



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Living in God's amazing grace

A workshop design produced by the Christian Education Team
Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission Unit



Children and Prayer

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Purpose: To introduce teachers and parents to the variety of prayer styles possible for children, reflecting the manifold ways in which children learn, as outlined in Multiple Intelligences theory.

Audience: While primarily for teachers, this workshop would also interest parents and others who are mentors and spiritual leaders of children.

Length: About 90 minutes.

Objectives: As the result of this workshop, participants will:

1. Explore understandings of prayer,
2. Practice a variety of prayer styles,
3. Discover new ways to pray with children, and
4. Apply the theory of Multiple Intelligences to prayer.

Notes to the Leader: Keep a few things in mind as you prepare to lead this workshop.

- **You are leading a workshop** rather than a class. That means you strive to get each participant fully involved in the activities. You want them to share their own experiences and insights; some may have more experience than you! This is in-service training for unpaid professionals in the church's educational ministry.
- **Think of yourself as a facilitator** rather than as a teacher. You are there to guide a process and to make an experience come alive. In many key ways, your participants will teach themselves.
- **Work with small groups.** The workshop style of learning utilizes small groups. In the steps of this design, you will find reference to “smaller group” of various sizes. This is where the major activities take place. Participants in effect teach each other. Sometimes you will see “whole group” or “total group.” Usually these are times when you give instruction or when everyone hears reports from the smaller groups.

Supplies needed: For best results, work in a room with moveable chairs so that you can easily form smaller groups. In addition, you will need these items:

- A means to display your writing where all can see – chalkboard or whiteboard, easel with paper, overhead projector, etc.
- Bibles for each participant

- Paper and pencils
- Materials to create a Prayer Environment (see “Advance Preparation,” below).
- One copy for each participant of Handout #1, “Prayer in the Bible”
- One copy for each participant of Handout #2, “Theory of Multiple Intelligences
- One set of eight “Practicing Prayer Cards” (see “Advance Preparation,” below)
- At least four copies of the Finger Labyrinth, to go with Practicing Prayer Card #7 (see “Advance Preparation,” below)

Advance preparation: Study this workshop design so that you feel comfortable with its flow and you understand how the various steps work together. Make any modifications you feel are necessary for your expected participants.

Gather materials to create a Prayer Environment. In step 4, “Creating an Environment for Prayer,” you will rearrange the room to give it a prayerful, meditative atmosphere. The idea is to create a focal point for prayer. You will arrange the chairs in a circular or semicircular pattern to focus attention on your display. Use your imagination! You might begin with a table covered with a cloth, perhaps in the color of the liturgical season. On this cloth, you might add a candle. (If burning flames are not allowed in your room, use a battery operated candle.) Add items that reflect yourself, the group, location, or time of year. You might add flowers if summer, autumn colored leaves, water as a reminder of baptism, rocks, pinecones, photos, children’s toys, etc. A Bible or other books, a cross, a picture, or a globe would also enhance the arrangement.

Prepare a display of the seven “Prayer Journey Reminders” in step 7. This display can be sheets of newsprint taped to the wall, an overheard transparency, or a PowerPoint presentation.

Prepare a display for the list of prayer subjects in step 3, B. This display can be sheets of newsprint taped to the wall, an overheard transparency, or a PowerPoint presentation.

Prepare “Practicing Prayer” cards for use in step 6. Copy for each of the eight cards comes at the end of this design. Mount the copy for each card on a sturdy backing, such as firm cardboard. Become thoroughly familiar with the prayer activity on each card.

Prepare the Finger Labyrinth to go with Practice Prayer Card #7, used in step 6. Make at least four copies and mount them on firm stock for easier handling.

Review the Bible passages in Handout #1, “Prayer in the Bible.” Pick what you consider to be the key passages in case you need to abbreviate the list; see step 3, A.

For further understanding of the Multiple Intelligences theory, developed by Howard Gardner, that argues for other forms of intelligence (and therefore other ways to approach learning and life) besides that measured by the usual I.Q. test, read *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* by Thomas Armstrong (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Alexandria, VA, ISBN 0-87120-376-6. You can order a copy on the web through www.shop.ascd.org; the cost is \$22.95.) Other useful resources include *Guiding Children and Youth in Prayer* by Carolyn Luetje and Meg Marcrander (Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1995) and *Soul Feast* by Marjorie Thompson (Westminster John Knox, 1995)

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

1. Getting Started (10 minutes)

This activity will help participants get acquainted with each other and with your workshop objectives.

A. Open with devotions. Make introductory comments about prayer, such as:

Prayer is conversation with God, a two-way conversation with a friend. As children journey in faith they look to parents and other leaders to be their spiritual guides. They learn to pray by being in the presence of people who pray! Just as children all learn in different ways, they can experience prayer in a variety of ways.

Then read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Using the liturgical invitation to prayer (The Lord be with you/And also with you/Let us pray), offer a prayer similar to this: “Gracious God, we give you thanks for the gift of this day, for bringing us together to listen, to learn and to share. Open our ears to the new voices of others today, open our minds to new ways of teaching and leading, and open our hearts to your Spirit this day. Amen”

B. Make introductions. Write where all can see this incomplete sentence: “From this workshop, I hope to” Introduce yourself and welcome participants. Invite participants to share their name, where they are from, and what brought them to this workshop – in the form of their finish to the incomplete sentence.

C. Clarify objectives and expectations. In your own words, state your objectives for this workshop, based on the Objectives, above. Note some of the expectations mentioned by the participants and indicate how this workshop may meet them.

2. Interpret Prayer as Conversation (15 minutes)

This activity encourages participants to express their own understandings and styles of prayer.

A. Express personal approaches to prayer. Unless your group exceeds 20 persons, you can do this as a whole group. Invite responses to the following questions. Make notes where all can see of key ideas in the group’s responses.

What is prayer?

When do you most often pray during a day?

If you don’t pray on a fairly regular schedule, what occasions or situations prompt you to pray?

On a scale of 1 (never) to 6 (always), what is your response to the statement, “God answers prayer”? (As participant give their numbers, ask them to explain why they chose that number.)

B. Discuss appropriate names for God. While still in the total group, talk about the language used to name God. Point out that the way we converse with someone we call “Sir” or “Ma’am,” or “Professor” or “Bishop” usually takes a different tone from our conversations with those we call “Pal” or “Honey” or “Skinny.”

Ask them to share their favorite name used to address God in their prayers. Write these where all can see under the heading “More welcoming.” Then ask them to share some names or titles for God that they find too intimidating or unwelcoming to use in their prayers. List these under the heading “Less welcoming.” Then ask if there are any names for God that they find too offensive to use. List these under “Offensive.” If the same name appears under two or more headings, point out how this reflects our individual differences in approaches to prayer even though we all pray to the same God.

Then ask them to pick the name for God that they find most “conversational,” as inviting conversation between friends.

If a variety of names is not forthcoming from the group, choose some from this list for their consideration:

Abba	Advocate	Almighty
Christ	Creator	Emmanuel
Father	Good Shepherd	God
Holy Spirit	Immanuel	Jesus
Jehovah	Lord	Messiah
Prince of Peace	Redeemer	Savior
Sustainer	Trinity	Yahweh

3. Explore Biblical Examples of Prayer (20 minutes)

This activity acquaints participants with representative biblical examples of prayers.

A. Explore biblical passages on prayer. Distribute Handout #1, “Prayer in the Bible.” Form smaller groups of two or three. If you think they can finish all 14 passages in the time available, choose that option. Otherwise, assign each smaller group a number they can handle, from three to five. Distribute the passages so that between them the smaller groups will cover all passages. Or ask all the smaller groups to work on the pared down list of your favorites. Remind each smaller group that they will discuss each passage in light of the three questions. They can make notes on their handout sheet.

When finished, gather as a whole group. Ask each smaller group to answer this question: What did this exercise tell you about prayer?

B. Identify appropriate subjects for prayer. Post your display of the following subjects for prayer:

Good government	
Healing	Friends
Winning a ball game	Sick pets
More money	Weather
Ending poverty	Peace
A better attitude	Angry feelings
Good grades	A new computer
Forgiveness	Help on a test
Respect	

Go through this list item by item. On each item, ask participants to raise their hands if they think this is an appropriate subject for prayer. Place the number of votes next to the item. Pick one or two with the least number of votes and ask:

Why do we consider these subjects inappropriate for prayer?

What subjects are really out of bounds for prayer? (Individually, we have feelings that certain kinds of prayer are not appropriate. But from God’s perspective, anything we really care about or are anxious about or afraid of is OK for prayer, if only because our feelings are involved and prayer is a means for God to deal with our feelings.)

Write A-C-T-S where all can see. Ask if anyone recognizes that acronym, and can tell what it means. It is a helpful tool for creating a balanced prayer life:

A = ADORATION – simply praising God for being God.

C = CONFESSION – admitting mistakes, asking for forgiveness

T = THANKSGIVING – thanking God in general and for specifics

S = SOMEONE ELSE – praying our concern and care for others

Ask them for examples of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication (someone else) that they found in the Bible passages.

4. Explore the Varied Ways Children Learn (15 minutes)

This activity acquaints participants with the eight styles of learning identified by the theory of multiple intelligences.

Gather as a whole group. Distribute Handout #2, “Eight Ways to Learn,” to each participant. Read the opening paragraph. Then go through the eight “intelligences.” Ask different persons to read each brief description. Add any information from your background reading or your experience. After finishing each description, ask:

From your experience, give an example of this kind of learner. (To save time, limit this to one response for each item.)

When finished with the eight “intelligences,” give participants a few moments to identify their particular “intelligence.” Repeat the first two sentences of the introductory paragraph. When they are ready, go through the eight items and ask for a show of hands to indicate who chose each item. Record the numbers. Take the most popular and least popular style and ask a representative of each to explain why they felt that style belonged to them.

Close by making these comments in your own words:

Everyone learns through a variety of activities and all learn differently. It is important to vary activities and teaching styles in the classroom so that all learning styles are included at some point over time. It is not necessary to include all eight in every class period, but be sensitive to providing a variety for students. Most of us teach in our preferred learning style because that is our comfort zone. It is important to move around, to bring variety into the classroom in order to reach all learners and to move beyond one style of method of teaching.

5. Create a Prayer Environment (10 minutes)

This activity helps participants become aware of the importance of a broader environment for prayer.

Ask participants to arrange chair in a circle or semicircle around the table while you build your focal point for a Prayer Environment. When you finish and participants sit in their rearranged chairs, explain that the focal point serves to create an environment conducive to prayer and meditation. Point to some of the items you incorporated into your Prayer Environment focal point. Ask them why they think you might have chosen these particular items. If time permits, invite some participants to share what environments or atmospheres they find helpful for prayer.

Then turn the conversation to the needs of children:

- ***What attitudes and experiences nourish a child’s faith and encourage him or her to pray?***
- ***For what reasons do you think this statement might be valid: “In order to develop a prayer life, children need to see themselves as members of their families and of the family of God. They need to witness members of their family and of their faith community praying”?***
- ***Thinking of the eight ways that children can learn, how can you help children to witness prayer and to see themselves as members of families and the family of God...***

In the classroom?

At home?

In worship?

6. Practice Varieties of Prayer (15 minutes)

This activity engages participants in styles of prayer based on the eight “intelligences.”

Have your eight Practice Prayer cards ready; see “Advance Preparation.” Each card describes one of the eight ways of learning and suggests options for prayer that build on this learning style. Have at least four copies of the Finger Labyrinth available to go with Practice Prayer card 7, “Intrapersonal.” Give one to each person in the smaller group working on card 7. The labyrinth may not be familiar and the group might want to practice it.

Smaller groups of two to four persons will practice the prayers. With 16 or more participants, you could give one Practice Prayer card to each smaller group. With fewer participants, each smaller group could work on more than one card.

Ask each group to read their card. They will talk about how the suggested activity fits that certain kind of “intelligence.” If possible, they might practice a bit of the suggested activity. Then they will discuss other possibilities for prayer activities for this type of learner. Tell them that at the end, each smaller group will prepare a brief presentation for the rest of the group on practicing prayer with this type of learner.

When smaller groups finish their work, gather as a whole group to hear the reports. As they report, you might make notes where all can see of key ideas.

7. Conclude the Workshop (5 minutes)

This activity wraps up the workshop and wishes Godspeed.

Say, “You go home and someone asks you what you learned at this workshop. How would you reply?” Invite a couple of participants to respond.

Display the seven Prayer Journey Reminders that you prepared, which are:

1. Seek God in all that you do, prayer is the foundation to everything.
2. As a teacher, leader and mentor work to maintain a regular discipline of prayer.
3. Remember prayer is conversation, talk and listen.
4. Be honest in your conversations with God. Hold back nothing.
5. Conversation with God happens in a variety of ways, be open to the new.
6. Expect to be surprised by the Holy Spirit.
7. Expect to grow and to change.

Read each of these aloud, by way of summarizing the session.

Thank each person for coming and for sharing. If possible gather in a circle around your Prayer environment focal point. Invite each participant to offer one to two words naming something they are thankful for today. As group finishes, offer a prayer similar to this:

Thank you Lord for this time together.

We have lost some but gained much more.

We have been filled with new friends, new ideas, and new ways.

We ask for courage, to live boldly, always trusting in you.

Amen.

Written by Lorna H. Halaas, 2005

Prayer in the Bible

The Bible includes many examples of prayer. There are stories of people praying when they were happy, angry, sad, and looking for answers. They prayed for many reasons. These stories can help children and adults today in their faith journey. The stories show us how people turned to God in every part of their lives and will give people today courage to do the same.

A. Read some or all of the following Bible texts, as instructed.

1. Genesis 18:16-33
2. 1 Samuel 1:9-18
3. 1 Kings 3:3-14-19
5. Psalm 51:10-12
7. Matthew 9:20-23
8. Matthew 15:21-28
9. Luke 1:46-55
10. Luke 1:68-79
11. Luke 7:1-10
12. Acts 7:59-60
13. Acts 16:22-36
14. 1 Timothy 2:1-2

B. For each passage you study, talk about and make notes on these questions:

- Why type of prayer is this, what did the people want?
- How do you think they were feeling at the time of this prayer?
- How did God answer?

Eight Ways to Learn

We learn in all that we do through a variety of activities, and we use all of the eight learning styles. Still, each of us has a preferred style of learning. Our preferred way of learning is the method through which we find learning happening most easily and most enjoyably. These methods of learning are listed below. This approach to understanding how people learn is called the *theory of multiple intelligences*.

These are the eight “intelligences”:

1. **LINGUISTIC – skilled in use of language and words**
 - Whole language learner – word smart
 - Books are very important.
 - Enjoys radio more than TV
 - Good vocabulary
 - Enjoys tongue twisters and rhymes
2. **LOGICAL / MATHEMATICAL – classifies, calculates, organizes**
 - Critical thinking learner – logic smart
 - Enjoys numbers and can solve problems easily in head
 - Believes there is a rational explanation for everything
 - Enjoys brainteasers and solving logical puzzles
 - Likes organization and everything categorized
3. **SPATIAL – visualizes, graphically represents**
 - Integrated arts learner – picture smart
 - Sensitive to color
 - Prefers books with pictures and illustrations
 - Likes to draw and doodle
 - Sees clear visual images with eyes closed
4. **BODILY / KINESTHETIC – whole body movement important**
 - Hands-on learner – body smart
 - May not like to sit still, likes physical activity
 - Enjoys physical activity, well coordinated
 - Uses hands, body movement, body language when speaking
 - May be a daredevil, enjoying amusement rides
5. **MUSICAL – can discriminate rhythm and pitch**
 - Musical learner – music smart
 - Frequently listens to music, know many songs
 - Keeps time to pieces of music
 - May enjoy singing or playing instruments
 - Learns music after hearing a piece once or twice
6. **INTERPERSONAL – sensitive to needs of others**
 - Cooperative learner – people smart
 - May have many friends
 - People seek out this person for friendship and advice
 - A natural group leader
 - Always involved in group activities and games
7. **INTRAPERSONAL – in touch with inner self**
 - Individualized learner – self smart

Enjoys spending time alone
Independent minded
Knows and understands the “self” well
Interested in own inner life

8. NATURALISTIC – sensitive to the natural environment

Ecological learner – nature smart
Likes being outdoors
Thrives on having a pet in their home
Enjoys learning about plants and animals

Text for Practicing Prayer Cards

Cut out the text for each card and mount each on a firm backing.

PRACTICING PRAYER CARD #1

LINGUISTIC

- These learners enjoy words.
- Activities these learners enjoy include reading, word games, choral reading, discussion groups, journal keeping, recording words and speeches, and publishing.
- Prayer for these learners could include writing prayers for worship, writing and leading prayer for the class, prayer partners, keeping a prayer journal, writing and creating a prayer and devotional book or column in the church newsletter.
- As a group, pray together *The Lord's Prayer*, pray it slowly and listen carefully to each word. When finished take paper and pencil and write/journal your thoughts, feeling, with this prayer.

PRACTICING PRAYER CARD #2

LOGICAL

- These learners enjoy questioning and thinking.
- Activities these learners enjoy include, questioning, creating codes, logical games and puzzles, categorizing and classifying.
- Prayer for these learners creating lists of things to pray for using **ACTS** as a model, writing prayers for different times of the day such as morning, lunch, dinner and bedtime, discovering all the different ways prayer is taught in the Bible, asking questions about prayer such as “what does this mean?”
- Each person in the group share a prayer concern, it may be very general or specific and person. Ask a group member to list these concerns on a large sheet of paper. When all have shared and concerns are listed assign someone in the group to lead the prayer weaving the list together. You may want to have group members share a number of concerns so the list becomes quite long and inclusive. Think also how you might create a word game or puzzle to help group members remember these prayer concerns.

PRACTICING PRAYER CARD #3

SPATIAL

- These learners enjoy color and images.
- Activities these learners enjoy include photography, painting, symbols, drawing, picture metaphors, videos, and art appreciation.
- Prayer for these learners may include using their hands to draw images that represent the Lord's Prayer, creating stained glass window projects for worship space, creating banners, symbols, murals for hallways for the season of the year, illustrating a devotional booklet. Photography projects and works of art may serve as ideas for prayer concerns.
- As a group, walk around the building paying careful attention to color, art pieces, stained glass and banners. Choose a piece of art that you find and begin asking wondering kinds of questions about this piece. Such questions may include, I wonder what these people were feeling, what they were doing, why they were in this place. Wonder about their worries, fears, joys, etc. Who are people I know that are like these in this painting. If the work is abstract, discuss emotions it brings out in those in the group. After everyone in the group has opportunity to share, pray together for others that this work reminds people of in their daily living. Share this process and experience with the larger group. If possible show the art piece.

PRACTICING PRAYER CARD #4

BODILY – KINESTHETIC

- These learners like to move and use their hands to learn.
- Activities these learners enjoy include creative movement, dance, mime, theater, cooking, gardening, and other hands on projects.
- Prayer for these learners is a fully body experience that may include, liturgical dance, sign language or touching items as a focus for prayer. Mime, body movement may be used to “act out” the words to a prayer.
- As a group read Psalm 150. Interpret this prayer of praise with your whole body. As a group practice these movements together.

PRACTICING PRAYER CARD #5

MUSICAL

- These learners love music
- Activities these learners enjoy include singing, listening to music, playing instruments and writing new songs.
- Prayer for these learners may include listening to hymns and other music, chanting the Psalms, setting familiar tunes to new words that are a prayer.
- Choose a familiar tune such as *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, and put new words to it that may be used for a prayer at the end of class time.

PRACTICING PRAYER CARD #6**INTERPERSONAL**

- These learners enjoy cooperative learning activities
- Activities these learners enjoy are group activities, board games, brainstorming, parties and social events, cross age tutoring and peer teaching.
- Interpersonal learners may choose to write prayers as a group or with a partner, they may want to work with the pastor to write prayers for worship. Encourage groups to work to plan prayer services or teaching a new table prayer to younger children. Popcorn prayers, praying as a group in a circle or making up a game to involve everyone are other possibilities.
- As a group brainstorm and create a prayer “game.” Try having the group line up in order of their birthdays (month and day only). Ask the January group to pray for the February group, etc. You create a variation as it fits your group!

PRACTICING PRAYER CARD #7**INTRAPERSONAL**

- These learners enjoy learning individually
- Activities these learners enjoy include individual projects, interest centers where they can choose activities, bringing emotions and feelings into learning, stories where they can imagine and wonder.
- Prayers for these learners are quiet, individual and often filled with emotion and caring, also empathy for others. These learners are aware of their own needs and of others around them.
- As a group spread out to find space alone where you can use the “finger labyrinth.” Allow enough time so that group members have time to begin the labyrinth and work toward the center as a time of confession, pause in the center, listen to God, then slowly move outward again praying for others in the world. When all have finished, talk about this experience. Might it work with some learners? When, how, what ages?

PRACTICING PRAYER CARD #8

NATURALIST

- These learners enjoy ecological studies
- Activities for these learners should always connect to the environment, the larger world and include plants, animals and the outdoors. Plants and animals in the room, windows to see outdoors, nature walks, stories and videos about weather, plants, animals.
- Prayer activities should include going outside, watching clouds, a collection of things from nature. Praying for crops, animals, the environment. A blessing of the animals service.
- As group members are able go outside for a short walk. Each member should walk quietly and alone if safe to do so, if it is better to stay in a group while outdoors, walk in silence. Observe the world, what do you hear, see, or smell? Find something small to bring inside with you that is a reminder of your time outside. When gathered inside again, share your walk experiences. Did you feel God's presence? How not? What did you bring in to remind you of your walk? Why? As a prayer share what you would like to say to God after being outdoors.

Finger Labyrinth

This goes with Practicing Prayer Card #7. Make at least four copies and mount them on a firm backing.

