

YEAR LEVEL	Foundation
TITLE	I Can Talk to God
STRAND	PRAYER AND DISCERNMENT
SUGGESTED DURATION	3-5 weeks
ENDURING QUESTIONS	Why is prayer important? How do I pray?

## Unit Focus

In this unit the children will begin to understand different ways of praying. They will experience prayer as a way of talking and listening to God. They will discover that prayer can take many forms, something that they can be involved in at any time and in any place.

## Achievement Standards

By the end of **Foundation**:

**Students identify prayer as an expression of God's relationship with each of them and a way of responding to this relationship.**

**Students describe various ways they can pray.**

## Unit Outcomes

By the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Understand that they can talk to God at any time and in any place.
2. Join in simple formal and informal prayers.

## Key Understandings for Students

- We can pray in many ways and in different places.
- A way to be friends with God is to talk and listen to God.
- When we talk and listen to God we pray.
- All people can pray.

Children come to school with a wide range of cultural, religious and social backgrounds. Some will have little or no understanding of prayer, others will come from different faith traditions. Most children will have developed a love of story and their lives will have been given structure by routines, which on many occasions have taken on elements of ritual. They will enjoy the elements of ritual associated with prayer such as the Sign of the Cross. They are beginning to learn to separate fantasy from reality and to understand the meaning behind symbols. When a candle is lit to signify God's presence during prayer time, this should be explained to the children. This will lead to an understanding of symbol and ritual in prayer.

While many children are very self-oriented at this level they begin to have an awareness of the needs of others. Their spontaneous prayer will not only relate to their pets and other personal needs but also to family members who need God's help in some way. It is important to recognise the children's tendency to imitate the expressions and behaviour of significant people, especially teachers. This is the time, too, for a strong response to the children's natural appreciation of rituals and symbols, and their liking for repetitive stories, poems, rhythmic sounds and movements.

## Theological Background for Teachers

- "Prayer can be described or approached in innumerable ways. Libraries have been written about the ways of prayer. But one thing is common to most forms of prayer: it is. Explicitly or incidentally, a striving for a deeper level of awareness-awareness of myself and of the mystery in which I live. The gospel assures us that the mystery of our life is in the hands of a faithful and loving Father. It may take time and a little practice, but every person has an inbuilt ability to come to this realisation-that is, to pray" (Doherty, 1989.)
- "Prayer is the experience of our relationship with God. It is a mysterious, personal, and sacred experience, never the same. We are all different. And God's relationship with each one is different.....God is at the heart of everything. We can be alone and pray or we can be alone and not pray. Prayer is an action of being in touch with God at the heart of our silence or at the heart of our words; at the heart of our solitude or at the heart of our activity. Prayer is a level of awareness." (Devine, 1988)
- "Prayer is a conversation between hearts. It includes the traditional praise and gratitude, an occasional scream for help, a fervent petition now and then, and some hard-nosed bargaining for a better deal. But it does not stop there. It encompasses the confiding of secrets, the admission of fears, and ecstatic dance. When you start a conversation with 'Abba' anything is liable to happen." (Doherty, 1989.)
- Through his life, Jesus illustrated his teaching about prayer. He prayed in times of joy and sorrow; before important events and in thanksgiving. He prayed in public and in private, using both vocal prayer and mental prayer. He was drawn to prayer because of his relationship with God."

## Scripture

John 8:12 Godly Play Script (Sydney) Our Prayer Place - Part 1

## Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

**Focusing Activity Use Sydney Godly Play Scripts: Our Prayer Place Part 1 to establish prayer within the classroom.**

- Create a prayer space/focus in your classroom.  
Talk about why we have a prayer space. Tell the students that the prayer space will change and look different at times.
- We talk to people about our feelings sometimes – when we are sad or happy, excited or scared, etc  
Who might those people be?
- We can talk to God as well. Ask the children what a prayer is. What are we doing when we pray?

- Discuss: Can we talk to God at any time? Can we tell God about anything? List children's' responses on a large sheet of paper.
- Introduce rhyme: From the top of my head, to the bottom of my heart, from shoulder to shoulder, I love my Jesus. (make up action to accompany rhyme)
- Brainstorm places where we can pray to God. We can pray in different ways
- We can pray different kinds of prayer – thanking God, asking God  
Discuss why we might say thank you to God. Why are we thankful for what God gives us?
- Students draw a picture of something they're very thankful for and write a Thank You prayer underneath.  
E.g. Thank you, God for the sun that gives us warmth and helps plants to grow  
  
Talk about what we might ask God to do for us, our family and friends, our world.  
E.g. God, please help me to be a peacemaker.  
God, please help those who are sick.
- Make a class prayer book. Children can take it home and write/illustrate a prayer. They are then invited to read it during class prayer the next morning/week.
- Teach students Five-Finger Prayer. **(Appendix 1)** This prayer was developed by Pope Francis and it assigns each finger something to pray for. The thumb is for those closest to us. – family and friends. The index finger for those who teach, instruct and heal us. The middle finger is for our those who lead us. The ring finger is for those who need our help - those who are sick or poor in some way The little finger is for ourselves.
- Introduce singing and movement as forms of prayer as well as the concept of silent prayer. Teach Andrew Chin song "Thank you" **(Appendix 2)**
- Make a family prayer kit to take home (decorated prayer cloth, candle, etc)
- Children decorate a 'Family Prayer Card' that can be added to their 'Family Prayer Kit **(Appendix 3)**

## Prayer and Ritual

In a circle, students sit in silence and focus on a candle placed in the centre of the circle. Explain that we do not always have to pray aloud; sometimes we pray in our head. Ask the students to think about what they would like to talk to God about in their head as they sit in silence.

Perhaps they want to say thank you to God for something, ask God to help someone who is sick or tell God how they feel at that time.

After an appropriate time of silence, all say **"Amen"** to conclude prayer.

## Appendices

Our Prayer Place Part 1

Appendix 1 – 5 Finger Prayer

Appendix 2 – Lyrics: Thank You God

Appendix 3 – Family Prayer Card