

5. Jesus Prays (Matthew 26:36-46)

“If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other’s feet.” (John 13:14)



PLAN

Session Outline

1. Gather

Greeting
Puzzlers
Praying in Nature
Transition to Explore

2. Explore

Sacred Conversations
Hear and See the Bible Story
Interact with the Bible Story
Say the Bible Verse
Transition to Respond

3. Respond

The Disciples’
Perspective
Prayer Positions
Loving God,
Loving Neighbor
Transition to Bless

4. Bless

Inviting
Praising
Blessing
At Home with God

Supplies

Basic Supplies: Offering basket | Pencils

Gather: TV/DVD player | Outdoor space or indoor space with plants

Explore: TV/DVD player

Respond: Open space | A few chairs | Tablecloth | LED candle | Potted Plant

Bless: Tablecloth | LED candle | Potted plant | TV/DVD player

Before You Teach

Our Bible story begins after Jesus and the disciples have shared their Last Supper and gone to Gethsemane, a garden where Jesus prays. Jesus expresses that he is feeling “sad and anxious” (verse 37). He asks the disciples to stay with him and remain alert while he prays. Jesus knows his future and that his time on earth is growing short.

He prays to God that if possible his suffering be taken away, but ultimately submits to God’s will by saying, “not what I want but what you want” (verse 39). After praying this prayer, Jesus goes back to where he left his waiting disciples and finds them sleeping. He chastises them and then goes away on his own to pray again. Again, he prays for his suffering to be taken away, but submits to God’s will. He returns to the disciples a second time, finds them sleeping again, and chastises them again. A third time he goes to pray, and when he returns, finds them asleep. This time, he does not return to prayer because his betrayer (Judas) has come into the garden, and he knows that he is about to be arrested.

This story provides us with a model for prayer in that Jesus takes his sadness and his anxiousness and turns it over to God, as we are taught to do. He also asks for what he wants, but ultimately submits to what God wants, as we are expected to do as well. This story is also a pivotal moment in Jesus’ story, because it takes place just before his arrest, which will ultimately lead to trial, torture, death, and the Resurrection.

This week, we will focus on prayer. We’ll explore different ways and places to pray, as well as pray for our community and personal concerns. We’ll also explore the story from the perspective of the disciples. You’ll want your children to come away more comfortable with praying in different ways and to continue to deepen their understanding of this familiar passage of Scripture, which they have likely explored before and will likely explore again in their faith journey.

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GATHER

Greeting

Before class: Display either attendance chart (Class Kit—pp. 16–17 or 15 & 18) at eye level.

- Play “A Whole New Level of Love” (Adventure DVD), as you welcome each child.
- Show the children where to place their offerings on the worship table.
- Have the children mark the “Attendance Chart” by signing their first names on week #5.

SAY: Today, we are learning about a time when Jesus prayed.

A—Puzzlers (Activity Sheets)

Before class: Tear out the Session 5 Activity Sheets for each child.

- Give each child a copy of “While Jesus Prayed” (Activity Sheets—p. 11). Let them complete the puzzle.
- Allow them to work on the “Jesus Prays” activity (Activity Sheets—p. 12).

SAY: In our Bible story, Jesus prays in a garden called Gethsemane.

OR

B—Praying in Nature (Spiritual Practice)

Before class: Locate an outdoor space where your class can pray.

SAY: In our Bible story Jesus prayed in a garden. Let’s spend some time praying in nature to remind us of what praying in the garden might have been like for Jesus.

- Walk in an orderly fashion to the place you’ve selected for prayer.
- Ask if there are any particular prayer concerns that the children would like to lift up.
- Have the children pray silently on their own, or join hands in a circle and lead them in prayer. If praying together, consider simple prayers for the day or week along with the prayer concerns raised by the children.

ASK: How did it feel to pray in nature?

TIP: *If rain is in the forecast or there is no safe outdoor space available near your church, consider bringing plants into the classroom to create an indoor garden.*

Transition to Explore

- Encourage children to bring a chair or to sit on the floor in a carpeted area.
- Invite children to form a circle on the floor.

TIP: *Transitions are a helpful way for children to move easily from one activity to the next.*

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EXPLORE

Sacred Conversations

- Encourage children to join and sit in the circle.
- Demonstrate a listening position for the children.
- Ask wondering questions.

ASK: I wonder:

- Where do you like to pray?
 - Is there a particular time of day when you like to pray?
 - Who prays with you?
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Hear and See the Bible Story

- Read the Bible story together (*CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible*—Matthew 26:36-46).
- Watch the Adventure DVD Session 5.

SAY: Today, we’re exploring a story about a time when Jesus prayed because he was anxious.

ASK: Who prays for you when you’re anxious or worried?

Interact with the Bible Story

- Assign parts and act out “Jesus Prays” (Bible Story Sheets—Session 5).
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Say the Bible Verse

Before class: Display the “Unit 1 Bible Verse” poster (Class Kit—pp. 5 & 28).

- Tell the children the Bible verse: “If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other’s feet” (John 13:14).
 - Have the children repeat the verse after you a few times. Once they feel they have the Scripture memorized, have them attempt to close their eyes, and pray the Scripture.
 - There are many ways to pray Scripture, but the children can simply bow their heads, close their eyes, and say the verse as they would a prayer. Allow them to repeat it to get a feel for saying a Scripture as a prayer.
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Transition to Respond

- Encourage children to put away their chairs and/or get back to their places.

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RESPOND

From the Disciples’ Perspective (Storytelling/Drama)

Before class: Gather a CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible for each child.

ASK: So we know the story of Jesus praying in the garden from the perspective of Jesus, but what do you think the disciples were thinking during this story? How would the story change if they told it?

SAY: Let’s create a skit to tell the disciples’ version of the story.

- Have the children form teams, and review the story using their Bibles. Suggest that one child read the story aloud to the group while the others follow along. Then have them come up with a short skit to tell the story from the disciples’ perspective, and present it to the class.

OR

Prayer Positions (Movement)

Before class: Photocopy “Prayer Positions” (Leader Guide—p. 36 for each child). Find an open space where the children can move around or clear a space. Place a few chairs in the space.

ASK: Did you know that there are many ways to pray and even many positions for prayer?

SAY: Since our Bible story is about prayer, let’s explore some of the different positions for prayer.

- Demonstrate the prayer positions from “Prayer Positions” (Leader Guide—p. 36) for the children. Then have them try them out.

SAY: One way of praying is to pray a Scripture. This can be done by reading the Scripture aloud and focusing our thoughts on what it means to us. It can also be done in other ways. Today, I’m going to read the Bible story aloud, and every time I say the words, *Jesus, disciples, or Father*, we are going to change prayer positions. Let’s try it.

- Read a couple of lines to the children, and watch to make sure that they are getting the hang of changing prayer positions as the selected words are read (everyone does not have to be in the same position at the same time). Then start over and go all the way through.

TIP: *Modify the positions for children who may have trouble with movement as appropriate for their movement limitations.*

Loving God, Loving Neighbor

- Ask the children if they know of any particular prayer concerns for your church community and pray for those. If there are no known concerns, pray for your church community in general.
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Transition to Bless

- Ring a bell to announce the transition.
- Create a worship center on a small table with a tablecloth, potted plant, and an LED candle.

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BLESS

Inviting

Before class: Display “Unit 1 Bible Verse Signs” poster (Class Kit—p. 29) on a wall or bulletin board.

SAY: Today, we learned about a time when Jesus prayed in a garden. We also learned about praying a Scripture using our Bible verse. Not all prayer is spoken aloud. Prayer can be silent or it can even be signed in sign language. Let’s practice saying our Bible verse as a prayer through sign language.

- Gather the children around the Bible Verse Signs poster. Have the children read the Bible verse.
 - Teach the children to sign the verse.
 - Have the children practice signing the verse a few times, have them try signing it with their eyes closed in prayer. (It is OK if they don’t do this perfectly.)
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Praising

Before class: Gather a TV/DVD player and the Adventure DVD.

SAY: In our Bible story, Jesus prayed to God, because Jesus knew God loved him and would do what was best for him. Let’s sing a song about love.

- Play “Taking Love to a Whole New Level” on the Adventure DVD.
 - Let the children sing the song.
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Blessing

Before class: Photocopy “Prayer Positions” (Leader Guide—p. 36 for each child). Be sure you have space for the children to spread out in different prayer positions.

- Gather around the worship center, and light the candle.
- Have the children select their favorite prayer position from the sheet, and get into that position.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for giving us the gift of prayer for talking with you. Go with each of us this week, and help us to stay in communication with you not only about our wants and needs but also our praise and thanksgiving. Amen.

At Home with God

SAY: What was one thing that you learned today about Jesus praying in the garden? Can you share what you learned with your family?

- Send Bible Story Sheets—Session 5 and the Unit 1 Song Sheet home with each child.

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Prayer Positions

