need to do if someone has wronged us? (Forgive) That's right. People who have wronged us are called debtors in verse 12. Can you fill in the blanks?** Answer for booklet page 3, number 4: D E B T O R S.

Ask, **Has there been a time when someone has done something wrong and hurt you? Can you describe the situation? How did you feel?** (Allow time for individual responses. Possible answer is angry.)

Ask, **Do you think it is easy or hard to forgive someone who has hurt us? Why or why not?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **It can be really difficult to forgive others. But Jesus teaches us that no matter what someone else has done to us. No matter how much they have hurt us, we are to pray and forgive them as God forgives us. The good news is that we do not have to make this happen on our own. God helps us. We just need to ask for His help when we pray and talk with Him.**

Review the prayer model. Print the steps on the white board or on a poster board. You may want to display this in a prominent place for the children to refer to. Pray aloud with the children, modeling this prayer in your own words.

Step 1: Pray, greeting God by name.

Step 2: Praise God for who He is. Thank God for His awesomeness!

Step 3: Tell God about your needs. Ask for His help.

Step 4: Admit your sins and ask God to forgive you if needed. Pray for God's help in forgiving others if needed.

Step 5: Ask God to help you obey Him.

Step 6: Finish the prayer. This is like saying good-bye. Pray, "In Jesus' name, Amen."

Say, **Now I am going to ask you to do something very important. I want you to spend some quiet time alone with God. Follow these steps to write a prayer, talking with God, using your**



Emotions

- Acceptance
- Affection
- Anger
- Fear
- Grief
- Gratitude
- Love
- Curiosity
- Hatred
- Hope
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Remorse
- Shame
- Happiness
- Worry
- Wonder
- Surprise

own words. We will not read these aloud. This prayer is between God and you. You can write anything you want.

Distribute extra paper and pens. Allow children time to write or draw their prayers and talk quietly with God.

Emotions of Prayer

Page 4 in *So... You Want to Talk with God?*

Begin by writing some of the emotion words on the white board or poster board.

Ask, **What do all these words have in common? How are they alike?** (Allow children time to give their thoughts.)

Say, **These words are types of emotions. God created us with the ability to feel many different emotions. We can be happy or sad, or scared or angry or even excited or surprised. Each day, we may even do things differently based on how we are feeling.**

Ask, **What emotion are you feeling today? Right now? Why?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

***Optional Activity:** Pass out mirrors, blank paper and a variety of writing instruments (crayons, markers, colored pencils).

Fold the paper in half (top to bottom) and then fold it in half again (side to side), making four squares on the paper.

In each square, have the children label the boxes with one of these titles: happy, sad, angry, and excited.

Encourage children to look into the mirror and make a face to show each of these emotions. Have them draw out the different emotional expression within each section on the paper. For example, a smiley face for happy.

Say, **Think of a time you were happy. What made that day so good? How did you talk to other people that day?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **Think of a time when you were sad. Why did you feel so sad? Did that change how you talked to or interacted with other people?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **Think of a time when you were angry. What made you so mad? Did that change how you treated other people?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Notes:

Say, **Think of a time when you were excited. What happened that you became so excited? How did you behave that day?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **Do you see how our emotions can change the way we talk to other people or behave? If prayer is a conversation with God, it will also change depending on our emotions or how we are feeling. Sometimes, we will be filled with happiness, but other times we may feel frustrated, sad, or even sorry for something, or angry.**

Say, **Some prayers are said with a glad and cheerful heart. These prayers are called thanksgiving prayers. Let's read together a thanksgiving prayer.**

Distribute Bibles and encourage the children to turn to Psalm 100. Invite the children to read the passage silently as you read aloud. This prevents any child feeling uncomfortable about reading ability. You can also help visual children by allowing them to run their finger along each letter, and children who learn through hearing by allowing them to read aloud with you.

Ask, **How do you think this prayer was spoken? What way do you think this prayer sounded?** (Read the first two verses with a variety of emotions. To read this psalm sad, speak in a slow, sorrowful voice, take deep sighs and pout lips as you speak these verses. To read this psalm as angry, speak loudly, in a sharp angered voice. To read this psalm as happy, speak with enthusiasm, smile and show spirit as you speak these verses.)

Say, **There is no doubt that this prayer is a prayer of thanksgiving or praise! It was said by someone who was filled with happiness or excitement. A thanksgiving prayer expresses thanks to God for all that He has given us. They also speak of God's greatness as we say, call out, or even shout praises to Him.**

Ask, **In this Psalm, for what is this person thankful?** (Allow time for individual responses encourage children to search each verse for ideas. God. He is God. He is faithful. He is loving and good and generous.)

Write on a white board or poster board answers.

Say, **In verses 1-2, we see that this person is thankful for God.**

In verse 3, we see that this person is thankful that God is God. He is also thankful that God made people. And he is thankful that God loves us, and that we are God's people.

Notes:

Say, **In verse 5, we see this person is thankful that the Lord is good. That God's love lasts forever and that God has always been faithful to each generation of people, from the very beginning, and He will be always.**

Have the children look at the center of booklet page 4. Distribute additional paper and pens. Say, **We have lots to be thankful for. In your booklets, there are two columns. One column is for things that you are thankful for, things that you want to thank God for giving and blessing you with. In the other column, list two things that you are thankful about how God is. In other words, why are you thankful to know God? Take some time to fill out these lists and then spend a few moments in silent prayer offering this prayer of thanksgiving to God.**

After this prayer activity, provide time for children to share their thanksgiving lists with the entire group. Write on a white board or poster board the entire class list of thanksgivings. Comment on the variety of thanksgiving praises and discuss the endless possibilities of things for which we can be thankful.

Say, **While some prayers may be filled with joy and excitement, we are not always happy people. Sometimes we feel sad, alone, angry, or frustrated. In these times, it is appropriate to speak a prayer called a lament. Do you know what this word means? It means to express or say aloud your sorrow, mourning, or sadness. A lament prayer speaks of sorrow and grief. But a lament prayer always ends with hope. Let's look at a lament prayer together.**

Distribute Bibles and encourage the entire group to turn to Psalm 13. Invite the children to read the passage together.

Ask, **How do you think this prayer was spoken? What way do you think this prayer sounded?** (Read the first two verses with a variety of emotions. To read this psalm as happy, speak with enthusiasm, smile and show spirit as you speak these verses. To read this psalm sad, speak in a slow, sorrowful voice, take deep sighs and pout lips as you speak these verses. To read this psalm as angry, speak loudly, in a sharp angered voice.)

Say, **This prayer could have been spoken in a couple of ways. It could have been spoken to God in a time of sadness or in a time of anger. But there is no doubt that this prayer was not said when someone was feeling happy or glad.**

Notes:

Ask, **In this Psalm, what is this person sad or angry about? This was considered to be written by King David.** (Refer to verses 1 and 2. Allow time for individual responses encourage children to search each verse for ideas.)

Write on a white board or poster board answers.

Say, **In verse 1, David speaks of feeling alone as if God has forgotten all about him. In verse 2, David talks about feeling filled with pain and sadness. He feels as if his enemies are triumphing or winning over him and that he is doomed to always lose.**

Is it OK to be angry or mad at God? (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **It is absolutely OK to be angry at God! In fact, God would rather us continue to speak to Him even when we are angry or mad, than to pretend like everything is all fine and just perfect. God knows our lives are filled with problems, and He is always there to listen to us, even when we are at our worst.**

Pause and allow children to consider this. Say, **After David speaks his mind to God, he asks God for a request. Look at verse 3 to discover what David asks for.** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Write on a white board or poster board answers.

Say, **In verse 3, David asks to see more clearly God's presence in this bad situation. David closes this lament prayer by affirming or admitting that no matter what, he continues to trust and hope in God. He knows that these days of sadness or frustration will not last forever. Look at verses 5 and 6. What does David say that helps us see that He still trusts in God even in this difficult time?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Write on a white board or poster board answers.

Say, **In verse 5, David says he trusts in God's steadfast love and rejoices in the salvation he finds in God. In verse 6, David says he will continually sing to the Lord because he knows that God is just and cares for him, even in this difficult circumstance or time. We can do the same thing.**

Have the children look at the bottom of booklet page 4. Read, **Can you think of some things that are difficult? Talk with God about these things. God wants you to share them with Him.** Allow a time of quiet reflection for children to find an alone spot and talk with God.

***Optional Activity:** Pass out Play-Doh to each child. Have children close their eyes and remember a time when they felt angry, sad or frustrated.

As they think of this situation, encourage children to beat or knead the dough as they think of how they felt, and how they felt about God or anything else that made the time seem unbearable and too hard to get through.

After a few minutes, have the children stop beating or kneading the dough, close their eyes again, take a deep breath, and then begin to form the dough into the shape of a heart. Encourage them to think of God's love for them even in this bad situation. Remind children that even when they are feeling angry or frustrated, God's love never fades or leaves them. Remind children that it is OK to have these feelings and to pray about them. But it is always important to remember that God is good and He loves them. Then they can take a moment at the finish of these prayers with a time thinking and speaking of God's faithfulness and love.

It's Not All About Me!

Page 5 in *So... You Want to Talk with God?*

Say, **While it is important to pray for our needs. It is also important to remember that prayer isn't just about what we need. It is about praying for others. It is also important to pray intercessory prayers. Intercession means to present the needs or interest of one person to another person. To pray for another person's needs. In heaven, Jesus intercedes for us with God, the Father.**

Distribute Bibles and encourage the entire group to turn to Philippians 1:4. Invite the children to read along as you read together the passage from Philippians 1:4 and verses 9-10. Remember to be sensitive to different reading abilities and find ways to help all children be comfortable with reading and writing activities.

Ask, **Who and what does Paul ask for in this prayer?** (Allow time for individual responses.) **Paul prays for the Philippians. He prays that they will know Jesus. He prays that they will grow more in love with Christ each day as they are filled with more knowledge of what it means to live the Christian life, pure and blameless. Paul's entire prayer isn't about himself; it is about helping others know Christ more fully.**



+ **Intercession** means to present the needs or interests of one person to another person. To pray for another person's needs. We pray to God, and then in heaven, Jesus intercedes to God for us.

Notes:

Ask, **Why do you think Paul prayed this prayer for the Philippians?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **We don't pray intercessory prayer just because we want to be thoughtful. We pray for others because we desire to have change happen in their lives. Paul prayed this prayer because he wanted the best for the Philippians. He wanted them to be changed by the transforming power of Jesus Christ.**

Ask, **What is an intercessory prayer that you have heard?** (Allow responses.)

Say, **Intercessory prayer can be as simple as praying that someone has a better day. It can be as complex as praying for people in other countries to receive enough food to survive.**

Say, **Here is a list of five things that you can pray for.** Distribute additional paper and pens as needed. Have the children look at the following on booklet page 5.

Say, **We can first pray for our family. What family members can you pray for?** (Allow time for children to share if interested, and then write their list of family members.)

Say, **Then we can pray for our friends. What friends can you pray for?** (Allow time for children to share if interested, and then write their list of friends.)

Say, **We can pray for the people in our neighborhood, school, and town or community. How can you pray for your neighborhood? School? Community?** (Allow time for children to share if interested, and then write their list of people in their neighborhoods, schools, and community. Remind children that this includes leaders in these areas like teachers, principals, and even a mayor or civic leader.)

Say, **We can pray for our country and the leaders who make decisions for our country. How can you pray for this country? Who can you pray for in this country?** (Allow time for children to share if interested, and then write their list of needs within the country and its' leadership.)

Say, **Finally, we can pray for people in other areas of the world. We can pray for world needs and events. How can you pray for our world and the people that live within it?** (Allow time for children to share if interested, and then write their list of world needs and people in other world areas. This would be an appropriate time to talk about missions and compassionate ministries with children.)

Notes:



Intercessory prayer is an important way to teach children to see beyond themselves and their immediate needs and pray for others. This is an important step in becoming a global Christian.

Conclude by saying, **When we pray for more than our own needs, we are praying intercessory prayers. These questions in this booklet can be a starting point as you look beyond your own needs and think of others for whom you can pray.**

Now that we have made a list of people to pray for, let's spend some time praying an intercessory prayer.

Hands-on Intercessory Prayer Activity: Pass out different color pony beads and a pre-cut strip of leather lacing (about 12 inches or 30 cm.). There should be five different colored beads; one bead to represent each group (family; friends; neighborhood, school, and community; country; world). If you chose to make key chains instead of bracelets, pass out key rings to attach to the lacing.

Tie a knot in one end of the lacing. Instruct children to pick up the first color bead and look at their list of family members. Have them pray for these family members as they string the bead onto the lacing. Continue adding beads and praying for each group.

When children have finished praying for each group of people have them tie a knot in the other end of the lacing. Then tie a slip knot so that this lacing can be worn as a bracelet. If you choose to do key chains, have children loop and tie the lacing onto the key ring at one end.

Encourage children to wear bracelets or carry the key chains, and to pray daily for the people and groups on their lists.

Many Ways to Pray

Pages 6-7 in *So . . . You Want to Talk with God?*

Say, **We have looked at how to pray, how we address our prayers, and for whom we can pray. Now we are going to discover when we can pray. Prayer can happen anywhere. We may have been taught that the only way to pray is to sit still, place our hands in our laps, close our eyes, and then silently begin to speak many words to God. And while this is an appropriate way to pray, this is NOT the only way to pray!**

God created each one of us unique and different. Let's try a quick experiment. I'm going to say a few short statements and if



they are true for you, stand up. If they aren't true, sit down. Let's see if we all answer these questions the same, or if some of us answer differently.

- Stand up if you have brown eyes.
- Stand up if your favorite color is red.
- Stand up if your favorite food is a hamburger.
- Stand up if you would rather read a book than write a story.
- Stand up if you like soccer.
- Stand up if you like to skate.
- Stand up if you sing or play an instrument.
- Stand up if you are an artist (draw, paint, sculpt, etc.)

Say, **In this quick little game, we saw that we all had different preferences. None of us agree on everything and that is OK. Did you know that at school we all learn differently too? Some of us learn best through reading, others learn through writing and taking notes, still some of us learn best by listening to our teachers and finally some of us learn through doing something for ourselves.**

Ask, **How do you think you learn best? Why? What do you like to do at school?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **We are all unique, have different preferences and even learn differently. We also can pray in many different ways. There is no right or wrong way to pray. Let's look and try out some different ways to pray.**

Have the students look at booklet page 7. Point to your eye.

Say, **One way we can pray is through seeing. Our eyes provide us with an endless possibility of things to help us to pray. Let's practice one possible way we can pray by using our eyes.**

***Activity:** If possible, lead children outside to an area where they can see a variety of objects from creation rather than man-made objects. If this is not possible, bring things into the room to represent God's world and creation. Give each child a sheet of paper and a pen. Have them number the paper 1-20. Ask, **What do you see?** Say, **God created the entire world. When we stop and appreciate the beauty of His creation we can respond in thanksgiving prayers. While looking around, try to find 20 different things that God created. Write or draw them on your paper. Then spend a few moments to thank God for each of these items. This can be anything from the tiniest ant to the biggest tree.**

Notes:

If you went outside for this activity, return to the room.

Have children share their lists. Write the items on the white board or poster board. See how many different things each list brings to the group discovery list.

Say, **We can look outside and SEE God's creation and use this as a time to pray. There must be other ways in which we can pray through seeing. We use our eyes all day.**

Ask, **Where else can we look and SEE prayer?** (Allow children time to wrestle with this question and share individual responses.)

Say, **If we go to an art museum and look at some paintings, we might be able to see prayer through the artist's perspective. We can see God's beauty through photographs that inspire our imagination. We can see prayer through some movies. When we see a movie that is so powerful that it makes us stop and think about things in a new way, we can use those moments to pray as an expression of how those images have influenced or shaped how we think about God and others.**

***Optional Activity:** Pass out some old magazines, pictures of classical paintings, and contemporary photography. Distribute blank sheets of paper or poster board, glue and scissors.

Encourage children to look through pictures to find ones that reveal God's beauty and are meaningful to them. Once they find pictures, instruct children to cut out pictures and make a collage on the paper or poster board.

Encourage children to hang this collage somewhere in their room or home where they can look at it and pray using the pictures as a visual guide.

Have the students look at booklet page 7. Point to your ear.

Say, **Another way we can pray is through hearing. We can listen for God's voice. He does speak to us. Sometimes rather than speaking to God, we can pray simply by listening to others or listening for God's voice in the stillness of our minds. Let's practice a prayer that focuses on us hearing God's voice.**

***Activity:** Before this activity, have a bucket pre-filled with water in the center of the room. Have a bowl of marbles. Instruct children to collect a marble for each thought they are thinking at the current moment.

Notes:

Once each child has a handful of marbles, instruct children to close their eyes, and then begin taking silent, deep breaths. As they take deep breaths, encourage children to allow whatever thoughts are in their minds to disappear. As they begin clearing their minds, instruct children to drop the marbles in the bucket. Once they have dropped all the marbles, they should quietly find a space in the room, away from distractions, where they can be in a comfortable position.

As each child finds a comfortable space, children should continue to focus on their deep breathing as they begin to listen to the silence. As children listen, every effort should be made to be as still as possible. It doesn't matter what their posture is, or if their eyes are opened or closed, but the key is to simply become still and listen.

The teacher should give a two minute warning when time is about up to prepare children to leave this silent station. After time is up, have children return to the group and be seated.

Ask, **What did you hear?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **Sometimes it can be difficult to just be still and listen to God in silence. This can feel like a difficult or jarring activity because we are so used to being busy and surrounded by noises. We can forget that God created us to have moments in our lives that are still and quiet. In fact, in these moments we can find peace and renewal in His presence. This practice may not have come easily to you today, but I want to encourage you to continue practicing this type of prayer. If you continue to practice this prayer activity, you will find joy and peace in listening to God's voice in the stillness and quiet.**

Say, **We can listen for God in the stillness, but this is not the only way we can hear prayers. Where else can we hear prayers?** (Allow children to wrestle with this question and share individual responses.)

Say, **We can also hear prayers when we listen to other people speak prayers at church, at home, on the radio, or any other place where people may speak prayers aloud. We can also hear prayers when we listen to the animals making noises outside. Sometimes the best way we can hear prayers is through music. When we find a song with powerful, meaningful lyrics we can listen to the words and music and allow this to be our prayer to God.**

***Optional Activity:** Provide CDs or sound files of select songs that provide meaningful lyrics for children to listen to either as a group or

Notes:

on individual headsets. Selected songs should carry a steady methodical rhythm, not too fast. Words should be meaningful as they reflect God or speak of His beauty or transformation in our lives. Songs should not be about the individual person, but rather should focus on the worship of God. Many praise and worship songs would be a good option.

Distribute headsets (or play the music). Allow children to find a comfortable place in the room to listen to the music. Minimize distractions during this time by having children sit alone, apart from others, with their eyes closed as they listen to the music.

Listen or have children listen to one song at least two times. The first time they should listen to hear the words. The second time they should silently speak the words of the song to God. Encourage them to imagine that they are the singer, pouring their heart into these words as prayer to God.

Have the children find the book icon on booklet page 7 and point to it.

Say, **Sometimes prayers don't happen through seeing or hearing but through reading. In fact, we don't have to always know the right words when we pray. We can use other people's words to help us as we read their prayers as a way to worship God. Let's practice reading a prayer.**

***Activity:** Distribute photocopied pages of the short story, "The Lion and the Mouse," and guided prayerful questions from this leader's guide.

Allow children to read the short story silently to themselves, and then spend time answering the questions on the page. Children can either answer these questions silently in their head or if they prefer they can write the answers in the blank space on the page. If you need to, read the story aloud, and then read the questions to the children to answer.

Say, **While we may have thought of this story as simply a fun story, this story can reveal a lot about God's character and love. This story can show us how to be thankful for our friends, and help us to ask for forgiveness as needed. Whenever we stop and ask questions about what we are reading, and then use those moments to bring glory to God it can be a way of praying. Let's spend a few moments discussing what we discovered through this story.**

Notes:

You can find helps and video demonstrations for ASL (American Sign Language) at www.aslpro.com

After children have spent some time in prayer and meditation, considering the story and questions, provide some time for the entire group to share responses as well.

Ask, **We have looked at reading stories as a type of prayer. But there are lots of other ways we can read prayers. Where else can we read prayers?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **One way to read prayers is by reading our Bibles. Did you know that there are many passages in our Bibles that were written as prayers? Some of the greatest places to find examples of these are in the Psalms. These written Scripture prayers can help us find words to pray by reading.** Choose a favorite Psalm and read it for the children. Talk about how this has been a prayer for you.

***Optional Activity:** Distribute Bibles and have children look up Psalm 23. Have volunteers take turns reading verses from this passage. Use these words as their prayer to God.

As they are reading this passage use these questions as basic guideline questions:

- How is God described?
- How is this person thankful for God?
- How are you thankful for God?

Have children find the jumping figure on booklet page 7. Have each child stand and do a jump that looks similar to the one the figure is doing. Sit together.

Say, **Another way we can pray is through our actions. Sometimes the best way to demonstrate how we are feeling is to show it through our body language. Let's practice a way of prayer that lets us use our arms as a way of giving praise to God.**

***Activity:** Distribute photocopied pages of the basic sign language actions for the different one-line prayers.

Encourage children to pick one of the four one-line prayers. Children should find a comfortable space in the room where they can practice the sign language for this prayer. Encourage children to repeat the motions multiple times to where they are able to repeat it effortlessly.

After time is finished, gather children to pray their prayers to the entire group. Allow all children to participate together as they learn all four prayers from their peers.

Notes:

Ask, **How did it feel using your hands to pray? Why?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **Sometimes moving around or doing something may be the best way to express what you are feeling to God. A sign language prayer can be a great way to allow your entire body to express thanks, ask forgiveness, or pray for others when our words are not enough. But sign language is not the only way we can move our bodies as we pray.**

Ask, **How else might you move to prayer?** (Allow time for individual responses.)

Say, **We can also pray by rhythmic movement, standing in specific postures such as kneeling or raising our hands, by using structured breathing, or even through art. Any time we intentionally give glory and honor to God through our actions we are doing a movement prayer.**

***Optional Activity:** Distribute a variety of art supplies such as paint, chalk, finger paints, markers, and collage supplies. Turn on a music selection without any words, such as a classical piece or a Christian instrumental worship song. Encourage children to have free use of all supplies and to simply create a prayer while listening to the music. Tell children that there is no right or wrong way to create this prayer masterpiece, but rather their art should be a reflection of their feelings toward God and as a response to the music they are listening to.

After a determined amount of time, allow children the opportunity to share their art, and tell about how the artwork is a prayer to God.

Prayer That Keeps Going and Going and Going . . .

Page 8 in *So... You Want to Talk with God?*

Distribute Bibles. Have a volunteer read 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Ask, **What does this verse say to do continually?** P R A Y Have children fill in the blanks on booklet page 8.

Ask, **How is it possible to pray every moment of our days and lives?** (Allow children time to wrestle with this question and provide answers.)



Notes:

Say, **If we only think of prayer as something that we do when we are sitting still, bowing our heads, folding our hands together and saying specific words to God . . . then no, it wouldn't be possible to pray every single moment of our lives. But if we have realize that prayer can happen through any emotion and through all of our lives in the way that we see, hear, read and move . . . then YES! We can pray continually. Prayer doesn't have to be something we do just once or twice a day at a mealtime or bedtime, prayer can happen in everything we do.**

Say, **One of the ways in which we can pray continually is through "flash prayers." A flash prayer is a one-line prayer that you speak silently or aloud for a specific event, person or place. For example—if you were going to school and you looked out your window and saw the crossing guard you might say, "Dear God, help the crossing guard keep everyone safe today." And that's it! It doesn't have to be a long prayer but can be quick and easy to voice aloud to God.**

***Activity:** Have children look around the room. Encourage them to find something or someone that they could say a flash prayer for.

Challenge children to see how many flash prayers they can do within a couple minutes time.

Ask, **Did you find this to be a difficult type of prayer?** (Allow responses.)

Say, **You may have found it easy to think of a one-line prayer to flash for something or someone else! That's great! These aren't meant to be difficult prayers. Just think of how many you could say within a day without even feeling tired or worried about them! This can be one great way to live out the command to pray continually.**

Say, **Another two ways we can pray continually is through serving others and caring for this world that God gave to us. When we help out people in our neighborhood, when we sit by someone at lunch who is alone, or even when we clean our rooms without being told to do so by our parents, this is using our lives to serve others and pray continually through our actions.**

When we recycle, when we pick up trash that was littered outside, or we respect God's creation, then we are allowing our actions to demonstrate our prayerful response to God and His gifts of people and places.

Notes:

Ask, **What are three ways you can help others?** (Allow time for individual answers.) Write these three things in your booklet on page 8. Pause and allow children to pray. Say, **This week, with God's help, choose one of these three things to do as a form of prayer.**

Ask, **What is one way you can take care of the environment and help care for God's world?** (Allow time for individual answers.) Write this one thing in your booklet on page 8. **Now ask for God's help to do this one thing as a form of prayer.** Pause and allow children to pray.

***Optional Activity:** Have children finish this series by serving within your church. Choose from these ideas for ways in which the children can serve God. Explain to children that serving is a way in which we live a life of continuous prayer to God.

- Make cards for a local nursing home
- Go outside and clean up the church parking lot and facility
- Collect cans for the local food pantry
- Plant flowers and trees at a local park, on the church grounds, or deliver pre-potted plants to shut-ins

Prayerful Questions:

1. Where is there forgiveness in this story?
2. Is there someone we need to forgive or do we need to ask for forgiveness? Why?
3. How did the mouse help the lion?
4. How can we help others in need?
5. How does this story cause us to think about God's love?

Reading Prayer Activity

The Lion and the Mouse: Aesop's Fables

Once when a Lion was asleep a little Mouse began running up and down upon him; this soon wakened the Lion, who placed his huge paw upon him, and opened his big jaws to swallow him. "Pardon, O King," cried the little Mouse: "forgive me this time, I shall never forget it: who knows but what I may be able to do you a turn some of these days?" The Lion was so tickled at the idea of the Mouse being able to help him that he lifted up his paw and let him go.

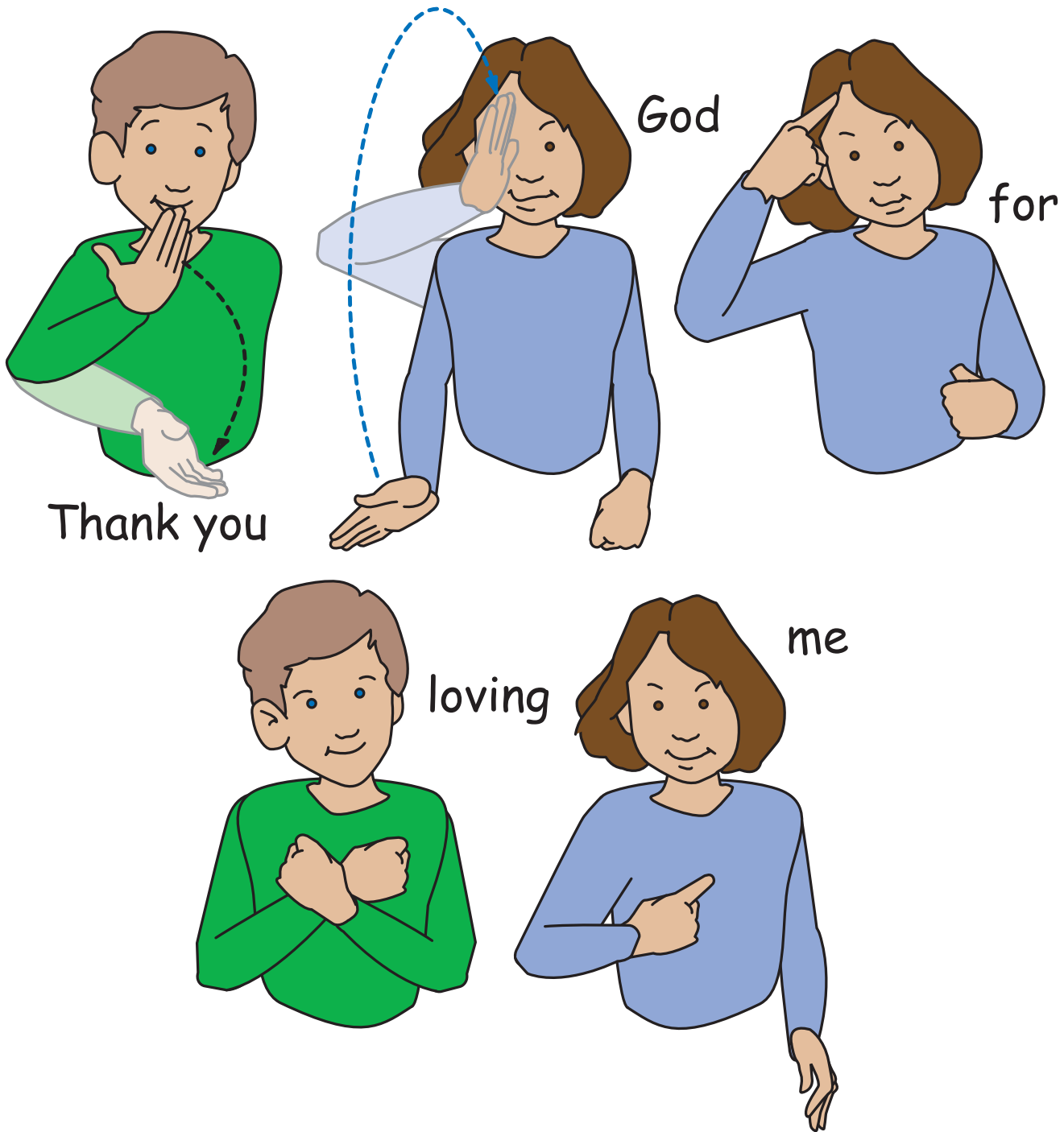
Some time after the Lion was caught in a trap, and the hunters who desired to carry him alive to the King, tied him to a tree while they went in search of a wagon to carry him on.

Just then the little Mouse happened to pass by, and seeing the sad plight in which the Lion was, went up to him and soon gnawed away the ropes that bound the King of the Beasts. "Was I not right?" said the little Mouse.

Reading Prayer Activity

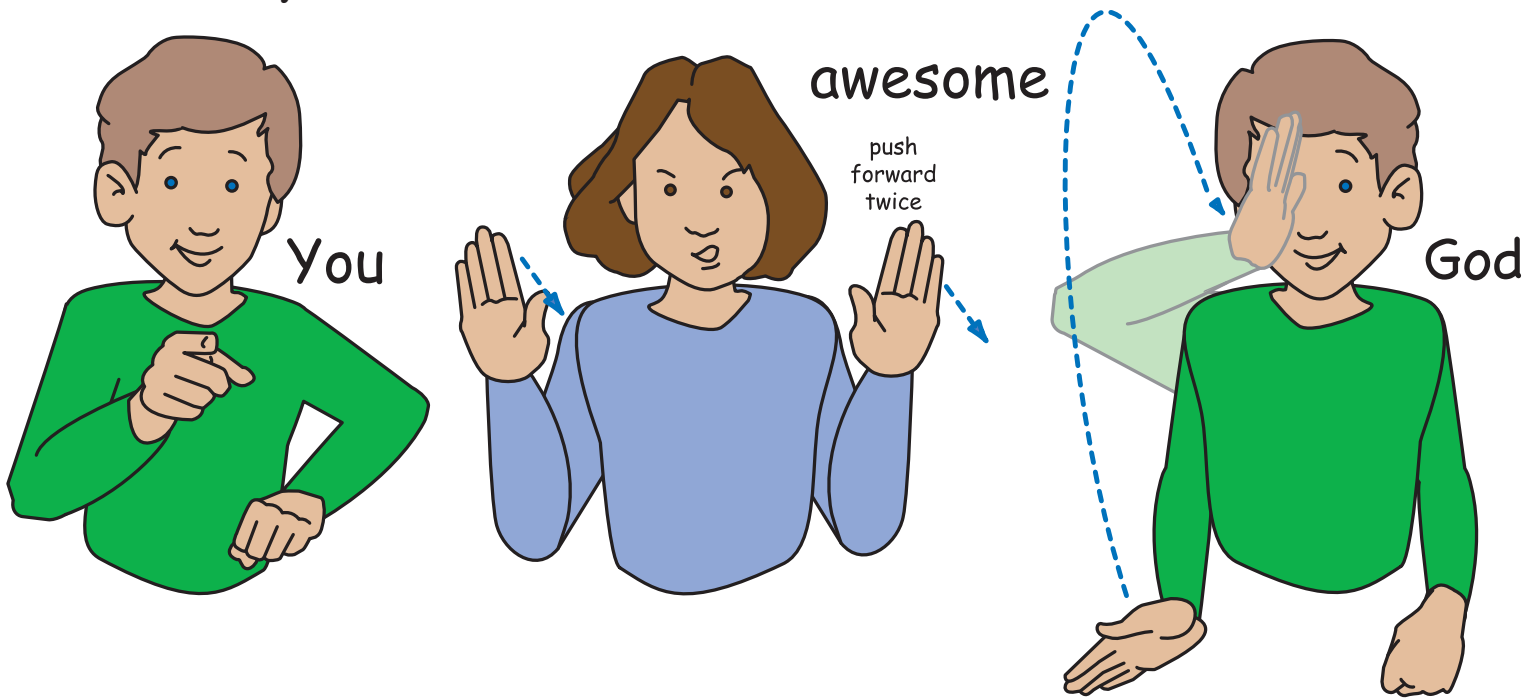
One-Line Sign Language Prayers

Sentence Prayer 1- Thank You, God, for loving me.

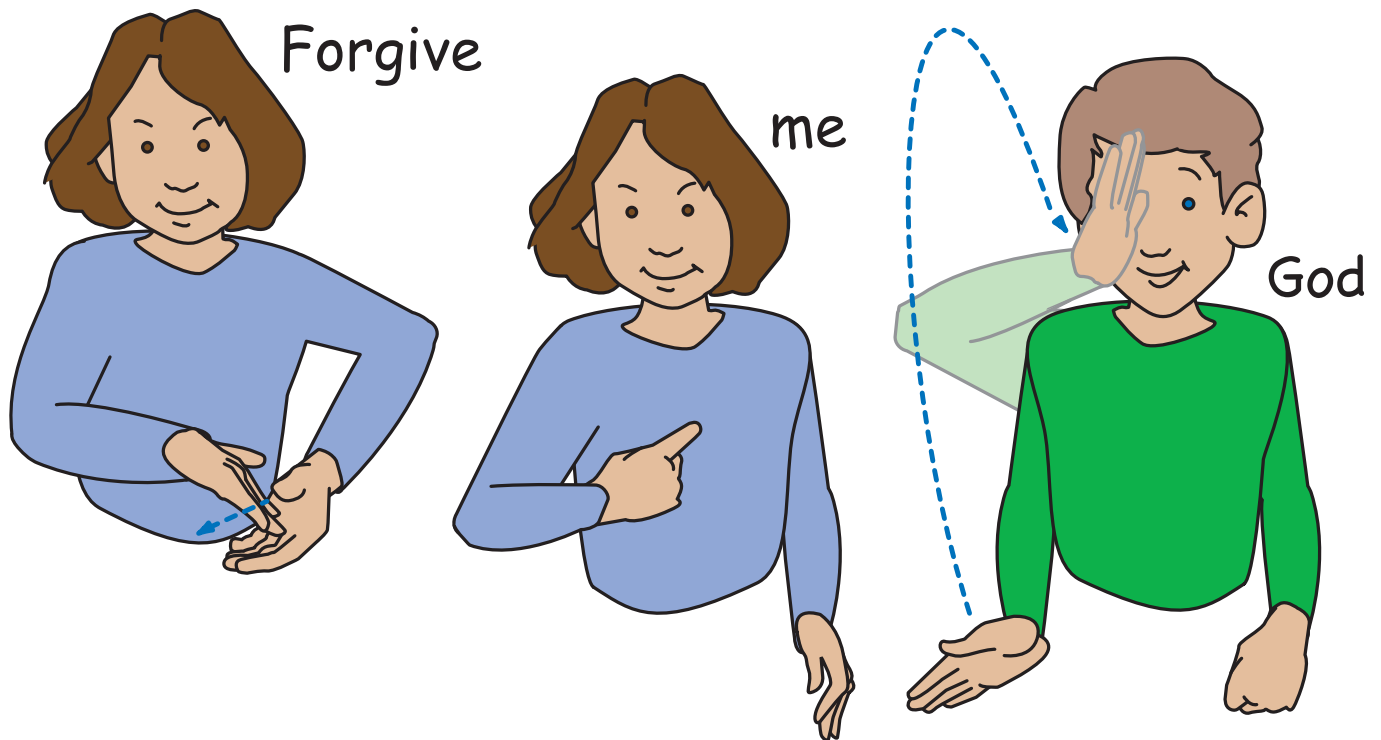


One-Line Sign Language Prayers

Sentence Prayer 2 - You are an awesome God.

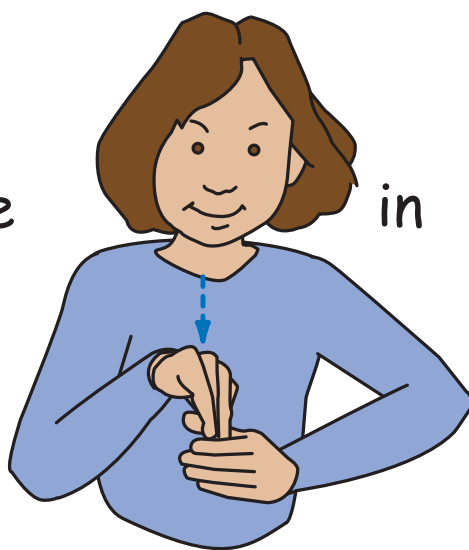
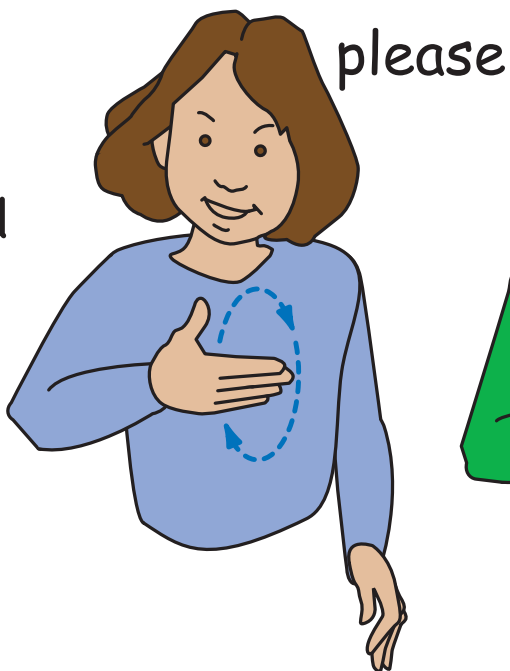


Sentence Prayer 3 - Forgive me God.



One-Line Sign Language Prayers

Sentence Prayer 4 - God Please help people in need.





Young Believer's Discipleship Series



So...You Want to Talk with God? Parent Guide

Scripture: “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-17).

Purpose: The purpose of this *Parent Guide* is to provide you with the basic resources to talk with your child about prayer through the use of the booklet, *So... You Want to Talk with God?*

Dear Parent:

Thank you for allowing us to join with you in nurturing your child spiritually. We believe prayer is such an essential element to a child’s formation and we are glad that you have allowed your child to take part in this class as we seek to discover what it means to pray continually. Throughout this study, your children will discover that prayer is more than simply one specific format, but rather your child will discover that prayer can encompass all aspects of daily life and choices.

Prayer can happen through each of our senses and even through our various rituals and routines. Your child is also learning that prayer happens through a variety of emotions such as thanksgiving, lament, and intercession. And we are learning and practicing all these various forms of prayer. Remember that the essential element in learning about and understanding prayer is seeing prayer modeled. Without modeling, prayer will simply be learned as something that happens sporadically and without much meaning. I want to encourage you to use this time to participate in some various prayer practices with your child. I have included all of the various prayer activities that your child has been learning in various prayer methods. Some of these may be new to you as well. I want to encourage you to try some of these techniques daily

Notes:

and allow prayer to saturate your home life. You'll also find a list of other ideas of how to continue building a stronger repertoire of prayer within a variety of mediums. For additional activities, you can visit www.wordaction.com to download a complete leader's guide that goes along with the prayer booklet that your child brings home. You can continue the learning within your home environment.

Various Prayer Activities found within the student booklet:

(Underlined activities were optional so your child may or may not have done these in the class session.)

1. Read Matthew 6:9-13. Jesus teaches us how to pray. Use the six steps to write a prayer as a family. Pray together.

Step 1: Pray, greeting God by name.

Step 2: Praise God for who He is. Thank God for His awesomeness!

Step 3: Tell God about your needs. Ask for His help.

Step 4: Admit your sins and ask God to forgive you if needed. Pray for God's help in forgiving others if needed.

Step 5: Ask God to help you obey Him.

Step 6: Finish the prayer. This is like saying good-bye. Pray, "In Jesus' name, Amen."

2. Pray thanksgiving prayers. Create a list of things for which you are thankful. Praise God for who He is and for all He does.

3. Pray lament prayers. Use Play-Doh to pound out frustrations, anger, and sadness, and then re-shape into a heart to close the prayer trusting in God's love to care for us.

4. Pray intercessory prayers. Use beads on a bracelet or keychain to pray for specific family members; friends; neighborhood, school, community issues; the country; and the world.

5. Pray SEEING prayers. Go outside, enjoy God's beauty through creation. List 20 things and thank God for them.

6. Pray SEEING prayers. Use old magazines, pictures of paintings, and photographs to make collages of God's beauty found in the world around us. Use this collage as a visual help to pray as a family.

7. Pray HEARING prayers. Find a quiet space and practice listening to God's voice in silence. Encourage the family to have a weekly quiet time to listen and wait upon the Lord.

Notes:

- 8. Pray HEARING prayers.** Listen to select music/lyrics, and then pray this to God.
- 9. Pray READING prayers.** Use the short story (at the end of this Parent Guide) to read and follow the guided prayerful questions as a family. You can read it aloud, and then ask family members to respond to the questions.
- 10. Pray READING prayers.** Read Psalm 23 or any favorite psalm as a guided prayer to worship God as a family.
- 11. Pray MOVING prayers.** Use the sample sign language one sentence prayers (at the end of this Parent Guide) as a family. You can also use American Sign Language to design and move together as you pray. A good website is <www.aslpro.com>.
- 12. Pray MOVING prayers.** Use a variety of art mediums (paint, chalk, beads, clay, paper, glue, etc.) to create individual masterpieces (or a family masterpiece) that expresses visually your response to God's glory.
- 13. Pray "Flash-Prayers."** Pray quick and easy one-line prayers throughout each day. An example "God, please keep Mom safe as she drives to work."
- 14. Pray through service.** Using your life as an example of serving in the community, help someone in need as a family. An idea would be to volunteer at a shelter, read a book to a shut-in, or deliver food to a local charity.
- 15. Pray through caring for the environment.** You can express thanksgiving prayer to God by working together as a family to care for His world. One idea would be to begin (or continue) recycling at home.

Additional Ideas for how to continue praying in a variety of ways with your family:

- Go to the art museum, look at some masterpieces and pray through this beauty as it reveals God's nature.
- Read some of the ancient creeds such as the Apostle's Creed.
- Move and dance to appropriate worship music that captures the glory of worshiping God.
- Try different prayer postures such as kneeling, raising hands, or finding a quiet place to talk with God.
- Journal or write prayer letters to God.

Notes:

- Make photo album books with pictures of friends, family, and people around the world for whom you will commit to pray for as a family.
- Read current event stories and pray for the people or circumstances that are being reported by news agencies.
- Light candles for various people for whom you are praying.
- Pin tacks on a world map or place small stickers on a globe as you pray for people and nations around the world.
- Find images and symbols of the cross. Touch these symbols and praise God for His Son, Jesus, and the power of salvation and grace at work in your lives.
- Watch a movie and discuss how God was revealed through the characters (Hint: most movies contain a good versus evil plot). Use this as a starting point to discuss God's goodness, and then praise Him.

These prayer activities are just a starting point. Your family prayer life can blossom. My prayer is for you to take these ideas and continue to create new ways to pray that are meaningful and relevant to your specific family and lifestyle. Together your family can place and keep God in the center of all that you do.

Prayerful Questions:

1. Where is there forgiveness in this story?
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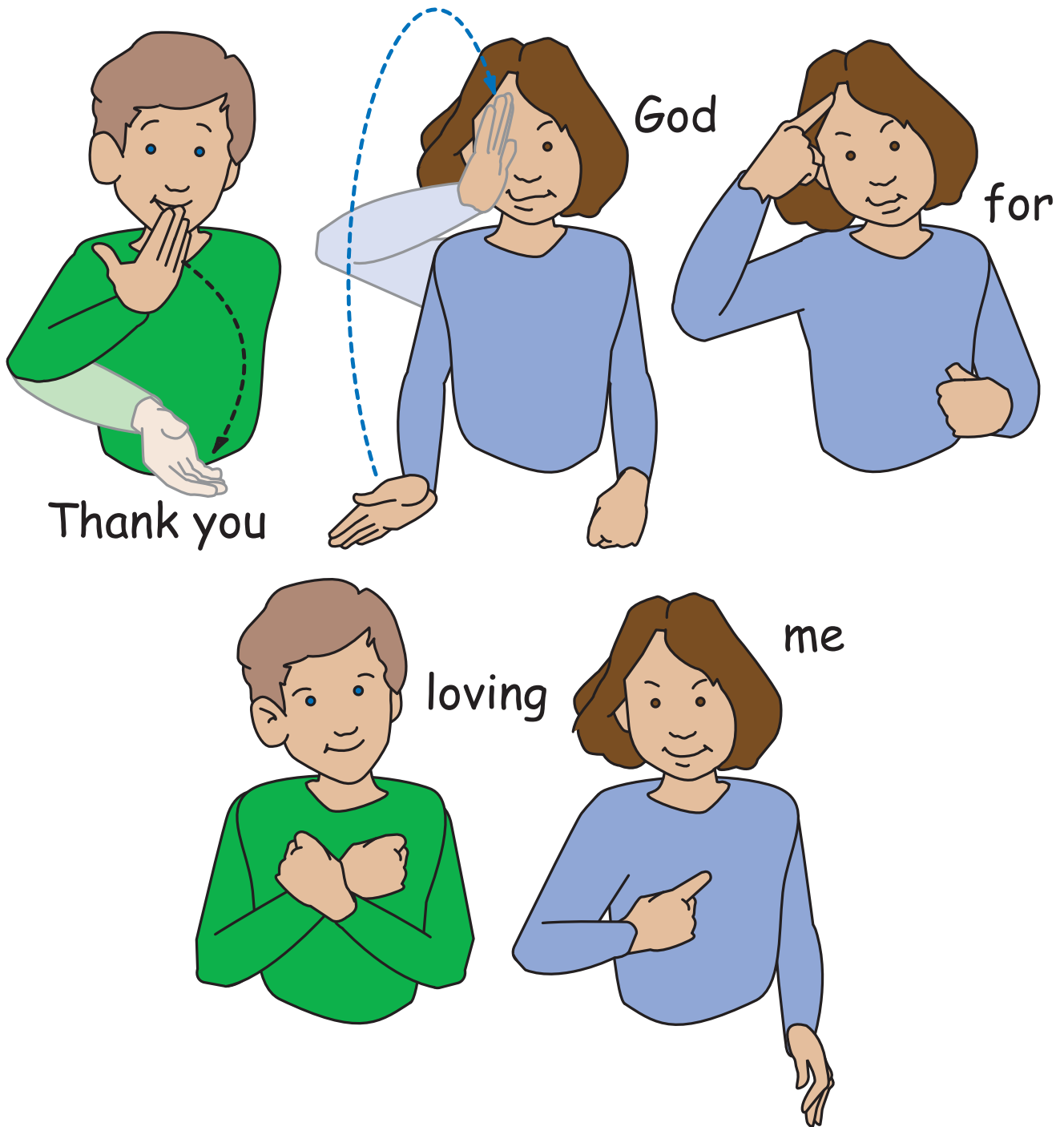
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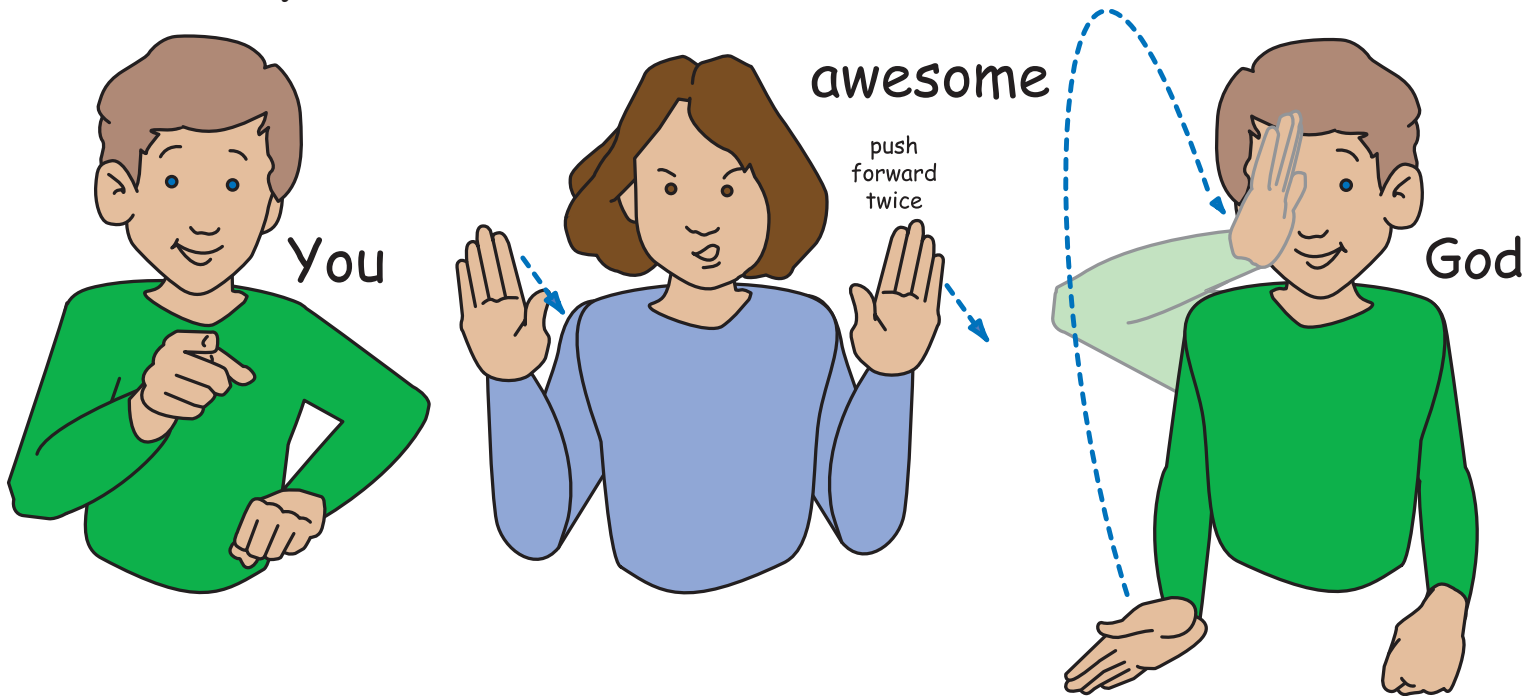
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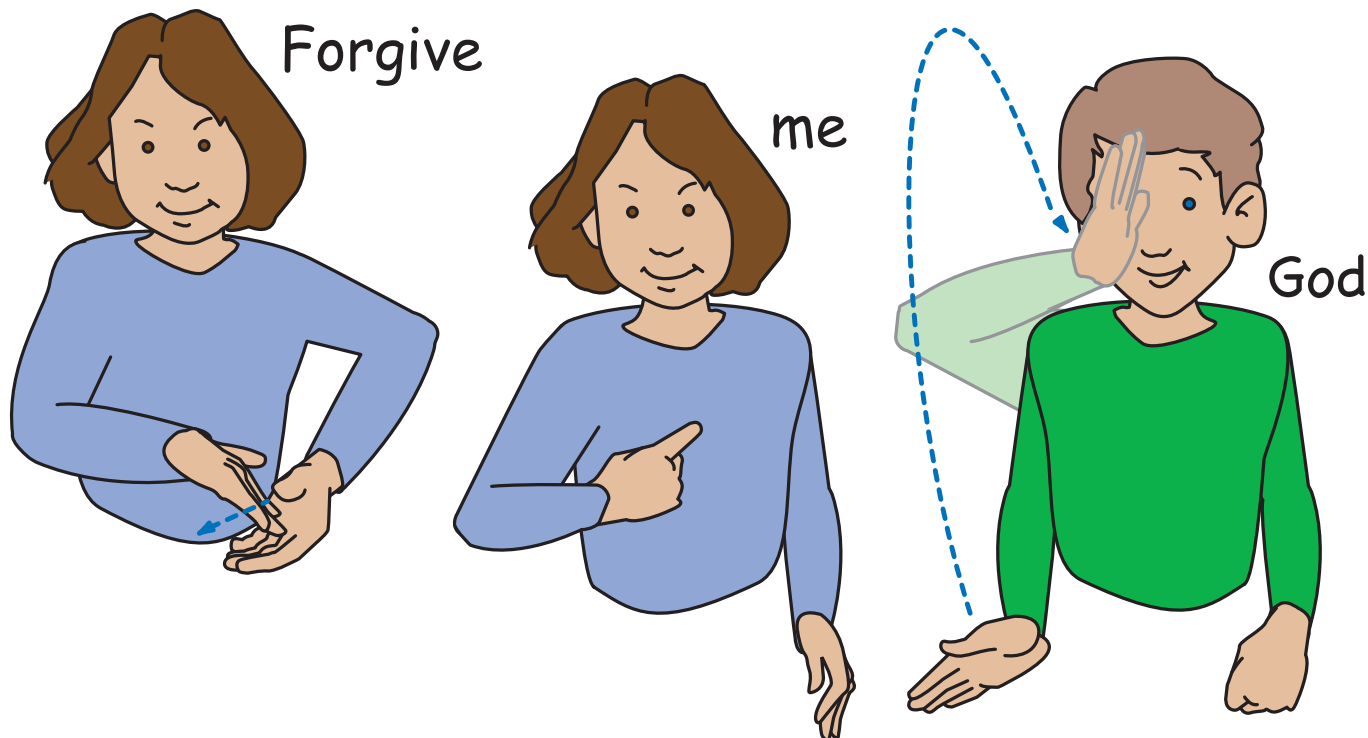


One-Line Sign Language Prayers

Sentence Prayer 2 - You are an awesome God.



Sentence Prayer 3 - Forgive me God.



One-Line Sign Language Prayers

Sentence Prayer 4 - God Please help people in need.

