



The Lord's Prayer

HOW DOES THIS SESSION HELP PEOPLE GROW IN CHRIST?

The theme of this session is God our Father, with particular focus on the prayer Jesus gave us to help us talk to 'our Father in heaven'. This ties in neatly with Father's Day, if it is this month. Part of the toolbox of faith, the Lord's Prayer is a valuable gift that we can pass on to the next generation. It seems sad that if children learn it at all, they often learn it in school rather than in church; even weekly churchgoing children may be out of the service when it is said. Some of the parables about prayer also feature here so that we can see exactly how Jesus is encouraging us to pray to God our Father.

Main Bible story: Matthew 6:5–14

ACTIVITIES

1 Pipe-cleaner figures

You will need: pipe cleaners; pony beads; googly eyes; funky foam; wrapped sweets or other tiny treats

Make a parent figure and a child figure out of the pipe cleaners and beads. The beads can be used as hands or feet, or threaded on to the pipe cleaners to make interesting limbs, with the funky foam added for extra interest—but let people choose how to do it, as ever. Put a

wrapped treat in the hands of the parent figure and position it as if they are giving the treat to the child.

Talk about

In his famous prayer, Jesus effectively called God his 'dad', which is why we can pray to God saying 'Our Father'. Our parent figure is giving the child a gift; Jesus said God is like that loving parent.

2 Word mobile

You will need: wooden coat hangers with the words 'Our Father' painted on to them (older people could do the painting during the session, but have some ready to go for younger people); ribbon or transparent thread; a hole punch; circles, hearts, squares or other interesting shapes cut from card in different colours and big enough to write a word on; pens

Challenge a family or friendship group to make a mobile with words to describe God our Father, each starting with a different letter of the alphabet. Write each word on a cardboard shape, hole-punch it and string it to the coat hanger. Further words can be added on to the coat hanger or attached by thread to the existing shapes to dangle beneath them. Here are some word suggestions to get you started, and in case you want to print some out to make it easier for people. Encourage people to use 'hallowed' for 'H'.

amazing, brilliant, childlike, daring, enterprising, forgiving, good, hallowed, invisible, joyful, kind, loving, motherly, never-failing, old, patient, quite fantastic, right, splendid, time-travelling, unavoidable, volcanic, warm, xtremely loving, young, zillions of times bigger than me

Talk about

What stories do you know about God where he displays these characteristics? Jesus said God's name is 'hallowed' or 'holy' and

told us to pray to him as a holy God. 'Hallowed be your name' is the second line of the Lord's Prayer.

3 Kingdom feelies

You will need: rising bread dough and bread dough without yeast in; seeds; small, non-toxic bulbs; tray and compost; a growing bulb or plant; pearl beads and one real pearl in a box (but only if one is available and the owner is willing to risk bringing it in!); scribble board/graffiti wall with the title 'Your kingdom come'; marker pens

Say you're taking people on a lightning tour of what God's kingdom is like. Let them poke the two sorts of dough while you tell them Jesus' parable about yeast (Luke 13:20–21). Let them plant a seed or bulb in the compost tray and then marvel at a growing plant as you tell them the parable of the mustard seed (Luke 13:18–19). Let them run the beads through their fingers and touch the real pearl in a box as you tell them the parable of the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45–46). Now ask them to scribble on the board what they think the kingdom of heaven is like.

Talk about

This is a very talky one already, so keep it short and punchy.

4 Daily bread

You will need: white sliced bread; a variety of sauces such as ketchup, mustard, HP sauce, chocolate sauce, honey and squirry cream

Write 'daily' on the bread using any sauces you like as long as you're prepared to eat the results!

Talk about

Jesus' prayer includes the line, 'Give us today our daily bread.' Where does your food come from? Where is it from ultimately?

5 Forgive us

You will need: fire (outside or in a metal bucket, or a tea light on a fireproof surface); barbecue tongs; bucket of water

Write or draw on a piece of paper very privately something you're really sorry for and that you're determined never to do again. Write on another piece of paper something someone has done to you that has hurt you in some way and tell God you forgive them for it. Fold them both in half. Ask a responsible person to burn the two pieces of paper, using the tongs if necessary.

Talk about

This shows how completely those sins are forgiven when we give them to God, and how completely we can forgive others with God's help. The pieces of paper have completely gone and so have those sins.

6 Lolly-stick gate

You will need: lolly sticks; cardboard rectangles about 20cm x 15cm; PVA glue; spreaders; pens

Glue the lolly sticks into a five-barred gate design on the card and write around the edge as a border: 'Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it' (Matthew 7:14).

Talk about

In the Lord's Prayer there is the phrase, 'Lead us not into temptation.' Sometimes it's much easier to give in to temptation and go through the wide gate than to resist temptation and choose the narrow gate, but Jesus always wants us to choose the best way.

7 Lifebelts

You will need: apples; lemon juice in a bowl; apple corers; knives; soft cheese in a tube; sliced orange cheese; cheese strings (optional)

Core an apple and carefully cut slices that are the same shape as a lifebelt. Put spare slices into the lemon juice to prevent browning. Use one apple slice as a template for cutting round a slice of orange cheese. Cut the cheese in half, then cut one half into four segments and glue them on to the apple using the soft cheese, leaving spaces between each one in a lifebelt design. Add lettering in soft cheese or cheese strings if desired, such as 'HMS St Wilf's'.

Talk about

Jesus' prayer says, 'Deliver us from evil.' It's a prayer to be rescued from evil, just as throwing a lifebelt to someone in the sea can rescue them from drowning.

8 Glory box

You will need: tiny cardboard boxes with lids on; sequins; glitter; PVA glue; spreaders

Leaving the lid on, coat the box in glue and encrust it by rolling it in the sequins or glitter or both.

Talk about

At the end of Jesus' prayer we add, 'For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.' This little box reminds us of the glory of God.

9 Display

You will need: the Lord's Prayer printed out in separate phrases on strips of paper; a picture of an open treasure chest; craft gems; sequins; lametta; PVA glue; spreaders

Make a display showing the open treasure chest with the Lord's Prayer phrases coming out of it like rays from a rising sun. Decorate the spaces between the phrases with gems and other sparkly stuff.

Talk about

Jesus gave us a real treasure in the special prayer he taught us.

10 Prayer candle

You will need: the Lord's Prayer printed out around the edge of a card circle; tea lights; crayons; PVA glue; spreaders; decorative bits and bobs

Glue the tea light into the centre of the circle. Colour in the lettering of the prayer and decorate the rest of the card. Make sure that no decorative bits are within reach of the candle flame and remind people never to leave the candle unattended when lit.

Talk about

Suggest that when people are at home, they could light the candle and pray the prayer together one mealtime this month.

CELEBRATION

Jesus gave his friends a brilliant present: he gave them the present of a prayer. It's a magic sort of prayer: the bigger you get, the bigger the prayer gets! Jesus' friends have been praying this prayer for nearly 2000 years and they haven't worn it out yet! We're going to learn this prayer today and see if we can say it with actions. It's a family prayer to say together, so it starts off:

Our Father in heaven (point up with one hand and keep it up).

And we need reminding how holy God is, so we say that his name is holy or hallowed:

Hallowed be your name (point up with the other hand so both arms are raised).

We ask God to make things better on earth, so we say:

Your kingdom come (as you're speaking, bring your hands across your body, crossed in front of you, and then let them spread out to either side), your will be done (continue the movement till your arms are open wide), on earth (turn hands palms down) as it is in heaven (turn hands palms up).

We ask him for the good things we need:

Give us today our daily bread (bring your hands together like a bowl in front of you).

And we ask him to make us right with him and with each other:

Forgive us our sins (wipe one hand across the other twice as if wiping away dirt), as we forgive those who sin against us (turn hands over and repeat the action four times in a rhythm with the words).

We ask for protection and safety:

Lead us not into temptation (clench a fist and place one arm firmly across your chest).

But deliver us from evil (clench the other fist and cross that one across your chest).

And we finish with a joyful shout of praise:

For the kingdom (open arms wide again), the power (make a 'strong man' pose with clenched fists) and the glory (make a full circle with your hands from as high as you can to as low as you can in front of your body) are yours (push out arms forwards) now (indicate the start of a 'timeline' with your left hand) and forever (continue the timeline over to the right with a spiralling 'on and on' movement with your left hand).

Amen! (Finish with both arms up again and a high clap.)

Pray it several times to practise. Try it very loud and very fast, then very quietly and with quiet music behind it. Encourage people to pray it at home at bedtime, and remind them that the older they get, the bigger the prayer will get!

Sunday treat

Forgive us our sins...

Dear Jesus, you love us so much. You want the very best for us.

You even died on the cross so that we can be forgiven!

We make mistakes and do things we know are wrong.

We're very sorry, especially for things we've done today, like... (say your own ideas).

Thank you that you forgive us every time we ask you to!

Take-home idea

- ✧ Write down two things (or more if you have time) you wish would happen. Take turns to read out your wishes.

- ❖ If God was making a list of what he wishes would happen, what do you think might be on it? Write down two things you think God would wish for and take turns to read them out.

Talk about what's on the lists and draw them together with a simple prayer such as: 'Our Father, thank you that you want what's good for us all. Help us to understand what you want and to do it.'

Messy team theme

- ❖ How much of the Lord's Prayer can you remember without help?
- ❖ Which part do you like best?
- ❖ Which part is most relevant to your Messy Church?