



awake to Jesus! sunday school resources

1: Jesus the Pray - er Sunday school lesson 3: Luke 9-12

Teacher's notes / Devotional for teachers

I remember once preaching on this passage from Luke 11 and the first thing I did was to ask the congregation if any of them struggled with prayer. Every one of them said yes! Many of us find prayer difficult and so Jesus teaching here is vitally important in helping us engage with our heavenly Father.

Having taught his disciples what we call the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells them a parable (verses 5-13) to further clarify how we should talk with God. It is known as the parable of the Friend at Midnight.

It is very important to understand what Jesus is not saying in this parable. Jesus is not saying that praying to God is like making a request of a grumpy neighbour. Jesus is saying something like this: When you go to this neighbour, everything's against you. Its night, he's asleep, the doors are locked, the children are tucked up in bed. He may not even like you, and yet still you go to him and you know he'll be responsive. You know eventually, if nothing else, persistence will do it, and so you persist. If that's the case, Jesus is saying, **how much more** should you persist with God, who is never asleep but always attentive to you and wants to give you lots of good things because he is good?

God pays very close attention to all our prayers. He is never reluctant but always eager to give. Jesus says if you persist with grumpy neighbours, then how much more should you persist in prayer with God who deeply loves you?

Then Jesus moves on. In verse 9 is where he really gives the command of this text. "Therefore," he says, "ask" (and grammatically each of the verbs here is given in the present tense and the imperative, or command, mood, which could be translated, "Ask and keep on asking. Seek and don't stop seeking. Knock and just stand there and knock and knock and knock and knock."). You do it in cases of reluctant, grumpy, unwilling people. How much more should you persist with God who is the complete opposite?

Then he goes on to give another picture, another analogy, and this is one that involves a parent. Again he puts it with some irony. He says, "Who among you would have a child ask for a fish, and you give him a snake?"

The snake that Jesus refers to here was a large, eel-like creature in the Sea of Galilee. It was called a barbut. It was about five foot long, had no scales and it was inedible. Probably that's the kind of thing Jesus is referring to. It couldn't be eaten. He said 'you don't that'.

A scorpion, when it's all rolled up, looked like an egg, they thought at that time. He says, "Who, when your child asks for an egg, would give him a scorpion?" Generally parents don't do that sort of thing. That's not where the heart of a parent belongs.

Then Jesus makes this remarkable statement, which I hope can be unpacked fully for us. It looks kinds of shocking at first, but it's very good news. He says, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts". That word comes like a slap in the face, "evil."

Of course, that's not the whole truth about us, but it is the truth about us. I'm a fallen man. I am self-centred. I can be vindictive. I can be amazingly petty, but even so, I know the joy of giving to my children.

But in God there is no fallenness, no evil. This is how we must come to think and believe with our whole being about God. There is nothing reluctant, nothing withholding about him. In the heart of God there is nothing but unstinting goodness and generosity.

Therefore, Jesus says, keep asking and seeking and knocking with confidence. We all can live in the streams

of the power of God. Jesus says you've just got to ask and keep asking, seek and keep seeking, knock and keep knocking. **Just don't quit.**

You may get disillusioned, you may be disappointed, you may have prayers that aren't answered, and you don't know why. We don't understand all that. Jesus says just know this, that far more than you want prayers answered, God longs to give wonderful things to every one of his children. So whatever else you do, don't stop.

So let this simple parable encourage us to pray with hope and perseverance. Despite all the difficulties and frustrations that we experience in our praying we can know this for certain that Jesus wants us to keep praying until our Father answers.

Don't give up because God's heart towards all of us is incredible love, goodness and grace.

- **Explanation of Lesson**

- This session is the third in the series on the life of Jesus and is concentrating on His teaching on prayer in the book of Luke. This session can be done as part of the whole series or as a lesson on its own.

We want the children within your Sunday school to see how important prayer is and especially how significant it was within the life of Jesus. You may want to help the children to see that this was not the only time in the life of Jesus that prayer was part of His ministry. As we go through the other lessons, point out where prayer happens and how central it was to all that Jesus did – communication with His Father in Heaven was vital to everything in His life.

- **Aims of lesson**

- Help children see that prayer was central to the life of Jesus
- Encourage their understanding of prayer as being about more than just asking God for a list of things that we want
- Helping the children to understand what prayer is about and to help them think about all the elements of prayer and know that they can talk about anything and everything, that they can do it everywhere and that there is no one right way to pray to God. It is all about building our individual relationship with Him.

- **Equipment needed**

- Flipchart/large sheet of paper and pens
- Bible passages (printed at the end of this lesson plan)
- Washing line/string
- Clothes pegs
- Capital "E"s cut out of A5 sheets of paper
- A4 paper to draw their circle diagram

Introduction

Ask the children what sort of things that they pray for. Make a list on a whiteboard or flipchart with all the topics and ideas that they come up with.

Then ask them how often they pray, why they pray and what their experience of it is, i.e. is it

always easy or is it sometime difficult? Allow the children to discuss and suggest ideas without too much direction or input from you. Give them the freedom to talk about prayer without being told what they should think. We often learn a lot from children about faith when they are given the freedom to speak.

Be careful not to be too prescriptive about how and how often the children should pray. We want to encourage them to do it but not make them feel like there is only one time, place or way to pray!

If there are children who say they do not pray encourage them to think about starting and maybe this lesson will help to encourage them about why prayer is important.

Part 2

- Read the Bible passage in Luke 11:1-13. This is when Jesus introduces the idea of the Lord's Prayer that we often say in church and as part of our Christian faith. Go through each part of the "Lord's Prayer" section (v.1-4) and ask the children what sort of prayer it is, what is Jesus praying about, i.e.

v.2 – Praise and Adoration

v.3 – Request for basic needs

v.4 – Forgiveness and help with forgiving

- Explain to the children that prayer is not just about asking God for stuff that we need or want and getting it but it is about building a relationship and friendship with Him and spending time with Him. Prayer helps us to show God that we love Him, to ask Him to help us think about other people and also about getting help with issues in our own lives. The more we pray and build a relationship with God, the more we understand how to pray and how God answers those prayers.

Part 3

- The children that we work with live in a "technical" age so help them to make some "emails". Give each child an E cut out of a sheet of A5 paper and invite them to write short prayers on them. These can then be peg onto a washing line string – going online! The prayers can then be read by a leader during a prayer time. These prayers can stay displayed during the whole of this series and encourage the children to add to them during the weeks if there is something that they want to pray about. Leave a supply of "E"s each week so that the children can write prayers and attach them to the line.

Part 4

- Read again the second part of the passage (v.5-13). Give everyone a sheet of A4 paper (or you could do this on one big piece of paper as a whole group). Draw 3 intersecting circles on the paper so that they overlap in the middle. Write "ask" in the first, "seek" in the second and "knock" in the third (see diagram below).

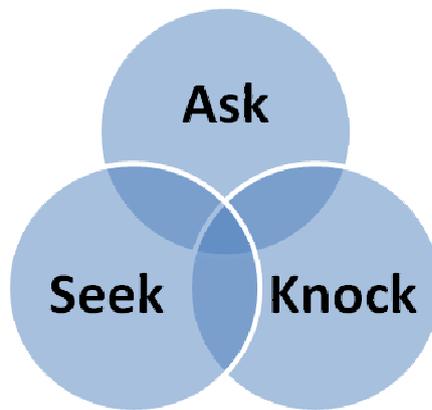
- In the "ask" circle, get the children to write things that they ask God for, e.g. for their basic needs, for other people, for the world, etc. In the "seek" circle, they should write things that they would like God to help them do in their life, e.g. live more the way that He wants them to, help to tell their friends about Him, etc. In the "knock" circle, write things that stop them living the way God wants them too, e.g. peer pressure, being busy, etc. You can either decide to have them share their ideas and answers or keep them to themselves. If you choose to share the answers, don't force children who want to keep their lists

private. In the very centre of their circles where the 3 overlap, they should draw an image or a symbol that represents God and in the 3 other sections that are empty write the words, trust in God.

TRUST ↘
God, e.g.

Draw a symbol to represent

a cross ↙



↖ IN

GOD ↗

Explain to the children that God wants us to pray to Him all the time about all the things that are on our minds and in our lives. There is nothing that we cannot talk to Him about. The devil does not want us to strengthen our relationship with God in this way and He wants to put lots of obstacles in our way to stop this happening, things like those in our Knock lists. But this passage tells us that God wants us to seek after His way of living and ask Him for what we need. When we do that He will not give us bad things but only what is good for us because He is a loving Father in heaven who only wants the best for His children.

Encourage the children to take their prayer circles home and use them during the week to pray and know that God is listening to them. To end the session, ask if one of the children would like to pray or have each of them say one sentence of a prayer in a circle.

Bible Readings

Luke 11:1-13

Prayer

¹When Jesus had finished praying, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his followers to pray."

²So Jesus told them, "Pray in this way:

'Father, help us to honour your name.

Come and set up your kingdom.

³Give us each day the food we need.

⁴Forgive our sins, as we forgive everyone who has done wrong to us.

And keep us from being tempted.' "

⁵Then Jesus went on to say:

Suppose one of you goes to a friend in the middle of the night and says, "Let me borrow three loaves of bread.

⁶A friend of mine has dropped in, and I don't have a thing for him to eat." ⁷And suppose your friend