

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Prayer is a powerful way to demonstrate our faith!

Luke 11:2-4

Acts 12:5-11

SESSION SUPPLIES

- ★ Bibles
- ★ paper or plastic cups
- ★ a playground ball
- ★ scissors, tape, and a stapler
- ★ markers and craft items
- ★ construction paper
- ★ wallpaper sample books
- ★ photocopies of Proverbs 3:5, 6 (page 127)
- ★ photocopies of the Whiz Quiz (page 62) and the Power Page! (page 61)

MIGHTY MEMORY VERSE

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5, 6

(For older kids, add in Psalm 25:1, 2: "To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God.")

SESSION OBJECTIVES

During this session, children will

- ★ learn that prayer is a hot line to heaven
- ★ discover how Jesus taught us to pray
- ★ realize that God hears and answers prayer
- ★ understand that prayer shows trust in God

BIBLE BACKGROUND

As a child, did you ever lie on your stomach in a grassy yard and search for four-leaf clovers? Have you ever carried a rabbit's foot or wished upon a star? Most of us enjoyed these silly pastimes at one time or another. But for life's real pressures, problems, and even praises, nothing beats powerful prayer! Prayer brings bountiful blessings, resourceful answers, and divine direction just when we need it most. And with such a powerful hot line to heaven, we not only know that God hears each prayer but can trust that he will answer in our best interests and with his perfect will!

Even the youngest kids need assurance that someone knows and cares about their problems, worries, fears, and

joys. And though most children learn simple prayers for grace and bedtime, they need to go beyond the rote recitation of “pleas” and thank-yous! Use this lesson to teach kids that prayer is something we can do anytime and that God faithfully hears and answers when we talk to him.

POWER FOCUS

Have kids sit in a circle and explain that you’re going to play a game of telephone. Tell kids you’ll whisper a message in someone’s ear, then he will whisper what he’s heard to the next person and so on around the circle. Then the last person will repeat the message aloud. If it matches exactly what the original message was, have kids give each other high-fives. Send around the following messages. Then if there’s time, invite kids to make up their own messages to “phone” around the circle.

Message 1: **There are many ways to show our trust in God.**

Message 2: **We can show trust through following and obeying God.**

Message 3: **Prayer shows trust and faith in God, too.**

Message 4: **It’s important to show and grow our faith in God!**

After you’ve sent the messages, say: **Well, some of our messages didn’t make it around the phone line correctly or they were miscommunicated. Why do you think that happened?** Allow kids to respond, then ask:

- ★ **How can we communicate or talk with God?**
- ★ **Why do you think God wants us to talk to him?**
- ★ **In what ways can prayer be a good way to visit with God? to show him our faith and trust? our love?**

Say: **The best way to get a message through loud and clear is to go directly to the person. And we can go directly to God through our prayers! When we pray to God and share with him our fears, troubles, triumphs, and requests, it shows we trust God to listen and answer—and he always does! Prayer is like a direct phone line or hot line to heaven—only better because the line is never busy and God is always home!**

Prayer is one of the best and most powerful ways to demonstrate our faith in God. Today we’ll be learning a lot about prayer and how it shows our trust in God. We’ll discover that God really does hear and answer each prayer, and we’ll practice our Mighty Memory Verse as we explore more about showing trust in God and what he does.

Do you like exciting stories? Pause for responses, then continue: **Then you’ll really enjoy our Bible message today as we learn how prayer and**

faith helped someone escape from chains and jail in an amazing way! Before we hear this super story, let's send one more message around our fun phone line! Listen carefully! Whisper "God wants our trust!" in a child's ear. When the message has been whispered all around the circle, have children end with a final high-five and a cheer.

THE MIGHTY MESSAGE

Gather kids and invite them to tell about times they feel God might have answered their prayers in amazing or surprising ways. Then explain that today's story is about something amazing that happened to Peter through prayer.

Say: **God always hears and answers our prayers, but sometimes he chooses to answer in amazing ways! Peter found that out one time after he**

had been thrown into jail. Mean King Herod had tossed Peter into jail because he was teaching about Jesus and telling others that Jesus was God's Son. You see, King Herod didn't love God or Jesus and didn't want anyone teaching about them. You can help tell the rest of this exciting story! Each time you hear the name *Peter*, give a double thumbs-up. Each time you hear the words *praying* or *prayers*, kneel and pretend to pray. Finally, each time you hear the word *angel*, hop up and say, "Praise the Lord!"

So *Peter* was put in jail and wrapped with heavy chains, but the people who loved Jesus were *praying* for *Peter*. The night before King Herod was to bring *Peter* to trial, *Peter* was sleeping between two guards, and even more guards were keeping watch at the entrance to the jail. Guards were everywhere! But God's people kept *praying* for *Peter*. Then, in the still of the night, something amazing happened!

Suddenly an *angel* of the Lord appeared in the jail cell, and bright light shone all around! The *angel* woke *Peter* and told him to follow quickly—and then the chains fell off *Peter's* wrists! Wow! The *angel* told *Peter* to put on his cloak and sandals and to follow him. Now *Peter* didn't quite understand what was going on and thought he was having a dream! But *Peter* still trusted the *angel* of the Lord and followed.

POWER POINTERS

Assure kids that God doesn't give us "brownie points" for how we pray or for what fancy words we use. Remind kids that God loves to hear our prayers when they come directly from our hearts!

Peter followed the *angel* right past the guards and came to the iron gate. The gate was locked, but whoosh—suddenly it swung wide to let them free! *Peter* followed the *angel* into the street, then suddenly the *angel* was gone! *Peter* said to himself, “Now I know without a doubt that God sent an *angel* to rescue me!” And we know without a doubt that God hears and answers *prayers*!

Applaud kids’ efforts and say: **You did a great job helping retell this exciting story! Peter really learned that God hears prayer and that, when we put our faith in God, he answers, too!** Ask:

- ★ How did the prayers of others help Peter?
- ★ In what ways did prayer show the people’s trust and faith in God?
How do our prayers show faith in God?
- ★ Why does God answer our prayers? How does answering our prayers demonstrate God’s love?
- ★ Does God always answer our prayers the way we want? Explain.

Say: **Prayer is a direct line to God, and he hears each prayer we pray. God answers our prayers, too, but not always as we think he should. In fact, sometimes he answers prayers in very surprising ways, as he did with Peter! When we have faith in God, we trust him to answer prayers the way he knows is best and accept his answers with grateful hearts.**

In the Bible, Jesus teaches us a wonderful prayer to show our faith in God. It’s called the Lord’s Prayer. Perhaps you already know it. Read aloud Luke 11:2-4 or repeat the Lord’s Prayer, then encourage kids to fold their hands and pray the Lord’s Prayer with you.

Say: **When we keep praying and talking to God, it shows our faith in his power to listen, answer, and help us. Let’s play a lively game as we learn more about finding faith in God through prayer. But first, we’ll bookmark the story of Peter’s escape so you can share it later with your families.**

Help kids mark Acts 12:11 in their Bibles with the blue bookmark ribbons they’ve been using the past several weeks. If anyone has lost or didn’t make a bookmark, let that child make one now using an 8-inch length of blue ribbon and the Bible icon from page 123.



THE MESSAGE IN MOTION

Before class draw happy faces on paper or plastic cups, one for every two or three kids. Clear a playing area for this lively game, then choose two kids to be the ball rollers. Have the other kids form groups of two or three. Hand

each group a paper or plastic cup and have kids spread out and place their cups on the floor right-side up. Hold the ball and explain that players are make-believe prayers guarding paper-cup people. The ball represents things that cause troubles in the world, such as illness, poverty, hunger, or other worries. This game is played like dodge ball, where the ball is kept in motion by the ball rollers and the prayer players keep the ball from toppling the cups. The object of the game is for the rollers to try to topple the paper cups while the prayer players do their best to protect their cups from falling down.



Tell kids that only the ball rollers may use their hands. The prayer players must deflect the ball with their feet by gently tapping it out of the way or by blocking it from hitting the paper cups. Play for five minutes and see if all the cups remain standing. If a cup topples, those prayer players can help another group protect their paper-cup person.

After five minutes, call time. Have kids give each other high fives, then ask:

- ★ **How did the prayer players protect the paper-cup people?**
- ★ **In what ways is this game like the way prayers protect and help us?**
- ★ **Why does God want us to have faith and trust in the prayers that we pray? that others pray for us?**
- ★ **How has prayer helped you?**

Say: **When we pray, we're telling God we trust him to listen and answer. Prayers can protect, heal, and help us when we have faith in God's power to answer them! And the Bible tells us that God does hear and answer every prayer. Let's hear what the Bible says about how God listens to and answers prayers.**

Read aloud 1 Kings 9:3a and Psalm 91:15. Then continue: **Isn't that wonderful? God is never too busy to hear or answer when we call! And we can put our faith in that because God gave us his word! Let's turn our attention to God's Word now and review our Mighty Memory Verse as we explore more about putting our faith in God through prayer.**

SUPER SCRIPTURE

Invite volunteers to repeat Proverbs 3:5, 6. (If you have older kids who are also working on Psalm 25:1, 2, have them repeat the verse aloud three times.)

Ask kids to name the three things we're to do and the one thing God will do from Proverbs 30:5, 6. Use the Scripture boxes you made last week to help. Then scramble the boxes and have groups of four race to see how quickly they can reassemble the two verses in their correct order.

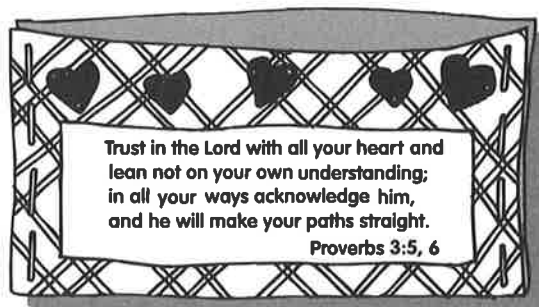
After your review time, gather kids and say: **Trusting in the Lord with our hearts and not relying on just our understanding can be hard sometimes! Remember last week when we learned about Joshua at Jericho? How did Joshua trust without understanding?** Allow kids to share their thoughts, then continue: **And today we learned about Peter's miraculous escape from prison. Let me read a verse from that story to you.** Read aloud Acts 12:9. Ask:

- ★ **How did Peter trust: with his heart or his understanding? Explain.**
- ★ **What might have happened if Peter hadn't followed the angel because he didn't understand or trust God?**
- ★ **In what ways can trusting God with our hearts help when we're not sure what to do?**
- ★ **How can we learn to trust with our hearts and not lean just on our understanding?**

Say: **Our Mighty Memory Verse really is a mighty truth to remember! When we know, love, and follow God, we can trust with our hearts and not rely on logic all the time. God wants us to be as smart with our hearts as we are with our minds—and trust and faith show heart-smarts! When we pray, we're showing God that we have faith and trust and that we're heart-smart. Let's make heart-smart prayer pockets so we can give our prayer needs over to God in total trust.**

Let each child choose a page from a wallpaper sample book and then tear or cut the page out. Fold the page in half and tape or staple the sides to form pockets. Use scissors to smooth or scallop the top edges, then use markers, bits of construction paper, lace, ribbons, or other craft items to decorate the pockets with hearts. Finally, tape or staple the Scripture strip for Proverbs 3:5, 6 to the prayer pockets.

When the pockets are finished, say:
We'll use our prayer pockets in the closing activity, so hold on to them. Now let's offer God a prayer with all our hearts to thank him for being so faithful and to ask him to help us be like Peter and trust with our hearts.



A POWERFUL PROMISE

Before class, cut a 4-inch red construction-paper heart for each child.

Have kids sit in a circle and ask for a moment of silence, then say: **We've learned today that God faithfully hears and answers prayers. We know that prayer is a good way to show God we have faith in him even if we don't understand his ways or his will. And we've worked on the Mighty Memory Verse that teaches us to trust God with our hearts and not lean on our own understanding. Let's repeat the Mighty memory Verse together: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."**

Hold up the Bible and say: **The Bible tells us that God promises to hear and answer our prayers. Because God loves us, he makes that promise. And because we love God, we can promise to trust God more with our hearts as we pray and follow his directions. As we pass the Bible around the circle, we can say, "I will trust you, Lord, with my whole heart."** Pass the Bible until everyone has had a chance to hold it.

Hand each child a red paper heart and a marker. Have kids silently write or draw a picture of one thing they need prayer for, such as school, an illness, a friendship, or for more trust in God.

When the hearts are done, say: **We can share a prayer thanking God for hearing and answering our prayers. When we get to the part where you can tell God a need you have, slip your paper heart inside your prayer pocket. This will show that we've given our requests to God in faith and trust. Pray: Dear Lord, no one is more powerful or faithful than you! You hear each prayer and answer in your way and in your time. Please hear my request for** (have kids slide the hearts into their prayer pockets). **We love you, God, and thank you for your faithful love. Amen.**

Before kids leave, allow five or ten minutes to complete the Whiz Quiz from page 62. If you run out of time, be sure to do this page first thing next week. The Whiz Quiz is an invaluable tool that allows kids, teachers, and parents see what kids have learned in the previous three weeks.

Say the Lord's Prayer together, then close with this responsive good-bye:

Leader: **May God's faithful love be with you.**

Children: **And also with you!**

Distribute the Power Page! take-home papers as kids are leaving. Thank kids for coming and encourage them to keep their promises to God this week.

POWER PAGE!

3 + 1

Use these words and Proverbs 3:5, 6 to complete the sentences:

paths	heart	straight
acknowledge	your	Lord
trust	understanding	lean

3 things we do:

- _____ in the _____ with all your _____.
- _____ not on _____ own _____.
- In all your ways _____ him.

1 thing God does:

- He will make your _____.



Use the words from the Lord's Prayer word bank below to fill in the missing letters.

Our	earth
Father	daily
heaven	bread
name	forgive
kingdom	who
done	

Family Prayer Pot

Make this neat prayer reminder and have a bit of fun, too!

You'll need:

- ★ a pot with potting soil
- ★ pea or bean seeds
- ★ a pencil
- ★ paint pens & markers



Directions:

- Decorate your pot with paint or markers. Be sure all family members add a design or two!
- Each time your family prays together, plant a seed.
- Keep your prayer garden moist and in a sunny spot. Then watch as God answers your prayers and blessings bloom!

