

Let's P.A.R.T.Y.

[All quotations and other material for this article are taken from the 2009 Christian Education Month Planning Guide published by the LCMS—District and Congregational Services.]

During the first five weeks of Sunday school, during the opening worship time, we are focusing on teaching the students about different types of prayer. The acronym “Party” can be a useful way to remember “Praise”, “Ask” “Repent”, “Thanks” and “Yes!Amen”.

“You may have heard the saying, “A family who prays together stays together.” Why is this true? As we draw close to our God in prayer, He brings us together as a father gathers his children. Together we can learn what He desires, get excited about what He’s done, and be more ready to introduce Jesus to others.”

Parents may want to consider some of the following resources as a way to nurture the prayer life of your children and to reinforce the ideas that they are learning each week.

Week 1—Praise

Preschool age-- Act out the following poem with your child

The writer in the Bible says, “Make a joyful noise.” So listen as I shout “hooray” like other girls and boys.

Jesus is my Lord. — I can jump up high.

Jesus is my Lord. — I can reach the sky.

Jesus is my Lord. — I can wiggle my nose.

Jesus is my Lord. — I can tap my toes.

Jesus is my Lord. — I can turn around.

Jesus is my Lord. — I can touch the ground.

Praise the Lord!!

Elementary Age-- Love Letters to God

Have children write a “love letter” to God. Remind them that this letter is not about them, rather it is about praising God. Have children start with “Dear God,” and follow with “You are ____” statements, but other words will work, too.

Youth and Adults-- Study Psalm 113.

Look at the different reasons/ways that God is to be praised. Other praise Psalms to consider include 8, 19a, 29, 33, 47, 65, 66a, 68, 93, 96-100, 104-06, 111, 113-14, 117, 134-36, 145-50.

Week 2—Ask

Preschool--Teach children to pray for people they love.

Have them draw pictures of the people for whom they pray.

Make a paper chain with seven different colors. Each color can represent a group of people for whom you are praying.

Elementary-- Teach the children the “Five Finger Prayer” www.creativeyouthideas.com/blog/childrens_sermon/five_finger_prayer.html

Five Finger Prayer

- Your thumb is nearest to you. So begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember.
- The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction.
- The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God’s guidance.
- The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is fact that this is our weakest finger; as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.
- And lastly comes our little finger; the smallest finger of all, which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, “The least shall be the greatest among you.” Your pinky should remind you to pray for yourself.

By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

Youth and Adults-- Study Genesis 24.

Discuss being specific in our prayers and praying boldly. *Questions to consider:* Why would Abraham send his servant out to find Isaac a wife? What was wrong with the women where they lived? What example can we learn from the servant? Is it just a coincidence that God answers the servant’s prayer with the same amount of specificity as what he asks?

Week 3—Repent

Preschool-- Have your child think of something wrong she has done recently.

When she tells you what it was, draw a sad face on their palm with a washable marker. Tell her that when Jesus came to die on the cross, He paid for that sin so she could be forgiven. Give each child a wet wipe to wash their hand. Talk about how we are cleansed through baptism. Give your child a smiley face sticker to remind her of the joy that comes with forgiveness.

Elementary-- Tell the story of Jonah (Jonah 2:1-10)

In the story, when Jonah is swallowed, have your children put paper bags over their heads. Say, "You're inside the fish with Jonah, thinking of all the times when you have disobeyed God. When I read that the fish spits Jonah out, throw the bags off your heads and stand up and cheer."

Pray: Lord, sometimes we get swallowed up by the bad things we do and by our disobedience to You. Thank You for hearing and answering our prayers for forgiveness. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Remind the children that we can't go where God isn't, because God is everywhere. He will love us no matter what we do, and He wants to forgive us.

Youth and Adults—Read and reflect on 2 Samuel chapters 11-12 (David and Bathsheba), and on Psalm 51, David's prayer of repentance.

Remember that different parts of the liturgy are specific sections of God's Word. When we sing/say in the liturgy, "Create in Me", we have the assurance that our sins are gone—they were taken by Jesus to the cross and are no longer ours, they are covered by His blood.

Week 4—Thanksgiving

Preschool--Make a "Thank You, God" book.

Have your child draw or glue pictures from magazines in a little booklet. Write his words on each page. Remind him that God gives him everything because He loves him.

Elementary--Do the same activity as above, but let the children find and cut out their own pictures and write the words for their book as they are able.

Use the second half of the book to write what they can give back to God. Remind them it has to be something that's really theirs—money that parents give them for their offering isn't necessarily on the list. They might list time helping a younger sibling or time spent helping their parent do a chore without being asked; doing something nice for someone as a surprise; giving away a toy to someone who needs it, etc. Have them make a plan of how they will give back to Jesus this week to thank Him for what He's given them.

Youth and Adults-- Focus on thanking God in the best of times and in the worst of times.

Read 1 Thess. 5:16-18 "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Discuss ways they can "thanks-live" this week. What can they do with/for others, using their time and talents to show God they are thankful for His gifts to them?

Week 5—Yes! Amen.

Preschool-- Have a party!

Review all the parts of prayer. Use noisemakers to **praise** God with music. **Ask** God to always help you remember to be in prayer all year long. **Repent** while making a craft related to the gift forgiveness, or have a present to open that includes a cross and/or a heart. **Thank** God before having treats. Say "**Yes, God—Amen!**" as you play a game or give high fives.

Elementary-- Do a Post-it® note prayer. Have four different colors of sticky note pads and pens or pencils. Assign one part of the prayer to each color of paper (i.e. orange: praise, yellow: ask, etc.). Have children write or draw the appropriate type of prayer on the notes and stick them all over the wall.

Youth and Adults-- Do a Bible study about praying in God's name or praying for God's will. Celebrate the ways that your family has witnessed God answering prayers among you.

Other suggested resources:

When Children Pray; Cheri Fuller. (Sisters: Multnomah, 1998)

When Families Pray; Cheri Fuller (Sisters: Multnomah, 2001)

When Mothers Pray; Cheri Fuller (Sisters: Multnomah, 2001)

When Teens Pray; Cheri Fuller (Sisters: Multnomah, 2002)

Teaching Kids Authentic Worship; Kathleen Chapman. (Ada: Baker Publishing, 2003)

The Praying Family; Kim Butts. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003)

Prayer Saturated Kids; Cheryl Sacks. (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2007)