

Enabling children to pray

Prayer – caught, not taught:

*Modelling prayer **outwith your event or club:***

- Pray with your own children at home. Amazing how many of us don't do this!
- Encourage children to pray out loud at Sunday club, midweek clubs
- Evaluate your own attitude to praying out loud. Not confident? Practise speaking out loud at home. Find a prayer partner, share with them your difficulty and ask for help.

*Modelling prayer **at your event or club:***

- pray naturally, simply and with short prayers – in language that children will understand
- invite children to pray at front – modelling prayer to their peers
- Don't be afraid of silence
- Share your own stories of answered prayer.

Prayer ideas – led from front

Popcorn prayers

Invite children to shout out short prayers around the room (no more than one sentence or a few words). Ask leaders to join in with this to give a lead.

Circle prayers

Stand in circle and turn left. Put your hand on the shoulders of the person in front of you. If you don't know their name, ask them now! All speaking at once, say something like, "Father God, help (insert name) to know you love them".

Mexican wave prayers

Sit in small groups and hand each group a piece of paper with the following instructions:

- Lord, we praise you because you are..... (as a group, think of one word to describe God and write it here)
- Lord, we thank you for..... (pick one thing you want to thank him for)
- Lord, we pray for (pick one person or situation to pray for)

Once the groups have completed the above, explain that you will start a prayer then point to each group in turn, who will stand up and shout out the word they have chosen at the same time as waving their hands in the air, like a Mexican wave. You will do this 3 times, and each time the groups should shout as loud as they can.

Begin the prayers and point to a group at a time, who should then complete the line:

Lord, we praise you because you are.....

Lord, we thank you for.....

Lord, we pray for....

Responsive prayers

Leader says a line of a prayer and everyone repeats that line, *OR* the leader says a line and everyone gives a set response each time such as "Lord, hear us as we pray".

The Lord's Prayer

If you are leading a Mission you could begin to teach the Lord's Prayer – reading it out on Day 1, hiding words of it on Day 2, until by Day 5 all the children can say it without looking. The same applies for Holidays, Sunday or midweek clubs or SU groups – in which case building up over a number of weeks.

Graffiti prayers

Equipment: length of wallpaper

Roll out a length of wallpaper across the room. Ask the children to draw or write prayers on it. Either allow children to write their own ideas, or else follow a theme, perhaps with a Bible verse or phrase at the top such as “Forgive us Lord, for....” or “Thank you God for....”

Prayer aeroplane prayers

Equipment: sheet of paper per child, instructions on making a paper aeroplane

Write a prayer on a piece of paper. Fold into a paper aeroplane. When instructed from the front, launch the prayers (NB: leader should turn their back to avoid being hit!) Works well launched from a church balcony!

Listening to God

Equipment: worship song, large sheet of paper

Prayer isn't all about talking! Put on a worship song, ask the children to find a space on the floor where they can lie flat. Before you play the song, ask God to speak to each person – ask the children to listen to the words and think: what is God saying to me? In groups afterwards, put up a sheet of paper and invite children to respond by drawing or writing what they felt God was saying to them, or what they want to say to God.

Prayer ideas – in small groups

Thank you prayers:

Bubble prayers

Equipment: Bubble-blower and bubble container

Especially good for little ones. Picture the bubble being blown as your prayer going up to God. As you blow a bubble, say “Thank you God for....”

Magazine prayers

Equipment: a selection of magazines, scissors, large sheet of paper, glue

Bring along a selection of magazines containing food, household items, cars, music, holidays, families etc. Ask the children to look through the magazines and find something they want to thank God for. Cut out the picture and paste it onto a big sheet of paper or wallpaper. As they stick it on, invite them to say out loud, “Thank you God for...” Write a caption at the top of the poster, “We thank you God for....”

Creation prayers

Equipment: various objects inside a drawstring bag

Put different objects in a bag which relate to aspects of creation, eg a feather, a flower, grass, a leaf, model animals, some pet food. Pass the bag round and explain that as a child takes out an object they are all going to talk about what bit of God's world the object reminds us of – something they can thank God for. Once you have discussed each object, say as a group, “Thank you God for (trees, animals, birds, pets, etc.).”

Sorry prayers:

Shredder prayers

Equipment: a shredder, small pieces of paper and pencils/pens

On a piece of paper write or draw something you have done wrong that you want to say sorry for. As leader, pray and ask for God's forgiveness, then put the pieces of paper through a shredder to trust God for forgiveness.

Balloon prayers

Equipment: balloons, Sharpies or permanent markers

Write a sorry prayer on a balloon with a Sharpie or permanent pen, then sit or jump on the balloon to burst it.



Whiteboard or Blackboard prayers

Equipment: blackboard and chalk, or whiteboard and whiteboard pens, cloth

Write up on a blackboard or whiteboard the following memory verse:

Psalm 51:1 Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy wipe away my sins!" (GNB)

Invite children to write a sorry prayer on the board, then wipe away afterwards.

Prayers for others:

Paper chain prayers

Equipment: Strip of coloured paper, pen

Write a prayer for another person on a strip of coloured paper. When everyone is ready, say the prayers, one after another. Staple them together to make a paper chain. Hang up beside your group, or alternatively pull apart to believe God is answering those prayers.

Family prayers

Equipment: paper chain of people

Make a paper chain of people by folding a piece of A4 in half (to make A5 size) then half again and half again; draw half a body along the folded edge, making sure that the arms and legs reach to the cut edge of the paper. Cut out (can be precut for little ones). Write the names of each person in your family on the head shape and a prayer for them underneath on the body shape. The "family" can be taken home as a reminder to keep praying.

Prayers for healing

Equipment: plain sheet of paper, scissors, pens of felt pens

Ask the children to draw round their shoe and cut out the shape. Talk about how the shoe reminds us that some people can't walk, or get out of bed as they are sick. Ask the children to write the names of people they know who aren't well on the shoe shapes. Leader begins a prayer, each child reads out the name of their person in turn. Stick up above your group area to remind children to pray; or else make sure a leader takes home and continues to pray.

Prayers for self:

Prayer Box

Equipment: decorated shoebox with label "Prayer box"

Display a prayer box at the front of the room. Make sure every group has a quantity of bits of paper which children can write their prayer requests on and post in the box. Write "Name" at the top and "Please pray for....." underneath. Make sure the prayer box is emptied each day and that you as a team spend time praying for the requests.

Pass the Bible

Equipment: Bible, Holiday Club activity/bible book or a soft toy

Explain you are all going to talk to God and tell him anything you like. It is your turn to speak when you hold the Bible (or whatever object you decide). When you are finished, pass to the next person. If you don't want to speak out and say anything, pass the Bible on to someone else. You can start your prayer "Dear God", or however you like.